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Political Spirituality and the Idea of México: From the Bourbon Reforms in New Spain to

Mexican Independence (1740-1821)

by

Richard Anthony Grijalva

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Samera Esmeir, Chair

Professor Ivonne Del Valle

Professor James Porter

Fall 2020

Political Spirituality and the Idea of México: From the Bourbon Reforms in New Spain to  
Mexican Independence (1740-1821)

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Richard Anthony Grijalva

Abstract

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This dissertation investigates how discourses and practices of political spirituality contributed to forming an idea of *México* as a national entity in the early nineteenth century. During the struggles for Novohispanic Independence from 1810 to 1821, there was little consensus on what the new nation would be named. Writers, historians, and political figures used names such as “Anáhuac,” “América,” “la América Mexicana,” and “El Imperio Mexicano,” each conveying different political ambitions. The dissertation tracks the emergence of the idea of ‘México’ in texts produced during the era of the Bourbon Reforms in New Spain and the period of the Novohispanic insurgency. Against the analysis of the prominent symbols and cultural tropes pertaining to *México* as mythical or ideological construct, I argue instead for the centrality of political spirituality, which in my account designates the means of finding novel ways of governing oneself and others and discerning different ways of articulating what is true or false. Political spirituality, I argue further, enabled the emergence of new subject formations such as the ‘Americano’ insurgent and of the independent ‘Mexicano.’ Along with forming subjects, political spiritualities subtended the transformations of concepts that would allow those subjects to recognize and affirm the idea of México.

This interdisciplinary inquiry brings together studies of political history, religion, the history of ideas, and philosophical anthropology. Approaching the emergence of the idea of Mexico through the lens of political spirituality allows me to draw on contemporary theories of the proper name and the concept as a way to tie spiritual practices to material conditions, discursive frameworks, and practical exigencies. This project contributes to a body of historical scholarship on the role of religion and religious discourse in the emergence of the Mexican nation and state. By exploring spirituality as a practice that is not intrinsically religious, this project seeks to shed light on different ways in which spiritual discourses and practices produce material effects. The dissertation represents an initial step toward a fuller genealogy of the idea of Mexico, its potentialities, promises, and limitations.

*-For Heidi and Maya, the lights of my life*

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## Introduction

### Labrado/Zacamoalitzli<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the power to define oneself and recover the memory of proper names (for example, that the capital return to be the ancient 'México' and not the Federal District), to be able to accept and name reality proper, no matter what, may help find the way of being happy that has been sought but not found since 1821.

-Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, "The Insurgency of Names"<sup>2</sup>

The origin story Mexican independence is well-known: on September 16, 1810, in the town of Dolores some 300 kilometers due northwest of Mexico City, a parish priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla proclaimed the independence of New Spain with a call to arms from the parish's atrium. Hidalgo's proclamation, which stated the grievances of alienation and placed the miseries of Spanish Americans at the feet of Spaniards in New Spain (*gachupines*), set loose a sequence of confrontations against the Spanish military and local Spanish militias that would persist in varying degrees for another eleven years. Hidalgo issued that proclamation in the name of King Ferdinand VII, who had abdicated the Spanish throne in 1808 under the pressure of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon Bonaparte's older brother; Joseph would reign as King of the Spain and Indies until 1813.<sup>3</sup> In that appeal, Hidalgo bemoaned that the presence of the *gachupines* had thrown the potential of Novohispanics to cultivate themselves into "the chaos of possibility", and whose opposed the temporal and spiritual happiness of the American-born.<sup>4</sup> As a rhetorical

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<sup>1</sup> "Labrada" is the Spanish term signifying the action or effect of working or cultivating, of which ploughing and tilling are varieties; "Zacamoalitzli" is the nominalization of the nahuatl verb "zacamo", signifying the ploughing of ground and removing weeds. See, RAE- ASALE and RAE, "labrado, labrada | Diccionario de la lengua española," «Diccionario de la lengua española» - Edición del Tricentenario, accessed December 5, 2020, <https://dle.rae.es/labrado>; for "Zacamo" see "Zacamo. | Nahuatl Dictionary," accessed December 5, 2020, <https://nahuatl.uoregon.edu/content/zacamo>; regarding the conventions for deriving abstract nouns from verbs in Nahuatl, see David K. Jordan, "Nahuatl Grammar Notes," accessed December 5, 2020, <https://pages.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/nahuatl/nahugram.html#sec5.4>.

<sup>2</sup> Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, "La Insurgencia de Los Nombres," in *Interpretaciones Sobre La Independencia de México*, ed. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., 1. reimpr., Colección Raíces Del Hombre (México, D.F: Nueva Imagen, 1999), 103–22.

<sup>3</sup> A well-known event in Mexican history, municipal, state, and federal officers throughout Mexico commemorate *El Grito* into the present, performing the founding cry in town squares on the eve of September 16 every year and calling out the names of the founders of Mexican independence. Hidalgo, of course, is among those named.

<sup>4</sup> Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla: documentos de su vida, 1750-1813. Vol. 3: 1810*, ed. Felipe I. Echenique March and Alberto Cue García (México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), 55.

counterweight to the feelings of frustration and rage engendered by Spanish oppression, Hidalgo drew on a central figure in Novohispanic life to make his appeal more forceful, more hopeful: the Virgin of Guadalupe. Of course, Hidalgo was not alone in drawing on the Lady of Guadalupe, as she was beloved and adored by Spanish Americans and Novohispanics alike.

As a matter of course, Hidalgo's allies likewise drew on the Virgin of Guadalupe as a source of inspiration. For example, in December 1810, a column appeared in one of the first insurgent newspapers, *El Despertador Americano*; it was penned by the paper's publisher, Father Francisco Severo Maldonado—a colleague of Hidalgo and among the nascent insurgency's first propagandists. In it he argued that political independence from the Napoleonic usurpers to the Spanish Crown involved defending Catholicism, and that a movement for independence needed to respond to local conditions, much in the way that the guerrilla insurgency in Caracas kept the Napoleonic forces from overtaking the Spanish province in April of 1810. Maldonado voiced impulse for liberty by placing himself before the world at large and invoked the the Lady of Guadalupe, the mother of the Christian divinity manifested in New Spain, as a source of strength that vouchsafes the cause of independence:

We solemnly protest before the face of the nations, we declare in the presence of heaven and earth and we swear, which the most sacred of religion and nature covers in its breast, that we shall not leave our arms behind until we accomplish our most just pretensions. For this we implore the assistance of the august and undivided Trinity, placing the three Divine Persons as witness to the rectitude and purity of our intentions, and we count on the declared patronage of the Holy Mother of Guadalupe, this Empire's tutelary inspiration and sworn captain of our legions.<sup>5</sup>

Insurgents thus affirmed Guadalupe as a dynamic and militant figure, a virtual captain who immediately accompanies, directs, and supports her troops. Referring to Guadalupe as a personage who could intervene in matters of war and peace contrasted with the way the crown's sympathizers referred to her, namely as a symbol on a standard, a celestial empress, and transcendent maternal figure. Maldonado and the insurgents regarded Guadalupe as taking up the cause of their own defense. For insurgents, she is a figure that embodied a desire to act in the Novohispanic world through the spirituality of the creole insurgents. The Lady of Guadalupe is a visible image of the spirit of insurgency and a leader who remains as more than just a mother and an empress. She is the very heart of the nation's freedom.

Nothing in these instances of Hidalgo and Maldonado are out of character for the time, place, and circumstances, since Roman Catholicism permeated everyday life and culture in New Spain for three centuries before the insurgency irrupted. Naturally, these historical conditions compel scholars of the Novohispanic insurgency and Mexican independence to address the role of religion, religious institutions, and religious discourses played in Novohispanic life and society. In this vast body of historical scholarship, ideology frequently appears the principal interpretive frame for explaining the discursive artefacts either emanating from clerics and Church authorities or from political figures seeking to make the case for independence in religious terms. Brian Connaughton's massive study on the role that the Church hierarchy in Guadalajara played in

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<sup>5</sup> Alfredo Ávila, ed., *El Despertador Americano*, 1. ed, Summa mexicana (México, D.F: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2010).

shaping the Mexican nation foregrounds ideology as the variable for correlate utterances and social outcomes. He argues that as a social class, the clergy tended to adopt an outlook whose temporal and historical gaze turned toward the past as a way to resolve the growing conflicts between Church and State; these clerics aimed to harmonize a multiplicity of social groups by insisting on the nation as the organic representation of their converging interests.<sup>6</sup>

Brian Hamnett's study on the sources of the Novohispanic insurgency also posits religion as an ideological force whose widespread presence produced mixed, if limited, results. In his estimation, religion colored the racial and social resentments that came out of the projects of governmental reforms during the eighteenth century and the Crown's inability to address material scarcities and disease. Yet, despite the capacities of religious societies centered on the Virgin of Guadalupe to act as hubs of social and cultural life, Hamnett's analysis concluded that religious discourse was an ideological mechanism to sanctify political attitudes, legitimize political acts, or to encode political content in religious forms. Despite conceding that the religious aspect of Hidalgo's movement may have offered a unifying ideology that was able to attract numerous people from different social groups, Hamnett concludes that religiously tinged ideological statements were not very effective.<sup>7</sup>

Ideology likewise appears as a critical category for explaining the use of religious discourses in political struggles in David Brading's histories of Novohispanic independence. By approaching religious language in terms of ideological functions, Brading remarks that the period of the insurgency proved fertile for the proliferation of political rhetoric in Mexico, stating, "...the rhetorical ability with which old creole obsessions were deployed with political effects, and above all, in the emotional attractions of its symbols. Needless to say, this arsenal of ideological instruments only partially represented the everyday realities of Mexican society; although sovereignty resided in the nation, in the best cases this fictitious entity was still the property and identity of a relatively small stratum of the population."<sup>8</sup> Thus, while speaking the ability of religious discourse to persuade or compel allegiance, Brading's account of religious discourse as ideology gesture to the ways that the language of religion and sentiments figure in other forms of political practice.

Other strains of historical scholarship, while mindful of a relationship between the ideological content of religious utterances and historical events, have employed different frames of analysis. In *Memoria Mexicana* Enrique Florescano approaches the history of New Spain and Mexico through the state of that era's historical discourses, the elements that make a given historical discourse unique, and the social basis of that given discourse's forms or conventions.<sup>9</sup> Insofar as Florescano's notion of historiography plays out social, economic, and political tensions through particular forms of historical writing, it comes at the cost of reducing the presence of

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Francis Connaughton Hanley, *Ideología y Sociedad En Guadalajara (1788-1853)*, 1a ed, Regiones (México, D.F: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Brian R Hamnett, *Raíces de la insurgencia en México: historia regional, 1750-1824* (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2012), 35-41.

<sup>8</sup> David A. Brading, *La Nueva España. Patria y Religión*, trans. Dennis Peña et al. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015) 124.

<sup>9</sup> Enrique Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana*, 3. ed., corr. y aum, Sección de Obras de Historia (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), 467-469.

theological or religious elements within a historical form to another element in a political ideology, as a part of a strategy of using history to accomplish broader political ends, or as serving the elaboration of political concepts. Florescano's elaboration affirms one of François-Xavier Guerra's findings regarding how eighteenth-century New Spain and nineteenth-century Mexico developed alongside the emergence of new spaces for sociability, new forms of sociability, and the expression of new mentalities that were more secular in form.<sup>10</sup> Yet, even for Guerra, insurgent discourses do not seem to follow his major thesis that the production and diffusion of the printed word were the principle machinery of forming the public, a quality that he regards as defining the emergence of modernity in the Spanish American world. He remarks "[t]he discourse of insurgent publications is not that of a precocious Mexican liberalism, but of the grievances, values, and utopias of a traditional society." More to the point, Guerra observes that the early period of the insurgency found that elite and popular classes inhabited what he called the same mental universe.<sup>11</sup> But the political utterances of the insurgency and royalists complicate Guerra's periodization of political culture as either national, modern, and secular on the one hand, or traditional, colonial, and religious, on the other.

Finally, Jacques Lafaye's *longue-durée* study on the formation of Mexican national consciousness through the figures of Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe addresses the roles of religious agencies and discourses have in effecting this consciousness. Lafaye's history of the religious aspects of nationalist discourse points to the importance of spirituality as an analytical category. At one point, he mentions that the sixteenth century debate on the status of the indigenous Mesoamericans was a spiritual question (a debate whose terms were mediated through the categories of scholastic metaphysics and theology that Spanish clerics brought with them from Europe). More relevantly, Lafaye draws on "Mexican spirituality" as a category for understanding the role that the Lady of Guadalupe had on Mexican history.<sup>12</sup> He broadly interprets spirituality as a having socio-cultural functions,

...in the same spiritual universe, the historical tests that threaten the existence of a community have given birth to analogous mythical responses over the span of two hundred years...the "new Guadalupe" [of New Spain] came to add itself to New Spain, as a reserve of spiritual oxygen needed for the new society to affirm its identity and stimulate its development.<sup>13</sup>

And perhaps most immediately proximate to the overriding concerns of this inquiry, Lafaye leaves a trace connecting the functions of spirituality with historical developments and the forms of living, behaving, and thinking that define a place and a time. For he notes that grasping the role of Guadalupe in Mexican life is to have a master trope for explaining Mexican history, to the extent that "within a certain ethic and a certain system of thought that is no longer of our time,

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<sup>10</sup> François-Xavier Guerra García, *Modernidad e independencias*, cited in Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana*, 493.

<sup>11</sup> François-Xavier Guerra García, *Modernidad e independencias: ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, 3a ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, MAPFRE, 2000), 304.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México: abismo de conceptos. Identidad, nación, mexicano*, 4a ed. (México D.F.: FCE - Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002), 368-390.

<sup>13</sup> Lafaye, 389-390.

has been... 'the mirror' of national consciousness."<sup>14</sup>

Whether the ideological functions of religious discourse pertain to the encoding of political discourses, the formation of historiographical premises, the creation of public spheres, or illuminating the social functions of spirituality and the spiritual, these analyses regard *México* as a constant that restricts what *México* signifies and the different ways that *México* can be thought. David Brading refers to this impediment in a passage from his seminal work *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History*. In that passage, he alludes to a disjunction between two historical segments: an onomastic history and the political history of the nation, a disjunction through which the following problems appear: how names materialize in history, what those names mean, and how they acquire or lose meaning. While discussing the roles that Servando Teresa de Mier and Carlos María de Bustamante had in framing the 1821 Constitution, he writes that they "...played an influential role, [in] obtaining the recognition of Hidalgo and Morelos as the Founding Fathers—Padres de la Patria—of Mexico, even if their hopes of re-naming the country Anáhuac were disappointed."<sup>15</sup> In short, the problems implicit in Mier's and Bustamante's apparent disappointment were, in part, were semiotic problems, insofar as it pertains to how a proper name denotes a change of meaning or concept: in this case from *La Nueva España* to a politically autonomous entity to be named but what would become known as *México*.

However, these critical appraisals of the functions of religious discourses in late New Spain appear to operate on a common presupposition: that religious statements were ideological expressions denoting a fully formed entity, rather than utterances that simultaneously give form to the subjects who enunciate, the subject of the statement enunciated, and the common object that these subjects constitute. And when spirituality does emerge as a theme as part of these religious discourses, it is as a form of historical consciousness that vaguely refers to a transcendental subject that mediates spirituality. In this dissertation I argue that the modern concept of Mexico as a nation-state was produced in the early nineteenth century, in no small measure by agitators for Novohispanic independence. These figures turned to a set of discursive techniques and political practices that dislodged the term *México* from its subordinate position in a hierarchy of names as a local toponym for the Novohispanic capital. While its meaning was not entirely settled by 1821, the preceding discursive labors had cleared enough pathways for redesignating Mexico along new lines, so widely adopted that Mexico had assumed a greater political significance, regardless of whether the nation was constituted as an empire or a republic. But common to both is a field where varying and conflicting ideas of *México* play out, a field where the speaking subjects form multiple relationships with the spaces they inhabit, the forms of governing they adopt, and the sources they refer to in shaping their identities. I further argue that techniques of political spirituality were critical components in shaping *México*, not just as an idea circulating within that field of contestation, but as the concept which gives the field its consistency.

This dissertation studies a history of the relationships between connecting and subtracting meanings as they pertain to one word, a proper name: *México*. This inquiry is less about nomenclature or onomastics as it is about mapping the becoming of a concept at a specific

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<sup>14</sup> Lafaye, 391.

<sup>15</sup> David A Brading, *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History* (United Kingdom: Centre of Latin American Studies, University of Cambridge, 1984), 43-44.

historical juncture. It is the work of mapping a possible world that when expressed, shows its face, and conditions the way people experience the world when it becomes actualized either within a field of experience or as the field of experience itself. The first two chapters of this dissertation inquire into these manifestations of *México* at two points: on the eve of consummating independence after eleven years of warfare in 1821 and the decades leading up to the insurgency's eruption in September 1810. Chapter 1 analyzes how *México* functions in one of the few pieces of writing from the period of Mexican Independence that explicitly takes up the name and concept of *México* as a political problem: Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos escrita desde el castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, Año de 1821". The chapter explores the role Mier's piece plays in forming a concept of Mexico and analyzes the different variables that Mier puts into play in the letter, the grounds on which he establishes his argument, and the semiotic regime that could plausibly make sense of the text's excesses and extravagancies. I argue that Mier's "Carta de despedida" forms a concept of *México* by gathering in its scope the politics of language and orthography, messianic discourse as a source and effect of historical change, the ways that historical discourses are political resources for contesting power and the ways that language can produce extralinguistic effects on the subjective constitution of speaking and spoken subjects. What ultimately grounds Mier's argument in the "Carta de despedida" is the appearance of the letter *x* in *México* and the meanings it signifies. That single letter is an orthographic mark invested with an excess of meaning and is a locus of encounter for Mier and his reader arouse passions for history and language as redemptive forces needed to actualize a concept of *México*. I further argue that the principal effect of Mier's "Carta de despedida" is to dislodge the sense of *México* as a localized urban territory and expand the name's spatial connotation from its sense as a local toponym to that of a nation on the world stage. By attaching messianic connotations to *México*, Mier's "Carta de despedida" consecrates the name of a national territory to come and the people—*mexicanos*—whose self-knowledge supports their habitation in the territory that the concept of *México* marks.

In his account of *México*, Mier attempts to actualize a concept at the intersection of what Michel Foucault describes as an event, where two times, histories, rates of change, and lines of history meet and overlap.<sup>16</sup> In this case, it is the history of the name *México* and the religious-political history of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. But because the concept is "a form or force" that, "...surveys the whole of the lived in no less than every state of affairs," it is a fragmented totality that, in the case of the concept of *México*, neither describes those states of affairs nor explains the essence of a primordial 'Mexican' life. For it is through acts of naming, the fundamental operation of language to refer to things objects and bodies, that names gesture to concepts without determining its elements and its essential predicates.<sup>17</sup> The concept is therefore neither identical nor reducible to a proper name.<sup>18</sup> These otherwise incorporeal concepts become actualized when they play out in and through the contingent conditions on which experience is possible: bodies, states of affairs, objects and lived states. While in themselves ahistorical,

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<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, "La scene de la philosophie", quoted in Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 75.

<sup>17</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 136-137.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 34, 144.



concepts, can become actualized or remain latent in lived conditions, a tension that allows concepts to have histories.<sup>19</sup>

I understand Mier's conceptualizing of *México* along similar lines. Mier's effort at coupling the proper name of *México* with a concept is a culmination of different ways thinking around and about *México* that preceded his intervention. Chapter 2 proceeds to examine ways that *México* appeared in texts dating about seven decades before the insurgency and independence. The sources I examine include archival documents, Spanish tracts on governance such as the *Nuevo Sistema de Gobierno Económico Para la América*, José de Galvéz's report to the Viceroy on the findings of his visit and audit of New Spain's administrative system, and the *Theatro Americano*, a two-volume geographic description of New Spain and its different territories written by Joseph Antonio de Villaseñor y Sánchez. In this chapter I also approach works by thinkers and writers in and from New Spain such as Joseph Granados y Gálvez (the Franciscan Archbishop of Sonora), the surveyor of Novohispanic intellectual life and rector of the University of Mexico José Eguiara y Eguren, the exiled Novohispanic Jesuits Rafael Landívar, Francisco Clavijero, and the polymath botanist and scientific journalist José Antonio Alzáte y Ramírez. In this second chapter I argue that ideas of *México* fell along two modes of linguistic usage during the late eighteenth century. One usage, a major usage of language, assumes a state of power and domination to draw constants out from a language's variability and to produce a standard, homogeneous system for expressing the content of those constants. The second line denotes a minor usage of *México*, that uses language to create variations in the use of the same language.<sup>20</sup> Under this major usage, one that might be called a form of linguistic colonialism, *México* designated the capital of a surface of rule and governance called *La Nueva España*; it appears as an instrumental or pragmatic figure with a restricted meaning, its Mesoamerican sources truncated and reduced to align with the priorities of governance animating reformist projects. One effect of this diminished valuation of the term *México* in the late eighteenth century it left open a space for *México* to be used and understood differently in a minor usage. In this minor usage, *México* appears in different contexts, referring to a diverse, heterogeneous set of phenomena: natural (biological, botanical, geological, hydrological), productive and commercial, religious, cultural, and historical (including the history of indigenous Mesoamericans). The expanded sense of *México* in the minor use of language opens possibilities of what a concept like *México* might entail and what a *mexicano* could be.

Implicit in this tension between the two different uses of language is that they mark the terrain on which politics plays out on the field of discourse, a field subtending and governing expression as a whole. Of course, political struggle is not reducible to the internal struggles of one person or each person involved in a struggle. Politics has two objectives: to force differences and disagreements into the spaces of experience and to constitute the subject who litigates those disagreements.<sup>21</sup> The second half of this dissertation examines how discourses and practices of

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<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 21, 123, 151.

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) .

<sup>21</sup> On the theoretical articulation of such a notion of politics as disagreement and the configuration of space, see Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," trans. Davide Panagia and Rachel Bowlby, *Theory and Event* 5, no. 3 (2001), <https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/tae.2001.0028>. Note especially Thesis 8, where Rancière discusses the role of

political spirituality operate in the service of articulating ideas or concepts associated with the names *América* and *México* in two venues of struggle: the battlefield and the printed page. As a means by which subjects are constituted, political spirituality is a set of practices and discourses where language and concepts figure among the *topoi* where political contestation occur. In one of the more succinct definitions of the term, Michel Foucault argues that political spirituality is, "...the search for a new foundation...the will to discover a different way of dividing up true or false — this I would call ‘political *spiritualité*’.<sup>22</sup> This formulation posits a link between a particular kind of will (a spiritual appetite) that seeks out, deploys, and regulates the conduct of selves and others in terms of criteria that coalesce around the relationships between subjectivity and truth. In his Collège de France Lectures on the Hermeneutics of the Subject in 1982, Foucault lays out three principal elements that form the structure of spirituality. The first supposes that the subject as constituted at the time of encounter is not capable of truth without a transformation or conversion, implying that truth is not a species of formalized knowledge, but a function of a change in the self’s very substance and sensibility. Secondly, different forms and kinds of practices can transform the subject and open her to truth along two lines—*eros* and *askesis*—love and ascetic self-fashioning. Finally, effects of these practices of truth double back on the subject’s being and transfigure the subject, bestowing a state of being from which a subject could allow new forms of knowledge to emerge.<sup>23</sup>

But particular forms of spirituality in history vary. In the Novohispanic drive for independence, political spirituality centered on two historical points of crisis: the encounter between a post-Tridentine Catholicism and the ascendance of liberal political and economic thought and the implications of the insurgency on existing social structures where the prerogatives and interests of Church and State were closely intertwined. For if anything, the movements of Spanish American independence in New Spain, many led by creole priests and one-time seminarians, frequently turned to spirituality as a way to draw in listeners, create adherents to the insurgent cause, and offer resonance to their claims. The changes taking place from eighteenth century New Spain to nineteenth century Mexico make up a situation that is ripe for untangling a dense conceptual knot in political and governmental discourses whose major motifs include *theology, spirituality, system, metaphysics, sovereignty*.<sup>24</sup> Other terms that appear in

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politics as altering the spatial coordinates for a subject to appear and the political subject’s primary mechanism as “the operator of a particular mode of mode of subjectivation and litigation though which politics has its existence.”

<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow, vol. 3, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 (New York: New Press, 2000), 233.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros (New York: Picador, 2006), 15-16.

<sup>24</sup>Where the spiritual modes in antiquity closely link acts of knowing with changing the structure of the subject to access the truth, the relationship between modes of spirituality and theological knowledge diverge in Christianity from the fifth to the seventeenth centuries. Consistent with the formula defining theology as “faith seeking understanding”, theology, Foucault remarks, derived its truth claims from a rational reflection of the self that universalizes faith and its vocation and establishes the principle of knowing. This rationalizing impulse propelling the conflict between the requirement spirituality places upon the subject and theology as a way to systematize the content of faith in a formal system of knowledge prefigures the way that the modern notions where access to the truth is found in terms of the act of knowledge and knowledge alone. The condition for accessing truth is not subjectivity, but on two sets of criteria. One set pertains to “internal” criteria: of the knower’s sanity, the discerning of formal methodological rules as well as the conditions and structure of the object. The other set regards the external

these discourses are more specific; they refer to entities such as *América*, *Anáhuac*, and *México*, figures such as the *mexicano*, *americano*, *anáhuacense*, and to concepts such as *naturaleza* (nature), *religion* (religion), *patria* (homeland), and *pueblo* (the people).

Chapters 3 and 4 turn to political spirituality as a force or mechanism for elaborating concepts. The third chapter will examine written correspondence, pamphlets, and proclamations from insurgents and royalists from the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and from published documents pertaining to central figures and events of the Novohispanic insurgency: Fr. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and Fr. José María Morelos. I argue that early political nomenclatures that Novohispanic insurgents focused on *América* and the *Americano*, in part because the insurgents continued affirming their allegiance to the usurped Spanish King, Ferdinand VII. This early variation of political spirituality gave way to a different one that would articulate a more nuanced claim for political independence, a claim that aligned with the demands of liberal republican political governance and popular sovereignty. I further argue in this chapter that the discourses and practices of political spirituality during the Novohispanic insurgency produced the figure of insurgent subject, the *americano*, along the following three converging lines. The first line elaborates truth and falsehood around the political interests and rights of American-born Novohispanics against exclusively Spanish interests. In turn, the political interests propelling the common cause of political independence were essential for elaborating the bonds of patriotic affection and shaping the subjective form of the insurgent on the grounds of fidelity and betrayal—the second line of political spirituality. Finally, the political spirituality of the insurgency questioned the suppositions of nature (*naturaleza*), the natural, and the proper relationship of the *Americano* to the *patria* from which s/he emerges.

Chapter 4 brings this dissertation full circle, returning to Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos." Where chapter 1 analyzes the concept of *México* implicit in his epistle, chapter 4 discerns the mode of political spirituality implicit in the "Carta de despedida," a spirituality that could enable the subjects of enunciation—Mier—and the subjects of the statement—*mexicanos*—to constitute one another in the encounter with the *x* of *México*, the *x* that signifies the Christian messiah and grounds the concept of *México*. I argue that the instruction imparted through the political spirituality in that Mier proposes in the "Carta de despedida" is a pedagogy of the concept of *México*. Further, I argue that the political spirituality of Mier's epistle draws on the notion of an archive—in this case the archive of Novohispanic texts about *México* and its history—as the venue for undertaking the spiritual exercise of instruction

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norms of reasonableness, formal education and the operation of knowledge within constraints of scientific consensus. See Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 17-19.

At this point, political spirituality approaches the domain claimed by political theology and calls up another line of questioning about the relationship of political spirituality to political theology. While not tackling this relation head-on, it is useful to mention some of the topics and questions that have to be set aside for later. These topics include the different ways that a political spirituality might work through the ontological problems of the relation between matter and spirit, nature and history differently from a political theological project inaugurated by Carl Schmitt. Other important topics include their varying understanding of the secular and secularization, the way that each theory regards power and power relations, and the nature of the alignment between theological principles and different types of state formation, and the role of sovereignty as a legitimating factor that resolves the explanatory weaknesses of a critique of ideology. For now, it suffices to say that the role of political spirituality in articulating the principles of a liberal republican state in New Spain and Mexico challenges Schmitt's polarizing and overly schematic characterizations of the relationship between transcendence and immanence.

that would catalyze changes in the subjectivity of the reader. This spirituality aims to transform the subject who is otherwise unable to access the truth conveyed in the concept of *México* but can be saved or redeemed by the truth invested in the x of *México*: the personification of Christian redemption, Jesus Christ. Other mechanisms that Mier includes as part of the political spirituality of the concept include the organizational medium of the codex as an implicit model for giving a discernible form to an individual subject as *mexicano*. Finally, I argue that the pedagogy imparted by the political spirituality is a pedagogy in the study of history of *México* a nation and the study of history and language as the activity through which the reader cultivates and nourishes the sensibilities that come with becoming-*mexicano*. This process of learning from the historical sources of *México* becomes part of fashioning the *mexicano* who narrates and re-narrates the historical origins of *México* nation and territory.<sup>25</sup>

Regarded on its own, each of the major variables making up the topic of this dissertation—colonial Novohispanic and postcolonial Mexican histories, the roles that concepts play in human history, and the interplay of politics and religion—is so broad so as to be discrete fields of interdisciplinary inquiry. When seen together, the topic can appear even more daunting; the prospects of producing knowledge regarding the relationships of these variables appear murky, the heuristic terms and concepts employed in this inquiry might evade discrete, and the outcomes more imprecise than this writer would like. With this project, I have posted a wager on the generative possibilities of studying periods of historical transition by paying attention to the uses and functions of discourse, the regimentations organizing the field where the social behavior of language unfolds, the rules governing discursive practices, and the material effects those processes may produce. I understand that the dividends that come from conducting a genealogy of the idea of *México* through the lens of political spirituality as following in what Eric Van Young calls the continuing reevaluation of Mexican independence, especially with respect to adopting a methodological eclecticism that both place the developments of 1808 to 1821 in a broader temporal context and can approach the different layers of narrative through a pluriform practice

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<sup>25</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). To infer how subjectivation, truth, and the formulation of concepts interact in a political spirituality, an analytic gaze must focus on the ways that affections can exert pressures on how a person uses language and grounds alliances in political struggles. Deleuze frames his account of the role of passions in selecting the language that make concepts visible in terms of the struggles passing through individuals, transform their subjectivities, and impose risks on the very life of the person. He remarks in his reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*,

The selection of signs or affects as the primary condition for the birth of the concept does not merely imply the personal effort each person must make on his or her own behalf (Reason), but a passionate struggle, an inexorable affective combat in which one risks death, in which signs confront signs and affects clash with affects in order that a little joy might be saved that could make us leave the shadow and change kind. The cries of the language of signs are the mark of this battle of the passions, of joys and sadnesses [sic], of increases and decreases of power.

It is no surprise that parts of this passage from Deleuze (the labor of thinking as costly struggle, the change of kind, salvation as the objective) has resonances with aspects of Foucault's conception of spirituality (salvation of the subject, truth). As a point of fact, Foucault reads Spinoza's *Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding* as posing a "properly spiritual question" and is an instance of the close connections between a "philosophy of knowledge and a spirituality of the subject's own being." However, Deleuze's conception of passions and signs make up important elements that can help establish a chain of reasoning from the truth that changes the subject's being to the elaboration of the concepts conveying and realizing those truths through struggles and combat. See Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 27-28.

of reading that is at home in both the archive and the reading room.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond diving into the currents of this reevaluation, this project contributes to conversations about the relationship between politics and religion, conversations such as those elevated by Matthew O'Hara's work on the interaction of religion and rapid political changes in his monograph *A Flock Divided* and Scott Eastman's *Preaching Spanish Nationalism Across the Hispanic Atlantic*, a study of on the role of religious discourse in the development of nationalism and national identity. O'Hara notes that colonial Catholicism was an important tool in that people used to negotiate social differences, weigh the meaning and value of social categories, voiced their political aspirations and demands.<sup>27</sup> By focusing on political spirituality as an analytical framework, this dissertation attempts to probe into ways that that people used the discursive mechanisms of colonial Catholicism, which according to O'Hara were used to, "...[make] claims on resources ranging from the material to the spiritual to those that blurred the boundary between the sacred and profane."<sup>28</sup> . Similar to O'Hara, Eastman argues that that the discursive mechanisms of Religious instruction, sermons, songs, and periodicals formed integral parts the political landscape of Spain and Spanish America at the time, a politics defined by an encounter between multiple social classes and ideological stances.<sup>29</sup> Whereas using the religious discourse of Catholicism can produce the effect of blurring such boundaries, political spirituality is itself distinct from religion. There may be overlaps and cross-pollinations between the practices and discourses of political spiritualities and religious traditions, but political spirituality functions as a set of activities and procedures operating in the areas that nationalist discourses presuppose—the individuals and groups who would make up a nation and the ideas that go into articulating a sense of the nation as a place and idea. In operating at these levels subtending the articulation of nationalisms and political ideologies, political spiritualities produce the forms of subjectivity that could use Catholic discourse to act in the political arena. Those same spiritualities can articulate the sentiments, ideas, and concepts that can be used in those nationalist discourses.

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<sup>26</sup> Eric Van Young, *Writing Mexican History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 162.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew D. O'Hara, *A Flock Divided: Race, Religion, and Politics in Mexico, 1749-1857* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>28</sup> O'Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Eastman, *Preaching Spanish Nationalism across the Hispanic Atlantic, 1759-1823* (Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 16, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/16636>.

## Chapter 1

### México's X: The Concept of México in Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos"

For reasons that will become clearer as this study proceeds, the present inquiry on the idea of Mexico begins near the end of its timeline: late 1820 and early 1821. By this time, Spain's liberal revolution of 1820 had forced the hand of King Ferdinand VII to renounce a brutal campaign of absolutist military rule that largely suppressed the Novohispanic insurgency's military capabilities. The revolution also restored the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 as the fundamental legal framework for governing Spain and its overseas empire. With that, the question of political independence was put back on the table and one of the consequences was that it brought to relief the social ruptures—regional, class, economic, and ethno-racial—that decade of war brought up, one costing the lives of hundreds of thousands.<sup>1</sup> A Spanish general commanding the armies of the Southern portion of New Spain, Agustín de Iturbide, was undergoing a political conversion during this period; all the while he was corresponding with insurgents such as Vicente Guerrero (whose forces had proven difficult to defeat), local military commanders, provincial deputies, and city councils, hoping to reach a settlement that could end the conflict.<sup>2</sup> These efforts culminated in the Plan de Iguala, a manifesto for procuring Mexican independence, which Iturbide announced on February 24, 1821.

Political developments were changing conditions deep in the sinews of Novohispanic institutions. With Ferdinand VII recognizing the Cádiz Constitution, he assented to dissolving the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Spain and its overseas territories. Among the individuals in the Inquisition's custody in Mexico City in 1820 was an erstwhile Dominican priest, historian, and political dissident originally from the provincial capital of Monterey in Nuevo Leon, a Blackfriar named José Servando Teresa de Mier. Before returning to New Spain in June 1817 as a chaplain to an unsuccessful insurgent raid on a Spanish fortification in Soto de la Marina, he had last set foot in Mexico City in 1795. In that year, Viceroyal and ecclesiastical authorities exiled Mier, then a promising and well-known orator-preacher, to Spain for delivering a contentious sermon on the Virgin of Guadalupe before the dignitaries assembled in the Insigne y Real Colegiata de Guadalupe in December of 1794. Two months after his capture in Soto de la Marina, military authorities extradited him to the Inquisition's secret prison in Mexico City, with the

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821-1853* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 74, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Anna, 78. Also see Ernesto de la Torre Villar, *La independencia de México*, 2. reimpr, Sección de Obras de Historia (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica [u.a.], 1995), 128.

contents of his library to follow in 1819. Mier spent three years confined within the Inquisition's confines in Central Mexico City, waiting for the inquisitors to adjudicate his case.

However, the Inquisition's demise in June of 1820 did not guarantee Mier's freedom. Rather, it halted his case in the ecclesiastic justice system's machinery and occasioned his delivery to the court jail of Viceroy Juan José Ruiz de Apodaca, the Count of Venadito in the Viceroyal Palace. But by August of 1820, Apodaca initiated his transfer to Spain to face trial, sending him to the brig in the maritime fort of San Juan de Ulúa in Veracruz until a ship would again take him across the Atlantic. While in his dank seaside cell in San Juan de Ulúa, Mier spends the period from August 2, 1820 to February 3, 1821 feverishly writing, all the while remaining in contact with insurgent leaders and negotiating his liberty with the Governor of Veracruz, José Dávila. In those six months, Mier writes a clutch of texts: a draft of his political memoir (*Manifiesto apologético*), a historical-theoretical inquiry on the nature of a Spanish American constitution folded into a polemical commentary on the Cádiz Courts of 1810 (*La Idea de la Constitución*), the beginnings of a political tract on the independence of the New Spain (*¿Puede ser libre la Nueva España?*), and a letter he hastily composed and furtively gave to fellow insurgents, Carlos María de Bustamante and Guadalupe Victoria, on the eve of his embarking for Spain.<sup>3</sup>

That farewell letter, "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos," stands out as a singular document; on a first reading its topic, subject matter, argumentative forms, tropes, and calls to action appear extravagant, and even bizarre and irrational. But there is more to this letter than what this reading allows for. Mier argues that Americans should spell México with the letter x, rather than with the j used widely in Peninsular Spanish and sanctioned through the Real

Academia de la Lengua's linguistic reforms of 1815. The presence of the letter x is crucial for Mier because it signifies a phoneme that was not voiced in the Spanish spoken on the Iberian Peninsula. However, the x did signify for Mier a phoneme that existed in spoken Nahuatl and was folded into the Spanish spoken in New Spain. Mier exploits the difference between Peninsular Spanish and its Northern American counterpart; he also invests a surplus of religious and theological connotations that resonate with the Catholicism of New Spain's inhabitants. An important part of realizing that saturation of meaning into the x is to attach the letter to a history of American Spanish and its Mesoamerican sources, as well as to a history of the evangelization of New Spain that could predate the arrival of the Spanish on the American continent. Mier argues in the "Carta de despedida" that the term México derives from a transliteration of the Hebrew word, "messiah" to signify "the place where Christ is adored," with the x in México signifying the messiah, or anointed one, himself. In the short span of twenty-six paragraphs, Mier mobilizes an intricate philology to argue his case for the importance of writing México with the x and saying it with a harder pronunciation as. That philological account draws on an eclectic range of sources to demote importance of Spain's role in bringing Christianity into America and secure a foothold for a primordial Christianity that could vindicate the importance of indigenous Mesoamerica in creating a national identity with a distinct history, an apostolic lineage, a distinct linguistic identity, and a preternatural divine grace that Spain could not claim for its own.

Because of its brevity and dense composition, Mier's "Carta de despedida a los Mexicanos"

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 1. ed, Biblioteca Era (México, D.F: Ediciones Era: CONACULTA, INAH, 2004), 590–92.

is incredibly challenging to read and readily defies extended analysis. One of the earliest twentieth century re-readings of Mier's epistle is David Brading's canonical description of "Carta de despedida" from 1973, where he reads it in terms of its place in the trajectory of Mier's thought and in the broader context of a history of Mexican nationalism and Creole patriotism. Brading notes how the "Carta de despedida" picks up on theme of Saint Thomas' evangelization of the Americas, a theme that Mier had cultivated since his sermon on the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1794. Though Brading rehearses the basic argument of the "Carta de despedida" and vouches for its plausibility since other prominent historians of Mier's time shared his assessment of American evangelization, he principally describes the letter as an "impassioned defense" of spelling México with the letter x.<sup>4</sup> But Brading also alludes to a political gesture of the "Carta de despedida," which was to deprive the Spanish Crown a rationale for justifying the conquest of Mesoamerica and, by implication, to present the conquest as morally unjustifiable and besotted by error on the part of the Spanish.

In 1975, the Italian-Mexican onomast Gutierre Tibón (who, it turns out, helped unearth the remains of the exiled Novohispanic Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero in Bologna in 1947), published an ethnological and linguistic history of the name and the foundation of México. In that massive study, he reductively presents Mier's use of the root word *Méxi* to mean 'anointed' or 'Christ' as one of 70 different etymological sources for the term México.<sup>5</sup> Christopher Domínguez Michael's 2004 biography of Mier, devotes just three of its 695-pages to the letter, with a view towards illuminating its status in theological terms. There, Domínguez understands the x as a relic for rebuilding the mystical body of a Mexican nation that, for all of Mier's questionable etymology, became his most lasting victory.<sup>6</sup> In addition, in the introduction to a 2013 anthology of Servando Teresa de Mier's political writings, which includes the "Carta de despedida," the anthology's compiler Begoña Pulido Herráez frames the "Carta de despedida" as a document centered on historical memory. She remarks that among the principal contributions of the "Carta de despedida" is to preserve ancient Mexican traditions by integrating indigenous elements into the narrative of Mexican independence. One purpose of folding the indigeneity specific to pre-Columbian Mesoamerica into the national narrative is to affirm a singularity to the Mexican nation that would contrast it from the other revolutions taking place in Spanish America at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano* (México: Era, 1997), 51-52.

<sup>5</sup> Gutierre Tibón, *Historia Del Nombre y de La Fundación de México*, 3a edición (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 102-105, 108, 139-141. Gutierre Tibón's body of work manifests an abiding fascination with proper names. Those names and works include América in *América, Setenta siglos de la historia de un nombre* (1945), the Spanish surnames of Sephardic Jews in Europe in *Origen, Vida y Milagros de su Apellido* (1946), and personal proper names in the *Diccionario Etimológico Comparado de Nombres Propios de Personas* (1956). Regarding his role in repatriating the remains of Francisco Javier Clavijero, see Edward H. Worthen, "A Mexican Historian Comes Home," *Journal of Church and State* 15, no. 3 (1973): 455-63, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23914478>. For a very brief introduction to Tibón's early work, see Louis Nesbit, "Gutierre Tibón: Prophet in Mexico," *Hispania* 33, no. 1 (1950): 51-53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/333490>.

<sup>6</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 590-92.

<sup>7</sup> Begoña Pulido Herráez, "Introducción," in *La Revolución y La Fe: Una Antología General*, ed. Pulido Begoña, Biblioteca Americana. Serie Viajes al Siglo XIX (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013).



More recently, Ignacio Guzmán Betancourt's 1998 compilation of fifty-six documents on the name of México that span 500 years of writings, however, strangely excludes the "Carta de despedida" from its collection. But the collection that he co-edited with Luis Núñez Gornés, was posthumously published in 2017, and focused on the history of the orthographic debate regarding the letter x in México, remedies this omission, placing the "Carta de despedida" as the collection's first entry. In the introduction to that collection, Núñez Gornés repeats Brading's description of the "Carta de despedida" as a passionate defense and adds that the "Carta de despedida" does not so much offer a reasoning as it is, "...a search for reasons beyond language."<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the reasons mitigating the scope of each of these treatments, each by itself comes shy of reading the "Carta de despedida" that works through the multiple relationships between its content, the functions its discursive techniques perform, the political implications of Mier's claims, and the political uses of the speech acts found in the "Carta de despedida." Attending to these different elements lays out the practical stakes of formulating what might otherwise seem to be an eccentric, erratic, or worse, insignificant document. To that end, this chapter poses the following questions. What role does Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos" play in forming a concept of Mexico? Which elements does Mier's conception of México encompass? By way of addressing these questions, I develop the following argument: given the state of knowledge about the history of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and the ongoing debates regarding the significance of natural and political history at the time of its composition, Mier's "Carta de despedida" supplies a philological account of the term México that can create a plausible and convincing concept, a concept that can ground an idea of a nation and a national identity, one whose substance inheres in a particular way of spelling and writing the word México in Spanish.

Moreover Mier's "Carta de despedida" is not just a piece of counter-discourse attacking the accepted histories of the Americas according to the rules and conventions of European historiography and political discourse.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the "Carta de despedida" seeks to break away from a form of expression centered on the King as the bearer of the nation's sovereignty in whose name a territory or jurisdiction is governed. Mier proposes to create different political relationships between subjects, as well as a way of becoming that centers sovereignty in the people whose distinguishing mark is a fidelity to the x in México. Concurrent with the form of becoming that the "Carta de despedida" advances, Mier's work sketches a concept of México that encompasses the transformation of spatial and territorial boundaries and the singular character of Mexican political independence and Mexican history. Mier's discourses regarding the territoriality and historicity of México endow becoming-Mexicana/o with a sense of place, historical justification,

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<sup>8</sup> Luis Núñez Gornés, "Introducción," in *La equis de México: historia de un debate ortográfico: selección de escritos sobre la grafía del nombre México 1821-2001*, ed. Ignacio Guzmán Betancourt and Luis Núñez Gornés, 2017, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, Calif: University Press, 2002), 266-268. There Cañizares-Esguerra reads the debates on Mexican antiquities taking place during the 1780s and 1790s (debates that informed the historical undercurrents of Mier's intellectual project) as not merely a passive reception of the language and rules of northern European discourses and controversies, but of constructing alternative, critical epistemologies that, in the sphere of cultural politics, "undermine[d] the authority of foreigners who dared to get involved" (268).

and political destiny.

To pursue these claims, this chapter will examine four areas of inquiry. The first area regards the role that names play in Mier's political philosophical form. In this regard, two related questions concerning names emerge. One concerns what Mier understands about the functions of proper names and their relationship to political forms. The second question about names pertains to how and why Mier's position on the proper name México changes over the course of his literary career. Secondly, the chapter will examine the principal passions that Mier invests in the proper name México, passions which animate his argument: an insistence on language as conditioned and shaped by historical forces and an affirmation of the messianic powers invested in a people consecrated by an adoration of Jesus Christ and made present in one letter: x. In the third place, this chapter will focus on how Mier's historical poetics specify the character of Mexican political independence and the substance it affirms. This involves examining the aspects of the letter that read as heretical or at least heterodox, for they are crucial parts of a Spanish American history where indigenous sources and the creole archive figure into formations of historical and political identity. Matters of space and territory make up the last area of this chapter's inquiry, examining how Mier's "Carta de despedida" expands the name's spatial connotations beyond its prior uses as a local toponym for Mexico City, so as to consecrate a national territory with the name México.

Because the "Carta de despedida" resorts to an intricate and baroque rhetoric, analyzing Mier's work depends less on reading it as a form of direct linguistic signification, but as a document that employs language to produce effects on the subjects who stand to read the letter.

The principal effect Mier seeks in the "Carta de despedida" involves more than simply changing readers' previously held opinions, conceptions, or values through acts of persuasion. Because heretical speech is a form of excessive speech bringing the enunciator and the statement into closer contact, the inquiry must parse out where enunciator and statement begin and end and the character of their relationships. Therefore, instead of either completely withdrawing from or reducing the role of autobiographic variables in the "Carta de despedida," this essay will attend to the excesses and transformations immanent to Mier's biography and how Mier's discursive strategy works with language in the "Carta de despedida." By attending to these excesses and transformations, we can shift the locus of questioning from explaining the meaning or the 'why' of the letter to 'how' the letter operates: the forces animating its form of expression, the functions it performs, the effects it produces, the stakes it advances, and the aims of Mier's historical poetics centered on the proper name. For these aspects of the letter play a decisive role in using language as a political gesture, in a Mexican history whose origins predate, and are independent of, the Spanish Empire.

### *Names and Passions in the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos"*

By the time he began composing the Carta de despedida in 1821, proper names had already appeared as a minor leitmotif in Mier's political thinking. He had already spent at least two years contemplating names, their sources, and the principles governing their use. In the Cartas a Juan Bautista Muñoz regarding the tradition of the Lady of Guadalupe written in 1819, Mier rehearses parts of his philology of the name México that he will use in later writings. The philology likewise

discusses the Nahuatl sources of the proper name México in the *Memorias* he composed while confined in the Palace of the Inquisition, which also repeats arguments from his notorious 1794 sermon on the Lady of Guadalupe. In addition, two of the works he wrote in the brigs of San Juan Ulúa in January and February 1821—the *Manifiesto Apologético* and *Idea de la Constitución dada a las Américas*,—articulate the bulk of the philological argument that later appears in the “Carta de despedida.” That later work contains a footnote titled, “Sobre los nombres antiguos y modernos de las Américas” (Concerning the ancient and modern names of the Americas).<sup>10</sup> That footnote on what México means and where it stands in the linguistic system of American Spanish adds considerably to how Mier’s writing channels political power into the field of language. For in that footnote, he establishes a political criterion that will figure into how the “Carta de despedida” itself positions México in his Mier’s conceptual repertoire.

In the period that Mier composed the “Carta,” the question of names was never far from his purview, for names functioned as a variable whose historical and practical value he finds elusive, sacred, and even deceptive. This, in spite of how he found himself distressed and let disillusioned by names. Recalling his arrival to Spain in 1795 in the *Memorias*, Mier reports encountering a dizzying array of bureaucrats and officials in the Council of Indies, the Secretariat of the Indies, and the Royal Court, all whom are little more than names in places to whom Archbishop Núñez y Haro had been sending confidential letters about how his 1794 sermon on Guadalupe “sullied the [Dominican] habit before the government.”<sup>11</sup> The names he comes across an ocean away from New Spain came to signify a horde of disembodied and “consummate rascals, with neither soul nor conscience,” in whose hands Mier’s fate lies. At one point in his narrative about this disorienting experience, Mier lets out in resignation, “El mundo vive engañado bajo de nombres” (The world lives deceived under names).<sup>12</sup> As the venal functionaries who frustrate him crisscross the halls of the court, councils, chanceries, and academies, Mier stands to ignore their names at his peril. Thus necessity, for the sake of his own life and well-being, compel Mier to pay close attention to names.

The names vexing Mier are not just limited to those of the functionaries who can help or hinder his cause. Names—proper or otherwise—mark the field of Mier’s political imagination and the terrain of his political struggles. In Las Caldas in 1795, Mier must confront and reckon with them, lest he remain deceived, disillusioned, or worse, left to wither on the vine. Two and a half decades later, he returns to another struggle with names; this time it is not to navigate a murky bureaucracy, but to elaborate a concept that the name México could signify and be powerful enough to compel anyone who would seriously read and reflect on the history at the heart of his argument. Nevertheless, the “Carta de despedida” demonstrates that Mier’s concern with nomenclature was far from idiosyncratic. His concern partook of cultural debate dating from the eighteenth century, when Spanish *letrados* were producing patriotic genealogies to

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<sup>10</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Escritos Inéditos de Fray Servando Teresa de Mier*, (México: El Colegio de México, Centro de estudios históricos, 1944) See, *Idea de la Constitución*, 311-314, *Manifiesto Apologético*, 137-143, *Memorias*, 36-38.

<sup>11</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Memorias*, 3rd ed., Cien de México (México: Secretaría de Cultura, 2016), 188.

<sup>12</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 188.

counter long-standing Northern European slights against the Spanish “mind.” This intellectual enterprise aimed to reassess Spanish American history for the purpose of recuperating Spain’s position as an enlightened global power. During this time, controversies around names generated sweeping studies that changed how Spanish intellectuals went about doing history, cartography, and botany. Preserving the Spanish names of places and plants were fundamental to these efforts, efforts whose stakes were nothing less than the authority and prestige of Spanish intellectual efforts and the political survival of the Spanish American empire.<sup>13</sup> They also generated a decades-long conflict over access to documents and information about the colonies, culminating in the creation of the Archive of the Indies in the 1780s.

In a stroke of irony, Mier’s “Carta de despedida” takes up many of the philological and historiographic principles the Spanish used to preserve their empire. But he employs them for a different purpose: to free New Spain from Spain’s imperial domination. Thus, Mier’s pursuit of names involves taking up a critical task of political self-understanding that takes place where historical discourses converge with the demands of modern nationhood and the source materials upon which political identities form, most especially language. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, we will describe the different mechanisms in Mier’s “Carta de despedida” that make the piece not just an elaboration of a concept of México, but the performance and advancing of a kind of political spirituality that would make such political self-understanding possible. As will be seen later in this inquiry, to pursue a proper name is to make visible several factors: the idea of a nation with an autochthonous history, the political form of subjectivity that can operate in the new national context, and the complex of passions and desires driving how the *mexicano* is formed through an embodied relationship with the proper name México.

### *Passion for Language as Historical*

Principal among the passions that Mier exercises in the “Carta de despedida” is a passion for language, not merely as a system of communication, but as a mechanism for forming the sensibilities of readers through instruction. The “Carta de despedida” opens with Mier expressing his dismay at the state of the Spanish language created by the Real Academia Española de la Lengua’s 1815 reform that introduced a standardized Spanish orthography. What perturbed Mier most about the reform was that it excluded the letter x from the consonants and replaced with j to indicate the voiceless fricative phoneme /h/, thus making the term México appear as Méjico.<sup>14</sup> Yet this orthographic change was not merely cosmetic for a denizen of the lettered republic like Mier, for whom the reform struck at the very essence of language. Changing the letter meant distorting México’s aesthetic composition and beauty, its capacities and usefulness, the validity of the sources used to debate Spanish orthography, and the historical origins of words and their differing uses across time. Apart from threatening the pedagogical usefulness that comes out of the continuity of Spanish from its Latin precursor, the reforms stand to rupture the practical continuity that teaching and transmitting language otherwise provide:

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<sup>13</sup> Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 133–35.

<sup>14</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 590.

...in the republic of letters, we are not obligated to kiss any scepter other than that of reason...I taught the Spanish language in Paris and Lisbon; I have mediated much over it; I have arrived at fixing its prosody. I have many reasons for opposing these useless novelties, especially against extending the j, so ugly in its pronunciation as in its shape, so unknown to the Latins as to the ancient Spanish. It would make teaching Latin and its European dialects more difficult.<sup>15</sup>

Mier contends that the orthographic change also attacks three centuries of customary use in New Spain, since scribes relied on the x to transliterate spoken Nahuatl phonemes into Latin script. Making the letter x a principal casualty of the reforms would greatly injure and bring shame upon Novohispanic language and customs, as it would stand to erase the traces of the Nahuatl in names of places. As he urges his readers, "...this epistle is reduced to plead to my Anahuacan compatriots that they recuse the suppression of the x in Mexican or Aztec names that remain in places, especially in Mexico, because it would be to cease destroying them. And it is a great shame, because they all signify something, and in their topographic, statistical, or historical meanings" (...esta carta se reduce a suplicar por despedida a mis paisanos anahuacenses recusen la supresión de la x en los nombres mexicanos o aztecas que nos quedan de los lugares, y especialmente de México, porque sería acabar de estropearlos. Y es grande lástima, porque todos son significativos, y en su significado topográficos, estadísticos o históricos).<sup>16</sup> Thus effacing the x is not simply to substitute a letter for the sake of aligning oral pronunciation and textual representation. The force of the linguistic reforms' undertow would sweep away the remnants of the meanings and materialities associated with places, political gestures, governmental authority, and events defining Novohispanic history.

Mier had not always argued that México was the nation's proper name. Mier's writings from the period of 1819-1821 shows that he focused on Anáhuac as the proper name for the political community he advocates for, thus suggesting that the "Carta de despedida" initiates a move away from Anáhuac as the proper name signifying the nation. But Mier seems to have motivations that lie beyond imparting a didactic orthographic lesson by focusing on México over and against other proper names with Nahuatl roots such as Tlaxcala or Texcoco or Xochitl. For example, in the Idea de la Constitución Mier tries to dispel what he regards to be an onomastic error around the use of the term América, by stating that Anáhuac is the proper name of the nation, rather than América (and much less so México). For in his estimation, México refers to nothing but the capital city of the Kingdom of New Spain. He remarks that calling an Anahuacan a Mexican would be akin to calling an already-misnamed Anglo-americano from the United States of America a Washingtonian:

Not believing in Europe that there is an America other than which the nation possesses, *an erroneous nomenclature has been formed*, dragging their respective writers into struggling to be understood. For us to also understand their writings and gazettes, it is

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<sup>15</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida a Los Mexicanos Escrita Desde El Castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, Año de 1821," in *La Revolución y La Fe: Una Antología General*, ed. Begoña Pulido Herráez, Biblioteca Americana. Serie Viajes al Siglo XIX (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013), 376.

<sup>16</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 377.

noted that in France, generally, when they speak of America, they understand Santo Domingo, en Portugal, Brasil, in England they call their islands like Jamaica in the Caribbean archipelago, our Indies or West Indies. And for the English there is no other North America other than the United States. All of Spanish America is South America, although the large part of it is in the north. The United States follows this language, and they become offended when we call them Anglo-Americans in contradistinction to us. They only want to be Americans or north Americans although no other name can exclusively satisfy them. “Americans of the United States” is very long and would thus have to be content with the name “Washingtonians,” from their capital Washington (the “w” is pronounced “gu”); much in the way they call us Mexicans from our capital, although we have a proper name, and it is “Anahuacan.”

Mexico is nothing other than the capital of New Spain, and even then its viceroyalty does not encompass the kingdom of Guatemala, which is entirely independent of Mexico, nor does it encompass the Internal Provinces, nor Campeche nor New Galicia. These false nomenclatures would come to cease upon things entering into their natural state, and America emerges from the number of its unknown lands to occupy the rank that corresponds to it on account of its wealth and size, in conformity with the decrees of the Supreme Creator.<sup>17</sup>

Beside arguing for Anáhuac’s status as a proper name, the passage above also advances a notion about how political factors determine proper names. For Mier, using proper names in Spanish American political discourse in the early nineteenth century tracks alongside European geopolitical discourses, discourses that inextricably refer to the political questions associated with colonization, commerce, the governmental control of overseas territories, and the emerging wars of independence during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this context, Mier considers Anáhuac to reside as an independent peer nation, implying that using México as the proper name for the nation would create confusion about what specifically México actually refers to, since Mier regards México to signify just the capital city of the Kingdom of New Spain, which itself is one element of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. For Mier, therefore, calling a nation México would put a local term to denote Spanish American jurisdictions that do not have strong political links to Mexico City. These jurisdictions, according to Mier, include those that are part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain—the Internal Provinces to the north of New Spain, the Kingdom of New Galicia to the immediate northwest, Mérida/Campeche to the southeast, and the Kingdom of Guatemala immediately south in the Central American isthmus. The principal implication is that Anáhuac comprehends the jurisdictions of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, which, aside from the ‘patria chica’ of Mexico City (México), allows Mier to dispense with another source of confusion: terms that refer to broader expanses of territory such as *América* or *la América Española*.

Mier’s nomenclature in “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos” departs significantly from the one he proposes in the *Idea de la Constitución*; however, in the “Carta de despedida” Mier does not excise Anáhuac from his political and geographical vocabulary. Rather, he gradually demotes

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<sup>17</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Escritos Inéditos*, 311–12.

Anáhuac's significance in the four times he mentions it in the "Carta de despedida." The first is when he refers to those he addresses in the letter as *mis paisanos anahuacenses* [my Anahuacan countrymen].<sup>18</sup> He then uses Anáhuac in a quasi-national vein more familiar to his use in the *Idea*, where Anáhuac is a name designating the space then called New Spain. The third mention it is in another, more localized sense of Anáhuac as the island locale in Lake Texcoco, a usage more consistent with a direct translation of the Nahuatl word for "close to water." The final use is the most extravagant and baroque in nature. It refers to Anáhuac as the pre-Columbian site of a Christian evangelization preceding the Spanish conquest, a reference that is critical to the history that Mier uses to conceive of México in the "Carta de despedida."<sup>19</sup> Unlike the way that Mier advocated vigorously for the name Anáhuac in the appendix to *La Idea de la Constitución*, the "Carta despedida" refers to Anáhuac as the nation in a way that betrays an emerging awareness on Mier's part that Anáhuac might not be able to perform the semiotic labor needed to sufficiently compel the passions and sentiments of a people and gather them under this particular national name. Not only does the spelling of Anáhuac not partake in the orthographic problem that Mier addresses in the "Carta de despedida," the x is also a convenient shorthand for "Christ," insofar as it borrows the Greek letter X (Chi) as the initial for the word *Χριστος* (Christ).

Orthographic affinities aside, Mier finds in México a term that more closely aligns with a history that uses the apostle Thomas as the figure that draws direct line from Jesus Christ to a primordial Christianity predating the Spanish conquest. What is all the more compelling in Mier's use of México is that the "Mexi-" referring to the personage of the Christian messiah (Jesus) and "-co" the place where devotional cults to Jesus and the Virgin Mary enables him to include the two most important personages in Novohispanic Catholicism. In the schema that holds together the meanings of México, Jesus Christ is the fully human embodiment of the Supreme Creator's powers to act as the origin of the world and its ultimate ruler; his mother is necessary for realizing the work of divine creation and redemption in this world. As baroque as this formulation may appear, the word México can more directly recall the realities, where Anáhuac, with its allusions to water would require Mier to make an even larger interpretive and logical leaps to invest and communicate the significance of the Messiah's redemption of Anáhuac to relatively distant phenomena in the Catholic Christian system of sacraments, beliefs, and symbols, like baptismal waters. In Mier's liminal form of baroqueism, a baroqueism that straddles the New World Baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Latin American neo-baroque of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it would appear that there are acts of rhetorical invention that might strain credulity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 377.

<sup>19</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 377–79, 382.

<sup>20</sup> Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, "Baroque, New World Baroque, Neobaroque: Categories and Concepts," in *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*, ed. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–35, esp. 3–13. Zamora and Kaup's periodization of the Baroque states that in Europe, the Baroque had gone "underground," while persisting through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Latin America. They also state that the neoclassical style of the Enlightenment had overshadowed Baroque modes of expression. But Mier, who scholars such as Brading have branded a either a Jansenist or a Jansenist sympathizer, exhibits a rhetorical sensibility that both embraces aspects of, and frequently runs against the grain of, the neoclassical style that Jansenism, Enlightened Despotism, and the philosophical

Where Anáhuac does not lend itself to the kinds of philological inventions needed to elaborate a new myth directly connecting the proper name to either Jesus Christ or his mother Mary, México in Mier's pen can more coherently articulate a primordial origin a transcendent source of authority, and the models of Christian life. Within this framework, the x in Mexico marks a break within the concept of origin [arche] between a nameless source of political authority and an ontological beginning, a break embodied in the figure of Jesus Christ and his presence withdrawn into the letter x. Yet also, to adapt an expression from De Certeau, the x also marks a gap between an origin and its intelligibility [logos], a lacuna between the figure of Jesus Christ and his significance that eludes the capacity of language to represent it or give it some form of expression.<sup>21</sup> The Virgin of Guadalupe, through her appearance in and patronage of New Spain, is a supplementary medium that intercedes by mediating the movement of the subject between the origin and its meaning, while sustaining the subject along her/his passage. Moreover, by partaking in a Christian historiography of redemption, the x designates a messianic passion of Mier's historical discourse, a passion that establishes the grounds for creating and re-creating the world by saving and re-valuing its historical meaning. That is to say, because the x attempts to, again in De Certeau's words, "change nature and converting the meaning of being and doing with the truth of history" the x becomes the locus of a political spirituality working on the passions and opinions to produce convictions.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Messianic as Marker of Passion and Subjectivation*

A political-theological proposition lies at the heart of Mier's argument about the significance of the letter x in México: that México is the name for a Mesoamerican Christendom. Positing a linguistic similarity between Hebrew and Nahuatl, he argues that dispensing with México with an x and pronouncing it with a soft /x/ (instead of a guttural /j/ from the back of the throat) is a matter of historical memory and the local identity. As if anticipating Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of language as a living, semiological phenomenon that can never exist separately from its two inner characteristics social and historical facts,<sup>23</sup> for Mier Novohispanic Spanish emerges when social forces shape the forms over extended periods of time, with its norms accreting over the three centuries following the Spanish conquest. To this point, Mier writes:

That is why the Spanish pronounced México (Méjico), although the Indians do not pronounce but México (Mescico) with the Hebrew letter *scin*. And it is a pain, Mexicans, that Italians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Germans pronounce the name of our *patria* better than us. For nobody outside of us pronounces México with the guttural letter. In

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sensibilities of Port Royal held in common until the outbreak of the French Revolution. On Mier and Jansesnism, see David Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, 53-60.

<sup>21</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Certeau, 149, 178.

<sup>23</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 77-78.



every case, fellow countrymen, let us continue writing it with an *x*, or to stay current, if the new spelling becomes dominant, to pronounce this and every other Mexican term as it should, lest we completely cast to oblivion one of our *greatest glories*. *Yes, México with a soft x as the Indians pronounced it signifies: where Christ is adored, and mexicanos is the same as Christians.*<sup>24</sup>

Mier's statement does not so much communicate a meaning as much as it transposes the values of messianic salvation *into México* by positing a relationship of proximity and affinity between Nahuatl and Hebrew. As to whether that linguistic connection was genetic and historical, Mier does not specify. But he does attempt to make a plausible case by citing historical and documentary sources.

As important as moving the concept of the messianic into the *x* is to Mier's argument are the rules he relies upon to effect that shift. For these rules of transvaluation ground the symbolic and mythical inferences and make plausible the similarity of the Israelites and Christians with pre-Columbian Mesoamericans. Thus, by citing the presence of the phoneme *scin* in each language, Mier advances the notion that a linguistic connection exists between a historical biblical language and a widespread indigenous language in Mesoamerica that defined the pre-Columbian Aztec empire. Universalizing the sources of Novohispanic Spanish in this way allows Mier to appeal to several social groups within colonial Novohispanic society—creoles, mestizo, and indigenous communities—in ways members of those communities could recognize. His gesture signals that Nahuatl has a place in a family of archaic languages, an inclusion whose political significance is to mark Nahuatl as a language whose history could be traced putatively to other ancient global languages.

This affinity of Nahuatl and Hebrew is not the only instance where Mier establishes connections between Nahuatl and other languages from Biblical and ancient civilizations. At one point he asserts that the Nahuatl word signifying the truncated temple pyramids—*teocalli*—was “a wholly Greek word.”<sup>25</sup> At another point he notes that “the Mexican language is full of Chinese words” (*la lengua mexicana está llena de palabras chinas*) and posits that the Mayan word *Chilan-cambal* is a Chinese word that, according to Mier, signifies Saint Thomas the Apostle, a key figure in the epistle's genealogy of the word *México*.<sup>26</sup> Since what counts in Mier's writing is the gesture of forming a subject with discursive means, not the act of signifying an object, emotion and effort

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<sup>24</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, “Carta de Despedida,” 377.

<sup>25</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 380.

<sup>26</sup> Six years earlier, Simón Bolívar wrote a letter from Kingston, Jamaica to an English-Jamaican Henry Cullen about the historical prospects of Spanish-American independence and the political effort to realize it. Toward the end, he notes that *Chilan-cambal* is the subject of a still-open question as to the nature of Quetzalcoatl, writing “Questions still remain as to whether he was an apostle of Christ or a pagan. Some suggest that his name means Saint Thomas; others the Plumed Serpent; and others say that he is the famous prophet of Yucatán, *Chilan-Cambal* [Kukulkán].” However, unlike Bolívar, who establishes a possible, yet inconclusive connection between *Chilan-Cambal* or Saint Thomas with Quetzalcoatl, Mier opts to equate *Chilan-Cambal* with Saint Thomas. See Simón Bolívar, Frederick H. Fornoff, and David Bushnell, *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, Library of Latin America (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 28.

take priority over the idea or imagination.<sup>27</sup> For Mier to align Mesoamerican language in this way is to connect Nahuatl to a universal history and geography of language. The objective of this gesture of opening is to stir the reader's passions by referring to potentialities for Nahuatl and *México* that lay at the horizon where Mexican language, Mesoamerican life, and universal history converge.

By making language act as a mechanism opening Mesoamerica to the field of universal history, Mier suggests a more profound relation between Nahuatl and Hebrew: that there existed a historical continuity between pre-Columbian Aztecs and the Israelites. When referring to the *teocalli*, Mier narrates that the Aztecs intentionally built the *Templo Mayor* in Mexico City to emulate the First Temple built during Solomon's reign and destroyed in 587 BCE. He also questions the truthfulness of colonial Spanish narratives recounting the Aztec practices of mass human sacrifice. In reality, Mier notes, the Aztecs sacrificed twenty-two thousand oxen, following the sacrifices celebrating Solomon's dedication of the temples as depicted in the seventh chapter of second book of Chronicles. As support he cites testimony from indigenous sources given to Fray Gregorio García which claim that pre-Columbian indigenous peoples had access to Biblical images and hieroglyphs as patterns for designing their rites and practices. He states that through transposition and confusion over time the Mexica "...applied the stories from Scriptures and transformed their proper history and religion" [...se aplicaron las historias de la Escritura, y trastornaron su propia historia y religion].<sup>28</sup> With this narration, Mier suggests that indigenous practices and language effected a *translatio* that made pre-Christian and Christian references and tropes immanent in the history and culture of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.

Two passions that the *x* in *México* elicits by calling up the messianic—for a sacred history and for language's capacities to give form to life—resonate a historical example that Deleuze and Guattari use to illuminate elements of post-signifying/passional semiotic regimes. The first passion, whose object is a sacred history, is exemplified by the Jewish opposition to several empires. These oppositions to empires on the part of the Jews included, among other instances, the Israelites' escape from Egyptian bondage, the ordeals of the destruction of Judah and Babylonian captivity chronicled in the Old Testament Books, and the various responses to the Roman conquest of Judea that culminated in the Jewish-Roman wars between 66 and 135 CE and a major Jewish diaspora. The objects of the second passion, the implicit relationship of the self to language, the devices and bodies mediating that relationship, and the capacities of language to engender the subject by doubling the self along two lines: consciousness and love.<sup>29</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari observe in the case of the historical emergence of Semitic traditions and the so-called religions of the Book, the face of God turns away and withdraws into the tablets and scriptures, thus making the book the principle vehicle for its adherents to internalize the word and for all things to be to internalized in the book in its turn.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Mier's gesture consists in

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<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 120.

<sup>28</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 380.

<sup>29</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 131.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 123.

further interiorizing and inscribing the withdrawal of God's face from the book itself into a single letter to vouch for the *México's* messianic mission: *x*.

Because Mier does not explicitly make the case for designating the *x* as a kind of sacrament or living presence of Christ, the grapheme *x* functions as an icon allowing the reader to behold the letter without having to avert her face. Rather, in two strokes of the pen or the pressing of two intersecting segments, the *x* stands in for the very gesture of dual aversion—from the face of God and the face of the reader. By making the *x* bear the infinitely heavy and light burden of transmitting the living name of the messiah, the letter ceases to represent or to show the face of God. Instead, the letter marks the immanent location of the messianic in the name *México* every time it is uttered or written. That utterance in turn indefinitely postpones the encounter between the messiah and the people—whom Mier states is the ultimate arbiter of names<sup>31</sup>—between Christ and the *Mexicanos* qua Christians.

Discursive gestures of uttering and inscription of course are not possible without the subject who enunciates. In the case of the passional regime, the prophet is the figure exemplifying the subject of enunciation. But instead of positing Moses as the exemplary subject of enunciation in the case of the Israelites, Mier situates himself as that subject in the “Carta de despedida.” As a prophet whose repeated misfortunes—such as near-constant exile, military defeat, frequent incarceration and exposure to prosecution, serial escapes and reprieves—block and impede his movements and acts, Mier internalizes his frustrated desires, giving them form and expression. Like the prophet enmeshed in schemes of universal betrayal who at bottom ceaselessly betrays God to the extent that God betrays man,<sup>32</sup> Mier becomes a prophet who by fits and starts, statements at once heretical and devotional, finds cracks and openings in the systems of thinking and discourse. Mier betrays Christianity and Mexica traditions alike by infusing Nahuatl and pre-Columbian Mesoamerican history with primordial Christian origins and by granting an origin to Mesoamerican history and culture that betrays the Eurocentric Catholicism that Imperial Spain hinged its political identity upon. He draws segments of a prophetic passion that depart from the circular orbit of peninsular Spanish as the language of power and its discourse centered on King that institutes and safeguards a national covenant. Mier's remediation of *México* centers on the *x* and the name *México*, and in doing so, Mier elaborates some of the elements that will become woven into the fabric of the Mexican Republic's civic religion.

Yet, civic religions do not emerge exclusively from the simple labor of a single subject of enunciation (Mier); rather, they are effects of several mechanisms working at once in practical assemblages: institutions, networks, economies, affective configurations, and forms of expression. As a corollary, a subject of enunciation works alongside those mechanisms to withdraw the transcendence of the name of God into the text. But in the case of Mier, the purpose seems less to assert his speaking authority than it is to lay out the form of passion that speakers and listeners, writers and readers, partake in as they realize the enunciated sign *México*. Otherwise, the prophetic content of Mier's enunciation would be seen only as an uninterpretable, solipsistic cry

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<sup>31</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Escritos Inéditos*, 311–12.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 123. De Certeau's reading of betrayal in Freud's writing, especially in *Moses and Monotheism*, is also apposite here. See “The Fiction of History,” in Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 308–54.

into the void, something on the order of the crank, the madman, or the pariah. In the case of the “Carta de despedida,” the always-betraying subject of enunciation *qua* prophet is straightforward: the wayward and wily Mier.

Mier’s “Carta de despedida” stages an encounter meant to give a discernable form to subjects by making language an affective conduit for mediating an affiliation between the prophet and the people. He addresses his readers as his *mis paisanos*, appealing to the sense of the glory of their *patria*,<sup>33</sup> a glory that speaks from the reaches of ancient history and informs the patriotism of the *mexicano*. As elements of a passionate, post-signifying semiotic, the letter *X* and the word *México* do not have a properly signifying function; rather it functions as a mediator of intersubjective becoming.<sup>34</sup> In this context, Mier—the subject of enunciation—is not the statement’s direct referent or object. Instead, Mier sketches out the general character the subject of the statement. That subject goes by the name *México*, into which Mier springs back. By not making himself the subject of the statement, Mier’s gesture creates a condition for the republican political criterion for determining the meaning and significance of names to take root. Mier wrests control of linguistic formation from the circular acts of signifying that emanate from the paranoid despot at the center—in this case Ferdinand VII—and returns through recurrent acts of interpretation on the part of priests, bureaucrats, and royal academicians.<sup>35</sup> The name *México* in Mier’s letter becomes the site of a political intervention through which the subjects of enunciation and the statement meet and become indistinguishable.

In cases where language is assigned the extralinguistic tasks of forming subjects and their affects, the substance of the sign is not in the signified, or the concept, but in the subject being formed. For in a post-signifying assemblage of signs, the subjects of the enunciation and the statement rebound into one another and individuate each other. Thus *México/Anáhuac* are the names of both the people as a collective and the places where they reside; *mexicano/anahuacense* is then the particular individuation applying to the enunciators and the receivers of the statement alike. The respondent of the statement vouches for the speaker.<sup>36</sup> The name *México* designates a site of encounter and mutual becoming, with Mier the speaking subject and his *paisanos* the subjects of the statements igniting each other’s intrinsic political passions and partaking of a project of building a commonly affirmed *Patria*.<sup>37</sup> Though the “Carta de despedida” itself is an

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<sup>33</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, “Carta de Despedida,” 381–82.

<sup>34</sup> On the role of the sign in a post-signifying passionate regime, Deleuze and Guattari are direct: “There is no longer a signifier-signified relation, but a subject of enunciation issuing from the point of subjectification and a subject of the statement in a determinable relation to the subject. There is no longer sign-to-sign circularity, but a linear proceeding into which the sign is swept via subjects.” See, Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 136.

<sup>36</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, 129.” Significance brought about uniformity in the substance of enunciation; now subjectivity effects an individuation, collective or particular. Substance has become subject, as they say. The subject of enunciation recoils into the subject of the statement, to the point that the subject of the statement resupplies subject of enunciation for another proceeding. The subject of the statement has become the “respondent” or guarantor of the subject of enunciation, through a kind of reductive echolalia, in a biunivocal relation.”

<sup>37</sup> On confession as a technique of forming subjects through passions, Foucault’s discussion of confession through the viewpoint of subjects and discourse is useful, for it resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s account of how post-signifying semiotic activities effect this passionate constitution of subjects: “The confession is a ritual of

epistle, it is one that dramatizes a ritual of confession. Played out on the text as a body of passion, the mode of direct address in the “Carta de despedida” entrusts Mier’s confession with the task of projecting a multiform passion, a passion that encompasses ethical, historical, linguistic, and political impulses. In terms of the discursive structure of confession, Mier’s “Carta de despedida” conveys passions in a manner consistent with the ways that Christian practices produce an individual subject’s interiority when the subject internalizes the idea of the infinite to initiate the process of subject-formation. Insofar as the “Carta de despedida” also confesses Mier’s own experience, it also partakes of the modern philosophical project that grounds thought in the self-affirmation of the knower, of which the Cartesian *cogito* is the most prominent example.<sup>38</sup> Being his first public declaration on the American continent since the 1794 sermon that sent Mier into a life of exile, the “Carta de despedida” is an *apologia pro vita sua* where he defends his scholarship, sensibilities, and the passions animating his political project.

By explicitly aligning the *Mexi/Méxítl* of *México* to Christ and *mexicano* to a Christian subject,<sup>39</sup> Mier is neither secularizing Christianity nor folding it into a national identity; nor is he expressing the desire that the nation would only be saved under the auspices of the Catholic Church.<sup>40</sup> Rather the alignment is one of a nation composed by a nominally Christian people whose customs and predispositions are through centuries of Catholicism in the Americas, a nation where the apostles pass through and live on through the nation’s indigenous history. By inscribing the concept of messianic redemption into the *x* of Mexico, Mier continuously renders the various ways of presenting *México* as potentially infinite, insofar as the subject—of both the enunciation and the statement—and the points of passion remain in close proximity. Such a close proximity opens a discursive space between subjects for linguistic elements to do their work in a way that resonates with what Deleuze and Guattari mention about such as shifters, personal pronouns, and proper names are above all central for developing the redundancy that supports such intensifications.<sup>41</sup>

### *Space and Place, History and Heresy*

The specters of heresy and heterodoxy loomed over and haunted Mier from the beginnings of his career as a writer and preacher; those specters were more or less a permanent part of his

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discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation.” See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 61–62.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 128.

<sup>39</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, “Carta de Despedida,” 377.

<sup>40</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 590.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 133.

public life. His position as an untimely prophet and chaplain in the late insurgency kept him in close proximity to betrayal and treason. A government document from 1820 surveilling Mier's documents speaks to how the Crown regarded him as a threat to the social order of the Spanish empire. A title across the top of the document directly states the subject of the state's correspondence: *El Rebelde Apóstata Mier* [the Rebel Apostate Mier],<sup>42</sup> a traitor to the State and Church separated from his communities of origin. To the extent that the prophet is among the exemplary figures of a passionate, post-signifying regime that emphasizes betrayal as its abiding idea, Mier's alleged apostasies gesture to a betrayal on his part that is as treasonous as it is heretical.

Aspects of the "Carta de despedida" closely align with Jacques Rancière's comments on heresy in a context where the book functions as the body of revolutionary passion. In Rancière's telling, secular histories and their meaning emerge because heresy is an excess of speech that tears the formal boundaries and rules governing discourse that could sustain signification:

For heresy is the very essence of what the paperwork of the poor and the revolution of the children of the Book manifest. It is the excess of speech, the violence that comes through the book, about the book. If heresy tears apart the social body for questions of words, it is because it is first of all the very disturbance of the speaker: the disturbance of life seized by writing, of the life that is separated from itself, that turns against itself because of writing. Heresy is the life of meaning.<sup>43</sup>

Rancière's comments on how the spasms of heresy create disturbances, separations and betrayals do not only give a sense for the quality of the violence conveyed by the historian. Each of those symptoms manifest the principal capacity of heretical speech: its ability to open spatial rifts. Fray Servando's "Carta de despedida" corroborates Rancière's insights in several respects. Biographically, Mier's life was punctuated by feverish spells of writing, with the "Carta's" composition rounding out a six-month period where he was surrounded by deaths of fellow inmates and haunted by the possibility that he was being transported to Spain to meet an almost certain death by firing squad. In those six months he did little else than read, write, and correspond from the cells in the seaside fortress, a habit he had acquired over two decades of incarceration and exile.<sup>44</sup> Seized by writing while in captivity, Mier's baroque missive traffics in an excess of references to produce a history that sunders Christianity in the American continent from a subordination to a European source and origin. The heretical epistle regarding the letter *x* commits an act of insurgent violence against the order of the Spanish empire, writing a new history in order to place itself outside of the historical sequence marked by conquest and colonization.

Because of this emphasis on the spatial aspects of historical speech as heresy, the historian and the writer approach heretical speech differently. Historians direct heretical speech toward the

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<sup>42</sup> AGN, "GD60 Infidencias. Año: 1820-1829. Vol. 19, exp. 6." 1820, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, trans. Hasan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 67.

<sup>44</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 580.

tacit spatial and territorial references that the language makes visible.<sup>45</sup> Heretical speech deterritorializes spaces by removing historical connotations to create enough distance for new territorial possibilities to emerge: *México* or Mexico City. Deterritorialized and indeterminate spaces emerge provide the material conditions on which national and state articulations can graft themselves on to the surface of the proper name. Because Mier composes his history by assembling an excess of references and crossovers, his letter moves along a trajectory that displaces territorial relations and proposes a heterotopic space of passionate movement, a space whose name has an index of the messianic as its most conspicuous feature: *México* as the site where Christ is adored.

Swaths of space and time are principal points of departure for the “Carta de Despedida,” as they ground Mier’s argument concerning the meaning of the proper name *México* and the value of spelling it with the *x*. Recall that for Mier, it is in the names of places that traces of Aztec/Mexican languages had become sedimented into the historical unconscious and become available for topographical, statistical, and historical purposes.<sup>46</sup> Thus to recover an original sense for the language and variations in its spoken use, Mier’s opens his genealogy of *México* at the aftermath of the conquest of Mexico in 1521, in the precincts of the Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco. It is in this site of encounter between indigenous nobles and the Franciscan missionaries who had elicited from them the narratives, memories, histories, and elements of Mesoamerican cultures that, not unproblematically, provoked a sustained linguistic contact and spurred the project of transliterating Nahuatl speech into Latin script. Mier notes that almost immediately, and by dint of the arriving Spaniards’ Andalusian, Extremaduran, and Arabic socio-linguistic backgrounds, Spaniards and Aztecs came to use different phonemes for the same grapheme. In Mier’s reckoning, folding Nahuatl terms into the Spanish of the missionaries and the conquistadores resulted in creating guttural pronunciations for words whose source language did not have guttural phonetic elements.<sup>47</sup> For Mier, rendering the alveolar and velar consonants in Nahuatl (tz and the soft x, respectively) in Spanish by using the *x* phonetically as a voiceless glottal fricative /h/ threatens to consign the Nahuatl connotations of *México* to oblivion. This happens in spite of the irony that the English, French, Italian, and German languages, wittingly or not, preserve the Nahuatl pronunciation and reveal an embarrassing point in Mier’s estimation: that foreigners can pronounce the name of the *patria* better than Mexicans (Y es un dolor, mexicanos, que italianos, franceses, ingleses, y alemanes pronuncien mejor que nosotros el nombre de nuestra patria...).<sup>48</sup> Such an historical amnesia is not simply a source of wounded pride. Rather, to pronounce *México* with the /h/ amounts to transgressing principles concerning history and memory at the center of subject’s political allegiance to the nation: it betrays a profound historical lacuna and a lack of historical self-knowledge. Such a gesture would deprive the people of Anáhuac and México of the kind of historical knowledge held as a form of political and cultural capital that comes with the confidence of self-knowledge.

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<sup>45</sup> Rancière, *The Names of History*, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, “Carta de Despedida,” 377.

<sup>47</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 377.

<sup>48</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 377.

Mier seeks to remedy these transgressions by turning to a form of heretical speech-turned-historical discourse. Mier's heresy consists in positing the secular ages of the *anahuacense* or *mexicano*—pre-Columbian and colonial Novohispanic—as having a directly Christian provenance and marshaling a historical-philological argument that draws on linguistic affinities and their manifestations in spaces and times. Mier rapidly dispenses with the way that the term *México* makes reference to matters of space and place, citing the Jesuit Francisco Clavijero (with whom he disagrees vehemently on other historical and theological matters) in affirming that the ending *-co* in Nahuatl signifies “the place where” (*donde*), thus inlaying a spatial denotation into the signifier.

Dealing with the graphemic ending *-co* was Mier's simplest linguistic task, if only because *-co* serves a nominal, meta-spatial function. Mier's most intensive labors in the “Carta de despedida” involve the way he associates the *x* in *Mexi-* with the Christian messiah, so that he could define *México* as *donde está o (donde) es adorado Cristo...Mexî, o Méxîtl*. This philological move links *Mexî* with the term *Mesci*, which he posits is the Hebrew term signifying “anointed,” from which ‘messiah’ is derived.<sup>49</sup> He favors this remote linguistic association over the more proximate one, for in Nahuatl *Mexî* is more closely related to the term *Metl*, signifying the agave plant *maguey*, or *Metzi*, the Nahuatl word signifying moon or month. At least two reasons seem to motivate this gesture of downplaying the intralinguistic connections between *Mexî* and other Nahuatl signifiers. First, the pronunciation of the soft *x* in *scin* as deriving from Hebrew lends the term the theological value and archaic authority that in Mier's estimation supersedes Spain's authority to rule America. Next, this linguistic resemblance—charged with theological and religious values central to Spanish and Novohispanic Catholicism—allows him to justifiably make a plausible historical connection between the pre-Columbian Mesoamericans, the Hebrew language, and an evangelization of Mesoamerica predating the unjust and violent Spanish conquest.

The principal effect of this move is to establish a genealogical line in Christian history that places Anáhuac in an apostolic lineage, one that grants *México* an historical basis for articulating a primordial sovereignty that the Spanish usurped in the sixteenth century. The rhetoric of apostolic lineage is decisive in the context of how the Spanish Crown legitimized its connection to Catholicism, and cannot be overlooked, for it also preoccupied the framers of the insurgent constitutions from Morelos to Iturbide. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Spanish political thinkers and royalist legislators in the Courts Regent of Cádiz among others, turned to the history of early Christianity to litigate matters concerning the political authority of spiritual and temporal powers as well as the primordially Christian constitution of the “Spanish” people.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 377.

<sup>50</sup> Examples of works that deal extensively in the relationship of apostolic authority and Spanish sovereignty include Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, *Juicio imparcial sobre las letras en forma breve que ha publicado la Curia Romana...*, Madrid: en la Oficina de D. Joachin de Ibarra, 1769, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5315912112>, and Juan Sempere y Grainos, *Historia del derecho español*, Madrid: Impr. de la Sociedad Literaria y Topográfica, and *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence de la monarchie espagnole*. Regarding the role of the apostolic presence in Hispania in the evangelization of the Spaniards, see Juan E. Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección de Documentos Para La Historia de La Guerra de Independencia de Mexico de 1808 a 1821* (México: J. M. Sandoval, impresor, 1877), 428,



Prominently figuring in these debates are the relationships of the historical apostles to Spanish principalities and the role and limits of apostolic institutions the governance of the Spanish realms. Against this background and consistent with function of betrayal in postsignifying regimes of signs, Mier's gesture prefigures his more full-throated disavowal of the role that Spain has played in the Americas.

Mier dedicates a considerable portion of the "Carta de despedida" establishing an historical and geographic philology where signifiers can acquire historical weight and latch onto a concept or idea. Conversely, Mier weaves Mesoamerican terms for places into sacred history as a way to stress *México's* autochthonous religious significance, independent of Spain's evangelization in the sixteenth century. He recovers what he understands to be the pre-Columbian Mexican sense of the name *Mexî* or Christ by associating that already Hebraicized name with *other Nahuatl terms* that have connotations resonating with Christian tropes or conventions. Mier does this in the "Carta de despedida" when he re-codes Christ as *Mexî*, he recodes recognizably Christian tropes such as Jesus' Crown of Thorns and his Christ's position in the celestial order by associating them with two figures in the pre-Columbian pantheon, with *Teotlaloc* as the Lord of Paradise and *Teohuitznáhuac* as the Lord of the Crown of Thorns. According to Sahagun, as early as the 1500s, *Teohuitznáhuac* was the son of the Mexica Goddess Tonantzin, who was said to have conceived and given birth as a virgin, consistent with the Christian narrative of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. To further emphasize the equivalency between Tonantzín and the Virgin Mary, Mier refers to her with a syncretic name Santa Maria *Malintzin*.<sup>51</sup>

Not implausibly, Mier remediates *Tlaloc* in a similar vein; for Tlaloc, as Viviana Díaz Balsera remarks, was the subject of a Tlaxcalan *auto* or didactic evangelization play portraying the sacrifice of Abraham that Toribio de Motolinia recorded in his *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España*. The *auto*—or *neixcuitilli*—that in Motolinia's retelling took place in 1583 during the feast of Corpus Christi (the Body of Christ in the Eucharist), places Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac squarely in Nahuatl social and linguistic conventions. These *autos* render Abraham as a Nahuatl nobleman (*pilli*) and the Old Testament's Yahweh as Tlaloc—a god of rain and water whose ritual sacrifices of children Sahagún describes in his *Historia*—in the position of the god who demands the sacrifice of a child on a hilltop.<sup>52</sup> It is telling that Mier renders Tlaloc as God the Father in the Abrahamic tale and Huitzanáhuac as the Son in *Malintzín's* virgin conception and the birth of the Incarnate God. Such a drawing together of disparate, yet related elements

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<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000238974>.

<sup>51</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 378. Also see Victor W. Turner and Edith L. B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Columbia Classics in Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). For further commentary on the structural aspects of Mesoamerican cosmologies across the Mesoamerican pantheon, namely between Huitzanáhuac and Huitzilopochtli, see Katarzyna Mikulska, "Los Cielos los rumbos y los números. Aportes sobre la visión nahua del universo," in Ana Díaz, ed., *Cielos e inframundos: una revisión de las cosmologías mesoamericanas*, Primera edición, Serie antropológica / Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas 24 (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: Fideicomiso Felipe Teixidor y Monserrat Alfau de Teixidor, 2015), 153–54.

<sup>52</sup> See Viviana Díaz Balsera, "A Judeo-Christian Tlaloc or a Nahuatl Yahweh? Domination, Hybridity and Continuity in the Nahuatl Evangelization Theater," *Colonial Latin American Review* 10, no. 2 (December 1, 2001): 111, 114–17, 221–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10609160120093787>.

illustrates how Mier's discursive strategy depends upon the intermingling and mutual saturation of figures, symbols, and discourses to produce the emotionally resonant figures he needs to form a literary community, one whose passions form around the *x* as origin and authority.

Not content with relying on an ontological permeability between figures in the Mesoamerican and Christian pantheons, Mier narrates a history of how those equivalences became possible, telling the story of how the Apostle Thomas reached the shores of Mesoamerica. To do this, he refashions elements of his history of the Virgin of Guadalupe, most notably his history of the evangelization of Mesoamerica by Saint Thomas. Part of that evangelization involved transmitting the devotion of the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus Christ by instituting a set of practices and customs (378). For those practices and customs are the raw materials for articulating a viable Guadalupan tradition that can be reenacted and passed on across time and space, linking Mesoamerican life with primordial Christianity on one hand, and the Virgin of Guadalupe with the American insurgency on the other.<sup>53</sup>

While Mier frequently alludes to the historical sources of the Thomasine tradition elsewhere in his writings, the "Carta de despedida" gathers its argumentative force from a history that chronicles the tradition of pre-Columbian religious and devotional practices.<sup>54</sup> To this, he tells of a community devoted to Santa Maria *Malintzin*<sup>55</sup> in the name of Saint Thomas, a community that professed Christian vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Members of the community wore their hair in a manner that would emulate the previously-mentioned Crown of Thorns—*sénchon-huitznáhuac*—and served in the temple to the Lord of the Crown of Thorns [*huitznáhuac-teocalli*].<sup>56</sup> He also mentions two principal feasts that the Thomasine Marian community celebrated. The first is a Marian celebration held in February that presented young girls to the temple in memory of the Virgin Mary to symbolize the redemption of every first son (an allusion to the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus); also presented to the temple were blonde or light-haired children in the memory of the fair-haired Saint Thomas.<sup>57</sup> The gesture of

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<sup>53</sup> By extension, this helps understand some of the motives behind the formulations in the charters of independence and constitutions that refer to the apostolic character of the Mexico as Catholic.

<sup>54</sup> Mier elaborates significant elements of this history in his *Memorias* and *Cartas a Juan Batista Muñoz* from 1819 and *the Manifiesto Apologético* from 1821. Indeed, much of the "Carta de Despedida a los mexicanos" condenses historical elements that he extensively elaborates upon in his *Memorias*; Mier also reproduces and re-arranges paragraphs from the endnotes for *Manifiesto Apologético* and *Idea de la Constitución*.

<sup>55</sup> To those familiar with the mythologies of nationalism and patriotism in Mexican history, this particular reference seems anomalous and at best, ambiguous. For Malintzin is one of the names for Doña Marina or Malinali, the Nahuatl woman given as a slave to Hernán Cortés in 1519 and became a critical part of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, for she served as his principal interpreter in the events leading to the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521. She bore two children with Cortés. As a figure in Mexican lore and history, she is also known in as La Malinche. To this day, Malintzin remains a highly contested figure who has been derided as a scapegoat who betrayed the indigenous people and became a symbol of disloyalty. However, scholarship and criticism has sought to reassess and recover her legacy in history and myth. As to whether this gesture on Mier's was an attempt to recover or redeem Malinche from historical ignominy by associating her name with that of the lady of Guadalupe is unclear, but it warrants further consideration.

<sup>56</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 378.

<sup>57</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 378.

presenting children to the temple re-instantiates both the re-mediated sacrifices of Mesoamerican children to Tlaloc, the Mexica god of water whose ritual sacrifices were also re-coded as the rough equivalent to the God of the Old Testament. With these allusions, Mier creates a hybrid and syncretic mythology and theological history that can produce a continuity between Judaism, Apostolic Christianity, pre-Columbian Mesoamerican history, and the Anahuacan/Mexican insurgency.

The second festival, to which Mier devotes more of his attention in the “Carta de despedida,” is arguably more decisive than the first, as it contains gestures that speak more directly to aspects of the Guadalupan tradition attributed to St. Thomas in New Spain. It likewise emphasizes aspects of the Christian messianism that Mier infuses into the letter *x*. Mier writes that the festival, occurring during the winter solstice, which in the Tridentine liturgical calendar was also the feast day of Saint Thomas Apostle and took place in Tepeyac, the site outside of Mexico City where the Virgin of Guadalupe was said to appear to Juan Diego in the early 1500s. Moreover, Mier describes the offerings of devotees to *Tzenteotonantzin* (a written post-conquest Nahuatl term for the Mother of the True God), whose garb he describes in a manner familiar to devotees of the Virgin of Guadalupe: the girded white tunic and a star-bedecked aqua-turquoise cloak.<sup>58</sup> What is less familiar is the Nahuatl terminology that he claims derives from of the indigenous Marian tradition. Among these are the “manto azul verde-mar” he calls the *Matlalcueye*, the stars decorating the *manto*, he writes, are *Citlaqui*, and the tunic *Chalchihuitlicue* (with the ending *-litcue* being the Nahuatl term signifying tunic or skirt). Mier also grafts indigenous forms onto the Christian reference to style her honorific. Implying that her title in modern Spanish as the mother of all of people of the Americas follows from pre-Columbian indigenous devotions, Mier says that the pre-Spanish Guadalupans of Saint Thomas regarded *Tzenteotonantzin* to be the other of all the peoples of *Anáhuac*.<sup>59</sup>

Mier’s etymology of *Tzenteotonantzin* is but one part of the second devotion he cites as evidence to support the argument of the “Carta de despedida.” The Marian dimension of the second festival stands as the ground on which Mier transubstantiates the ancient territory of *Anáhuac* (what he now calls Nueva España, or New Spain) to *México*. Moreover, the line of transformation is simultaneously a passionate line, insofar as the structure of the transformations that the Catholic tradition narrates also affects changes the constitution of things: the incarnation of Christ in which the word is made flesh; the transfiguration of Jesus, the transubstantiation of the Eucharist, the Resurrection of Jesus, and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Theological tropes such as these provide paradigms for articulating aspects of secular life: the self, citizenship, society, and history, but in a way that did not sacralize political offices, social formations, and state hierarchies as such. Rather, these theological tropes are elements of a politico discourse that conceptualizes Mexico as a divinely ordained historical entity. They also articulate historical continuities in the face of political tumult and offer a common supposition of purpose and destiny.<sup>60</sup> They are commonplaces that political thought in New Spain and Mexico relies on

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<sup>58</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 378.

<sup>59</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 378.

<sup>60</sup> Brian F. Connaughton, “Conjuring the Body Politic from the Corpus Mysticum: The Post-Independent Pursuit of Public Opinion in Mexico, 1821-1854,” *The Americas* 55, no. 3 (January 1999): 478–79,

understand the processes of historical change and to grant those developments a sense of transcendence, greatness, and common destiny.

By extending the focus of divine favor from the Mother of God to her son, the Christian messiah, Mier's "Carta de despedida" transforms the emphasis of the symbolic politics of independence from the Virgin of Guadalupe as patroness of the insurgency and the American people to the messianic character of the nation to come. Mier connects the name *México* and its orthographic elements—especially the grapheme *x* as a shorthand for Christ—with a land blessed under divine auspices (Anáhuac). In Mier's analysis the names *Mexî* and *México* bear the mark of anointment signifying the messianic and historically redemptive core of Christianity. Mier draws on festivals and commemorations of the feast of *Mexî* to fashion a way of reading Mesoamerican paintings and hieroglyphs in terms of Christian symbolism (crosses and crucifixion scenes) and as well as the history of the tradition of Saint Thomas in the Indian Subcontinent, where the evangelizer Saint Thomas Apostle died and is buried. He also turns to the gestures that Torquemada in the sixteenth century attributed to pre-Columbian Mesoamerican communities, in which the Mexica called themselves Mexican in their travels from Aztlán because their god Huitzilopochtli commanded the Mexica to place an unguent on their faces, a gesture of anointing that Mier remarks is consistent with the messianic character of Christianity and Jesus Christ. Thus, Mier's discourse aims to redeem *México* as an object of divine approbation deserving of its own history. Likewise, Mier seeks to make *México* and its orthographic focal point—*x*— source of a transcendent passions in the life of the Mexican.

To further cement the historical significance of the messianism borne by the *x*, Mier's historical philology establishes a politics of linguistic and historical affinity. This political form relies on the resemblances between similar-looking or similar-sounding signifiers in different languages to operate as vehicles for carrying over political and historical symbolisms from one linguistic-cultural formation to another. By asserting that Nahuatl does not contain the phoneme /r/, thus making it difficult for pre-Columbian Mesoamericans to pronounce the word *Cristo*, Mier posits that Thomasite priests baptized indigenous Americans by reciting the doxology of the Trinity in Hebrew, as was the liturgical practice of Thomasite Christian communities in the East.<sup>61</sup> Such a gesture grounds the inference that the second person of the Trinity (Christ) would be referred to as *Mesci*. This (un-)witting use of the language transfers the conception of Christ into the Nahuatl system of signification. In this instance, the language used in the rite of initiation into a Christian community spills out into the everyday use of language, most especially in consecrating things and places by virtue of their names.

Mier's history of *México* as a toponym unfolds along these lines of transmission-through-overlap in the "Carta de despedida," with the Thomasite Christians playing a central role. He narrates that the Thomasite Christians, the community in whose name Mier connected with Quetzalcoatl in his 1794 Sermon on the Virgin of Guadalupe, as those that Huemac the King of Tula persecuted and who would come to found *México-Tenochtitlan* as the capital of the Aztec

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<https://doi.org/10.2307/1007650>. Furthermore, connecting conceptions of divine grace and passions in theologies operative New Spain/Mexico more fulsomely requires a genealogy of passion and the sources/media of its articulation.

<sup>61</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 379.

empire. Mier draws a nexus between Saint Thomas as *Quetzalcoatl*, the site at the edge of Lake Texcoco where they took refuge (Anáhuac), and the island city on that lake where they found cactus growing atop a small hill (Tenochtitlan) on which the Metropolitan Cathedral currently stands in Mexico City. In these social, political, and spatial conditions, Mier claims that the refugees-turned settlers gave the name *México* to a grouping of neighborhoods on the island and the surrounding lakeside region. At the urging of the communities' leaders, the swath of territories and jurisdictions became suffused with the name *México*, effectively establishing that area as one where Christ is revered. This echelon of Thomasite leadership would help propel the political growth of *México-Tenochtitlan* from republic to a kingdom and from a kingdom into an empire. As to this question of political leadership as being composed of Thomasite bishops, Mier turns to the accepted Spanish-language chronicles by citing Torquemada's history of *México-Tenochtitlan* in his *Monarquía Indiana*.<sup>62</sup>

A stunning hybridity and intermingling of elements characterize the two paragraphs in the "Carta de despedida" where Mier portrays the historical, political, theological, and linguistic sources that inform the meaning of a community's rituals. This elaborate mechanism at the heart of the "Carta de despedida" and its arguments gesture to the ways that a semiotic form centering on generating passions and forming subjects draws on the excesses and redundancies attendant to heretical speech. Its multiplicity of discourses, historical references, political aspirations, and religious sentiments create a baroque exorbitance. By investing this multiplicity in an historical and geographical space of reference whose name is spelled in *one specific way*, the "Carta de despedida" over-saturates the field of discourse to allow the name to engender, transmit, and intensify passions. It renders the emerging subject's body a signifier referencing the name *México*, which is itself a signifier. The body of the subject and the lettered body of the name converge on a way of becoming a subject resonant with a concept. In turn, that apostolic genealogy constructs the concept by re-signifying the archaic sources of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican life and civilization as primordially Christian.

Creolizing the indigenous past by Christianizing it, Mier offends a chauvinistic Hispanist sensibility that attaches pride to violent conquest, evangelization, colonization, and the imposition of the Spanish language and its signifying regime. It also threatens to scramble the mixed semiotic regimes preserving the linguistic and social traditions of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.<sup>63</sup> Conversely, Mier injects transcribed elements of Nahuatl into the Spanish

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<sup>62</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, 379. While not as present in the "Carta de despedida," the role of Quetzalcoatl in the development of a Nahua-Christian history through the work of Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl is important to mention. For Ixtlilxochitl's re-casting of Quetzalcoatl feeds into Mier's conception of Mesoamerican history and his history of the Virgin of Guadalupe. For an appraisal of Alva Ixtlilxochitl's role in elaborating the place of Quetzalcoatl, see Leisa A. Kauffmann, *The Legacy of Rulership in Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Historia de La Nación Chichimeca* (University of New Mexico Press, 2019), <http://muse.jhu.edu/book/65911/>.

<sup>63</sup> We must be mindful of Rabasa's warning about reducing pre-Columbian and post-conquest indigenous forms of expression so as to overdetermine and misunderstand their specificity: "And yet we should not reduce subalternity to some kind of privileged perspective on power and oppositional consciousness. Equally dangerous, as Spivak has pointed out, are Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's transparency when they argue that subalterns "know far better than [the intellectual] and they certainly say it very well." See José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 21.

language for counter-signifying uses against the Spanish Empire and into a new signifying semiotic that will bring into its fold a national language with vestigial elements of Nahuatl. This gesture of independence will also be instrumental in forming the Mexican state. This alternating dispossession and repossession configure the creole as the steward of an indigenous patrimony already invested in the national space. Yet this anti-imperial stance also presumes a problematic gesture of transformation and appropriation of an indigenous past by post-conquest creoles and mestizos, like Sigüenza y Góngora and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Eguiara y Eguren, who among others were responsible for forming the elements of a distinctly Novohispanic archive.

### *Conclusion*

Although Mier would ship out for Spain from San Juan de Ulúa via Havana in February 1821, the “Carta de despedida” had reached two of his correspondents and political co-conspirators, the political polymath Carlos María de Bustamante and the tenacious General Guadalupe Victoria.<sup>64</sup> Their intervention made possible the publication of two runs of the “Carta de despedida” *de despedida* in Mexico City and another run in Guadalajara. With the assistance of Mier’s nephew in Puebla, the Franciscan friar Juan de Quatemoctzin Rosillo de Mier, the “Carta de despedida” appeared in that city, which was the largest between Veracruz and Mexico City. Before departing, he urged Bustamante and Victoria to publish the “Carta de despedida” before any of the other political pamphlets he wrote from the coastal fortification, convinced, according to Bustamante, that biblical legends resonated better than weapons and that the apostolic heritage of Mexico was more valuable than any political plan or pamphlet in Spanish America.<sup>65</sup>

The “Carta de despedida” marks neither Mier’s last intervention in the politics of the Mexican nation nor the last piece of prophetic rhetoric he composes and delivers. After contracting an illness while detained in Havana, Mier escapes the hospital of Saint Ambrose on May 31, 1821, with the aid of the secret societies of Spanish American independentists who procured Mier a passport under the pseudonym Don Mariano Cosío. Bound for Baltimore, he ultimately spends the remainder of 1821 and the beginning of 1822 in the United States, residing in Philadelphia and New York with the help of Spanish American compatriots who were part of a trans-American political network extending from Philadelphia to Caracas, such as the Greater Colombian diplomat and activist Manuel Torres.<sup>66</sup> While in this phase of exile, events were quickly moving in the direction of Mexican independence. The royalist general-turned-conciliating liberator, Agustín de Iturbide, proposed the Plan de Iguala in February of 1821 and reached a treaty in August of 1821 with the Spanish Captain-General Juan O’Donojú in Córdoba,

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<sup>64</sup> Both were key figures connected with the early phases of the Novohispanic insurgency and by 1821 were weathering out the absolutist restoration of 1814-1820 with an eye toward consummating Mexican independence.

<sup>65</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 591. Curiously enough, in what is an otherwise exhaustively attributed work, this allusion to Bustamante remains uncited in Domínguez-Michael’s biography. Nor does a reference to Bustamante’s *Cuadro historico* appear in any of the chapter’s notes. Tracking down this statement has proven very difficult and next to impossible. Thus, at best, this rather plausible and compelling statement remains hearsay, yet tantalizing, nonetheless.

<sup>66</sup> Domínguez Michael, 594.

which called for the independent nation to be called the Mexican Empire, [*Imperio mexicano*].<sup>67</sup> Keeping tabs on these developments, Mier continued writing, agitating, and plotting his return to Mexican shores amid news that the first Mexican Congress would convene and that his birth city of Monterrey was eager to elect him as Nuevo León's representative in that Congress.

Mier returned to Veracruz in February of 1822, only to be detained in San Juan de Ulúa for a third and final time. During this period, Iturbide was consolidating different segments of the Mexican population—clergy, aristocracy, army, and commoners—under the banner of three guarantees that would stand to unite erstwhile royalists and insurgents in a national cause, under a form of constitutional monarchy. Mier, on the other hand had returned from the United States with increasing republican fervor and putting him on a collision course with Iturbide's pretensions to rule Mexico as an emperor. This final stay in San Juan de Ulúa would last only until May 21, when Iturbide proclaimed himself emperor of Mexico and his jailer, José Dávila, a general with Bourbonist sympathies who was likewise antipathetic toward Iturbide, released him. Mier went promptly to Puebla to rest before heading to Mexico City.<sup>68</sup> Mexican independence had been declared formally on September 28, 1822, in the name of *la nación mexicana*; yet his political struggles were not over. Mier would take his fights to a new venue, with different issues to be contested, namely, the form of government that the Mexican state would assume. It was a form that neither contemplated nor countenance the presence of a monarch, much less an emperor, and Mier would agitate for Iturbide's removal and execution. In 1823 and 1824, Mier carried out his legislative duties, with two speeches of his standing out for its relationship to the very concept of *México*: the *Discurso de las profecías*, in which he warned his colleagues about the dangers to the nation associated with establishing a federal system with a weak central government; and his paean to Mexico City, *Discurso en pro de que México sea ciudad federal*, where he advocates for Mexico City to house the seat of the new federal government.

So as to not get too far ahead, let us return to the moment of "Carta's" dissemination; it comes into circulation at a threshold in the political history of Northern America, a threshold straddling three hundred years of colonial subjection to the Spanish Crown and an uncertain horizon of nationhood and its political forms. Upon creating a discourse that is as at home in the archaic traditions of Greco-Roman and Christian antiquity as it is in the Spanish American colonial archive, and the political philosophies of modernity, Mier, invents a quasi-Christian history around indigenous language and history whose elements a politics of the Mexican nation can coalesce around. This allows Mier to appeal to a society composed of multiple groups that have been classified according to notions of caste, race, ethnicity, and social standing in Northern Spanish America. Of course, the history of the concept of *México* that Mier composes is one that accomplishes a broader political objective of elaborating a history that does not hinge on Spain's

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<sup>67</sup> Ernesto de la Torre Villar, "Tratados de Córdoba," in *La independencia de México*, 2. reimpr, Sección de Obras de Historia (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica [u.a.], 1995), 278.

<sup>68</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 614–15. Mier was not yet free from detention, for in August of 1822, Iturbide detained Mier along with fifteen other Congressmen who were forming an anti-Iturbidist faction in the Congress. Iturbide sent Mier to the monastery of Saint Dominic in Mexico City, where he had lived and worked. Upon escaping the monastery in 1823, he was apprehended yet again, only to be sent to the cells of the Court jail and finally, to the old palace of the Inquisition. His final detention, from which he would be liberated by rebel forces on February 23, 1823, ironically took place in the space that he called an archive.

conquest and colonization to assert Mexico's standing on the world stage.

This chapter began by posing a set of questions: what role does Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos" play in forming a concept of Mexico? Which variables does this conception encompass? On what grounds does Mier establish his argument? What material effects do Mier's "Carta de despedida" and its conception of Mexico seek to accomplish? Finally, what are the discursive and psychic mechanisms at work in the "Carta de despedida"? To reiterate, allowing that arguments conceiving *México* may exist in the documentary record, the "Carta de despedida" is among the few attempts at explicitly deriving a concept of *México* during this critical historical juncture. Mier forges a concept with a temporal horizon that poses a quasi-secular future, yet no less grounded in a history of Christian evangelization that resonates with the religious sentiments of a people whose lives were profoundly shaped by Catholicism. In terms of doing and undoing the ways that spaces become territories, the concept of *México* found in Mier's "Carta de despedida" dislodges the localized sense of *México* as an urban territory and expands the name's spatial connotation beyond its sense as a local toponym. By attaching messianic connotations to *México*, the "Carta de despedida" consecrates the name of a national territory to come.

A principal implication of reading Mier's "Carta de despedida" as a form of post-signifying writing that extends beyond the limits of language to signify a concept is that reading becomes a quasi-liturgical act. Reading for the sake of becoming-Mexican is liturgical in the sense of the liturgy as a public work or service to the community, in this case the community seen as *la nación mexicana*. However, reading the "Carta de despedida" is not liturgical in the sense that a liturgy understood as a cultic rite of celebration and consecration presided over by a priest in a public ceremony.<sup>69</sup> Having just alluded to the powers of messianism to effect historical, social, and political changes, the other form of passion pertains to a disposition for how language works and functions with respect to history. For Mier, however erroneously or subject to degradation and forgetting, linguistic signs are susceptible to being conditioned by historical and even political forces, for recall that in the case of names Mier is forthright: the people are the arbiter of names. These two commitments play out in an interpretive context that recognizes the ways that language can operate in ways that extend beyond signification, where language produces effects on the subjects who stand to read the letter as a prophecy that, by encountering the face of a messiah lodged in the letter *x*, the reader/listener and writer/speaker alike undergo an imperceptible self-transformation on the order of a political conversion capable of changing sentiments, affects, devotions, and fidelities.

Consistent with the way the "Carta de despedida" uses language to accomplish extra-linguistic ends, it is a document saturated with a form of excessive speech that pushes the boundaries of orthodox theological opinion and to marshal an intense proximity between Mier and his readers. By attending to discursive-poetic mechanisms of heretical speech that subtend modern historical writing, this chapter discerned that it allows Mier to argue that creole and indigenous sources are decisive for elaborating a Mexican history that could ground political independence. Including those sources has a political value, for Mier's new history aims at establishing the precedent of a messianic *México* that predates, and is independent of, the Spanish empire.

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<sup>69</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Opus Dei: an archaeology of duty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 3-6.



By beginning near the end of our story, the reasons why the “Carta de despedida” matters so much to the present inquiry on the concept of *México* come into sharper relief. The “Carta de despedida” is one of the few extant documents of the period that take up the extremely daunting task of forming a concept by inquiring into the history of a proper name. Practically, Mier straddles both the heights of the Bourbon reforms, the struggle for independence, and the ascension of Mexico into a new nation, which places him as part of both the old and the new, as a chronicler and instigator of the broader political and historical changes afoot. In the next chapter, we will turn our gaze backward to the era of the Bourbon reforms in New Spain, with the purpose of attending to the regimentation of discourse and a way of thinking that Mier’s “Carta de despedida” simultaneously employs and aims to upend. It will also analyze ill-fated attempts by creole intellectuals to articulate cases for ideas of *México* and associated concepts. For these early attempts sought to persuade a Spanish Crown that was indifferent to the political situation of its colonial subjects and otherwise threatened by productions that it saw as questioning the prevailing economic, political, and social order. The Spanish Crown’s governing apparatuses did not look kindly on such incursions, now would it hesitate to use the formidable powers of the State to either absorb, smother, or crush those attempts.

## Chapter 2

### Ideas of México in the Discourses of the Bourbon Era (c. 1740-1808)

#### *Introduction: Reforms to Spanish Government and Historical Change in New Spain during the Late Eighteenth Century*

If there was an underlying commonality to the Kingdom of New Spain that Mier encountered before his extradition to Spain in 1795 and his return twenty-two years later in 1817, it was the persistence of a monarchical regime headed by Spanish Monarchs of the House of Borbón-Anjou, the cadet branch of the French House of Bourbon. Under the rule of six monarchs beginning in 1700 and extending throughout the eighteenth century, Spain cumulatively underwent transformations to its geography, economy, society, government, and administration. Changes on the Iberian Peninsula began the House of Bourbon's negotiated occupancy of a Spanish throne left vacant by the death of Charles II, the last Habsburg Emperor, in 1700. The ascension of Felipe V—Louis XIV's grandson—to the Spanish monarchy in 1700 augured a fourteen-year war of succession that brought the relatively autonomous Kingdom of Aragon under the control of the Bourbon house and flooded Madrid with French administrators and ambassadors.<sup>1</sup> Felipe V mounted a campaign to attenuate the long-standing Aragonese political and economic privileges that had previously checked pressures from the Kingdom of Castile. The Crown of Castile removed political and economic exemptions that provided for home rule, or *fueros*, from the Aragonese and Valencian Crowns.<sup>2</sup> Localized juridical bodies in Spain's other kingdoms—the legislative *Consejos* (councils) and administrative *Cortes*—were shut down and their members summoned to the Castilian Court in Madrid to affirm their fidelity to the Bourbon crown and ratify royal decrees.<sup>3</sup>

Once Felipe had sufficiently consolidated his rule and secured the throne, his ministers and advisors prompted him to establish permanent armed forces on land and sea as a way to garrison peninsular fortresses, secure provinces, and take part in foreign expeditions.<sup>6</sup> Felipe V also established a campaign to colonize the interior territories of the Iberian Peninsula as a way to stimulate Spain's domestic economy, in part by creating new jurisdictional units and territories

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 440-441.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco Aguilar Piñal remarks in his primer on eighteenth-century Spain, "The 'Crown of Spain' did not exist in legal terms until the pragmatic sanction of Felipe V given in Madrid on 10 May 1715." See *Francisco Aguilar Piñal and Ricardo de la Fuente, eds., Historia de La Literatura Española, vol. 25, Introducción al Siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Ed. Júcar, 1991), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 11-12.

called intendancies, on the model of the French system in 1711. These intendancies were designed to exert greater military and political control over naval and military activity, mostly in the ten larger cities of the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>7</sup> They were also created with at least three principal aims in mind: to consolidate the territories of the Peninsula under the rule of the Bourbons against the British, Dutch, and Austrians during the War of Succession, exert greater control over tax revenues in the Castilian and Aragonese reigns to finance and wage war, and to recover century saw the emergence of a state apparatus whose character Rafael Torres Sánchez describes as fiscal-military, where military forces managed state monopoly concerns, harvested taxes, directed collected revenues to the Treasury, and transferred those revenues from the colonies to Spain.<sup>4</sup>

Next to the control of political interests, the Crown regarded wealth as a source of power and legitimacy to the aristocracies within its jurisdiction and to its French, English, and Dutch rivals on the geopolitical and commercial stages. Economic affairs were thus central to the Bourbon monarchy's considerations. Amidst military campaigns and administrative changes taking place were interventions on the part of Felipe's government to stabilize economic conditions in the peninsula by regulating and standardizing currency to help get prices under control. The Crown's interventions into the economy were possible on account of a protracted project of governance that envisioned the adoption of new practices for the Crown to accumulate wealth, such as free trade and the introduction of direct taxation. The economic exigency to trade brought American colonies into the broader political considerations of the Spanish Empire under Bourbon rule, as gold and silver bullion were being extracted from mines in the viceroyalties of New Spain, Peru, and New Granada and were being sent to the Spanish port of Cadiz to be re-exported to Europe and Asia.

By 1739, the Spanish Bourbon Monarchy had centralized its administrative structure and stabilized its rule on the Iberian Peninsula. These changes which did not only effect the mother country on the continent, they also created decisive changes on its overseas territories in the Americas and the Spanish East Indies during the second half of the century. This consolidation of the Spanish Crown's administrative apparatus allowed the monarchy to focus its attention on achieving a similar consolidation of power overseas by reforming governmental bodies, introducing a similar fiscal-military regime, and directing the wealth accumulated abroad back to Spain more efficiently.<sup>5</sup> To accomplish these economic goals of producing wealth to capture and send back to the Peninsula, the Crown sought to impose governmental and social controls the help stimulate the economic growth.<sup>6</sup>

On the Peninsula and overseas, the Spanish Crown's changes to the apparatus of government turned on three distinct axes: economic government (*gobierno económico*), fiscalized administration, and military regimentation. While not promulgated in New Spain until

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<sup>4</sup> Rafael Torres Sánchez, *Constructing a Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-Century Spain*, trans. by Dave Langlois (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Brian R. Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico*, Third edition, Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 145–46.

<sup>6</sup> Martínez Baracs, "Los Indios de México y La Modernización Borbónica," 358.; Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, 7, 11.

1786, the *Real Ordenanza para el establecimiento é instruccion de Intendentes de ejército y provincia en el Reino de la Nueva-España* (Royal Ordinance for the establishment and instructions of military and provincial Intendents in the Kingdom of New Spain) gathered the changes already occurring for several decades and promulgated these changes as the Spanish Crown's policy. That Royal Ordinance organized its activities under four major headings: Hacienda (Treasury), Policía (Police), Justicia (Justice), and Guerra (War), with each of these domains of fiscal-military rule attending to some aspect of economic government, fiscalized administration, and militarization.

The Spanish project of economic governance mobilized the heft of the state to impose wholesale changes onto previously existing institutions and if need be, interfering, bypassing, or dislodging long-established political relationships in major political and economic centers such as Mexico City. Liberalizing Spanish American trade would take place abruptly, as Alan Knight remarks as he distills how these economic changes played out,

...Spanish economic policy involved extensive state intervention, and political modernization demanded a revolution from above. The Bourbons took upon themselves the paradoxical task of pounding civil society into an acceptance of *laissez-faire* capitalism and rational-legal political authority. Their subjects would be forced to be economically free, handcuffed into an acceptance of centralized state authority...it was risky and riddled with contradictions, the more so when it was implemented in a colonial context.<sup>7</sup>

Imposing a vision for governing the economy would happen with the blunt instruments of the state's powers to monopolize commodities such as tobacco, paper, sulfur, and mercury, as well as its abilities to capture and create markets for commerce between Spain and its many colonies.<sup>8</sup>

The Crown's ambitions for economic government found expression in a text attributed to José de Campillo y Cosío and purportedly composed in 1743, which went by the title, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico para la América* (New System of Economic Governance for America). Much of Campillo's text appeared in Bernardo Ward's widely read *Proyecto Económico* in 1762, which was widely circulated and discussed among government officials and merchants alike.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Knight, *Mexico: The Colonial Era* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, N.Y., USA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 249.

<sup>8</sup> Allan J. Kuethe, "Carlos III, absolutismo ilustrado e imperio americano," in *Soldados del rey: el ejército borbónico en América colonial en vísperas de la independencia*, ed. Allan J. Kuethe and Juan Marchena Fernández (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2005), 26.

<sup>9</sup> The question of the authorship and composition of *the Nuevo Sistema* makes for a fascinating, if important debate in the intellectual history of the eighteenth century. While a considerable amount of scholarship speaks to the prominence of Campillo's text, Horst Pietschmann and Luís Navarro García's investigations lend weight to the idea that Campillo himself did not write the text, even though it was circulated and discussed widely in the "Sociedades Económicas." The importance of the *Nuevo Sistema* cannot be understated, especially since much of the text of the *Nuevo Sistema* appeared in Ward's *Proyecto Económico*, which Pietschmann notes was the most widely read economic work in Spain during the late eighteenth century. See Horst Pietschmann, "Justicia, Discurso Político y Reformismo Borbónico," in *Acomodos políticos, mentalidades y vías de cambio: México en el marco de la monarquía hispana*, ed. José Enrique Covarrubias and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, Primera edición, Antologías (Ciudad de México: El Colegio de México, 2016), 177.; Luís Navarro García, "Campillo y El Nuevo Sistema: Una Atribución Dudosa," *Temas Americanistas*, no. 2 (1983): 67–84; and Luís Navarro García, "El Falso Campillo y El Reformismo Borbónico," *Temas Americanistas*, no. 12 (1995): 10–31.

In the arena of political government, the Crown labored to compel the compliance of its functionaries to support the development of a mixed mercantile-capitalist economy, even if that meant working around or suppressing Viceroy and other governing bodies such as the local cabildos and ayuntamientos that were often in the hands of creoles who were largely restricted from obtaining higher office. From the 1760s onward, the Crown's program of reforming colonial governance and administration in New Spain gathered momentum, with Charles III appointing José de Galvéz the Visitor General of the Indies in 1765. In his visit to New Spain, Galvéz conducted an extensive audit of the colonial administrative apparatus, delivering to the Novohispanic Viceroy, D. Antonio Bucareli y Ursua an *Informe General* in 1771.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of the *Informe*, Galvéz recounts his tasks of expelling the Jesuit order in 1767, brutally suppressing uprisings, establishing military intendencias, and sketching out what he understood to be the principal reforms that needed to be taken in New Spain to capture and control institutions that would generate income to the Royal Treasury. These included: reevaluating and creating a strategy for dealing with the local courts and legislatures, changing the structure of the Royal Treasury to process and coin bullion more efficiently, assuming military command of the Interior Provinces once administered by the Jesuits, capturing and assuming greater control of the accountancies of local properties and means, and implementing the plan to create the system of provincial intendencias that would integrate and systematize the other efforts.<sup>11</sup> Beside outlining the general structure of the reforms to be carried out, Galvéz's *Informe* also exhibits the tendencies of the Bourbon government to intensively bureaucratize and rationalize operations. It likewise displays the increasingly militarized, fiscalized and bureaucratic tone of discourse that typified the projects of imperial governance in the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

The political composition and financial management of ecclesiastic institutions, as well as the character of popular religious expression did not escape the reforms' tendrils.<sup>13</sup> The Bourbon regime carried out a program of politicized anticlericalism that easily dispensed with clerics who did not support or align with the political and social priorities of the Bourbon regime. As Alan Knight remarks, "their aim was not to eradicate Catholicism, but to clip the Church's wings and

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<sup>10</sup> Interesting to note is the usage of the honorific "Frey" by Galvéz to address his fellow military officer. A term for 'brother' typically used for referring to mendicant Friars, this usage suggests that the military borrowed the terms of affection amongst members of the religious order to refer to a comrade in arms. It speaks to the prominence and sway that the military had acquired during the era of the Bourbon reforms.

<sup>11</sup> José de Galvéz, *Informe general que el Excmo. Sr. Marqués de Sonora siendo Visitador General de este reyno al Excmo. Sr. Virrey Frey D. Antonio Bucarely y Ursua, con fecha de 31 de diciembre de 1771. Se arregló y enquadernó siendo Secretario del Virreynato el Coronel de Dragones Antonio Bonilla*, ed. México (México: Imprenta de Santiago White, 1867), 6–7, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x030366280>.

<sup>12</sup> Bernardo García Martínez, "La época colonial hasta 1760," in *Nueva historia mínima de México*, ed. Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo, Bernardo García Martínez, and Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1. ed., segunda reimpr., (México, D.F: Colegio de México, 2005), 105.

<sup>13</sup> John Lynch, "The Expulsion of the Jesuits and the Late Colonial Period," in *The Cambridge History of Religions in Latin America*, ed. Virginia Garrard, Paul Freston, and Stephen C. Dove (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 227.

make it sing in harmony with secular policy.”<sup>14</sup> The regime lifted legal exemptions that clerics had previously enjoyed under Habsburg rule. It also, expelled religious orders, secularized parishes, and put churches in the hands of secular priests with ties to the governing structure. In terms of the Church’s governmental authority, the Bourbon state curtailed the capacities of Church courts to mete out punishment. Likewise, the regime regulated and surveilled more intensively acts of religious faith and devotion, curtailing popular fiestas, granting parents greater control of their children’s rearing and education, and more tightly circumscribing everyday aspects of religious life, such as marriages, missionary work, popular recreation, and official ceremony.<sup>15</sup>

In this new world of administration and programmed governance from above Crown officials increasingly understood themselves as having the authority to impose onerous measures on the Crown’s Novohispanic subjects so long as they met the Crown’s economic and political aims.<sup>16</sup> The implementation of the policies of an enlightened despotism produced a mood in a Novohispanic culture and society that Esteban Sánchez de Tagle describes as being afflicted by a “rationalizing contagion.” Though decades in the making, Bourbon New Spain created a precarious, unstable, and increasingly regimented world, one in which a several forces simultaneously passed through the bodies and psyches of this world’s inhabitants. He remarks:

The world lived through an arbitrary remodeling. Some viceroys tried to seize the street as a private jurisdictional space of the superior government. The streets of the Old Regime, finally, made for a bristling environment and was intersected in a thousand ways by different jurisdictions, privileges, rights of the most diverse social entities, and ancestral uses. In the streets public ceremony was made manifest; it was marketed, and made to labor, expressing the view of a world shaped by its customary traditions. An astonished world that would see the authoritarian irruption of an aseptically administrative entity, that when situated, was unusually determined to submit the world’s logics and uses to its caprices, without possible discussion. It was the unrestricted behavior of an entity that, by pretending to behave as merely administrative, exercised power without accepting or abiding by the old order. An entity that did not want to recognize the privileges of the multiple bodies that lived on the street and ran over them. It treated the city hall pretextually as a mere apparatus, as if it were a subordinate office.<sup>17</sup>

Sánchez de Tagle’s remarks indicate a world created by the Bourbon reforms that was administered and controlled, although one where the exercise of state power could befall anybody at any time. One important example of how changes in governing economy and society in during

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<sup>14</sup> Knight, *Mexico*, 263.

<sup>15</sup> Knight, 265. Also see Clara García Ayuardo, “Re-Formar La Iglesia Novohispana,” in *Las Reformas Borbónicas, 1750-1808*, ed. Clara García Ayuardo, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Historia. Serie Historia Crítica de Las Modernizaciones en México, (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 225–84.

<sup>16</sup> Esteban Sánchez de Tagle, “Las Reformas Del Siglo XVIII al Gobierno; La Ciudad, Su Hacienda, Su Policía, Su Ejército,” in *Las Reformas Borbónicas, 1750-1808*, ed. Clara García Ayuardo, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Historia. Serie Historia Crítica de Las Modernizaciones En México 1 (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 217.

<sup>17</sup> Sánchez de Tagle, “Las Reformas Del Siglo XVIII al Gobierno,” 207–208. “

this time in New Spain is in the ways that, in spite of the government's attempts to include all segments of the Novohispanic population, indigenous communities experienced demographic stagnation and material impoverishment, while the populations and wealth of non-indigenous populations in New Spain grew considerably. This disparity created a state of endemic social and economic inequality.<sup>18</sup> Increasing economic scarcity in the countryside set off waves of indigenous migration to Mexico City, which was already feeling the strong undercurrent of poverty among most of the City's population. Popular classes responded by means of economic resistance, negotiated labor, fiscal evasion, self-consumption, communitarian organization of economy and social life.<sup>19</sup> The introduction of a broad police measures (policía) in the social and economic life of New Spain further complicated and intensified political economic relations and became a powerful mechanism of state pedagogy, social control, and moral hygiene.<sup>20</sup> This newly-developed apparatus would, in Voekel's terms, "police the poor and define the social boundaries between [the poor and the elites]...[and] fabricate the internally regulated individual."<sup>21</sup>

The Bourbon monarchy's intensified efforts to integrate economic considerations as central to governing, change the ways that it governed, and use administrative and fiscal instruments to govern produced sweeping changes in Novohispanic economy, society, and everyday life. Historians' characterizations of the era speak to the extent of changes taking place during the reign of Bourbon monarchs, with David Brading calling the reforms "a revolution in government."<sup>22</sup> Serge Gruzinski called the era of "a second acculturation" in the history of religion, while Nancy Farris stated that the reforms brought on a "second conquest" of the Mayas. Other descriptions of the era include those of Felipe Castro Gutierrez ("a kind of recolonization"), Bolívar Echeverría (a "second shock" of modernization), and John Lynch (a bureaucratic conquest of America that sought to control the creoles).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Martínez Baracs, "Los Indios de México y La Modernización Borbónica," 36–37.

<sup>19</sup> Martínez Baracs, 80–81.

<sup>20</sup> Omar Guerrero's extensive study on the Bourbon sources of the post-independence national state draws a genealogy of the concept of policía from its earliest manifestations in the seventeenth century conceptions of police relative to the razón de Estado, to emergence of the police apparatus in Portugal and Spain, as well as Turgot's administration of the police state in Louis XIV's France. Guerrero also discusses Bourbon Spanish tracts on the police and Novohispanic debates on policía from the 1780s onward. This genealogy of the Novohispanic "Estado de policía" includes Campillo's definition of policía's economic functions as arranging the elements—social, laboral, institutional, and political—needed to procure the common benefit and profit. See Omar Guerrero, *Las Raíces Borbónicas Del Estado Mexicano*, 1. ed (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 1994), 15–16, 54–64, 128–33.

<sup>21</sup> Pamela Voekel, "Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to the Bourbon Reforms in Mexico City," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, no. 2 (1992): 192, 184, 186.

<sup>22</sup> David A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 10 (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1971), 25, 26. Also see Leslie Bethell and David A. Brading, eds., "Bourbon Spain and Its American Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 397–409.

<sup>23</sup> Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, "Los Indios de México y La Modernización Borbónica," in ed. Clara García Ayuardo, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Historia. Serie Historia Crítica de Las Modernizaciones En México 1 (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 34.; John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, 2nd ed,

Amid the welter of changes to the life and character of Novohispanic society, how did the term *México* appear in discourse? Returning to Mier's project of forming a concept of *México* in the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos," what were the some of the antecedent ideas of *México* that Mier was constructing a concept out of? What kinds of ideas about *México* did Mier contest and reformulate in the "Carta de despedida"? Recall that before returning to New Spain in 1817, Mier closely followed the unfolding of the insurgency from Europe, only then to play a minor, if unsuccessful, role. These questions about the sources that Mier draws on to assemble a concept of *México* in the "Carta de despedida" also apply in a broader context regarding the general climate of politics and thought that led up to the Novohispanic insurgency's emergence in 1810. That is to say, while Mier's "Carta de despedida" was a rupture from previously held ideas of *México*, it did not happen out of the blue. Thus, to explore the ways that *México* appeared in discourse during the time period preceding the Novohispanic insurgency and Mexican independence, this chapter will pose the following questions: Which ideas of *México* emerged and circulated in the Spanish and Novohispanic world during the late eighteenth century? In response to these questions, this chapter argues that during the late eighteenth linguistic articulation of ideas of *México* fell along two general ways of using or treating the same language. One is major use of language that assumes a state of power and domination to draw constants out from a language's variability and to produce a standard, homogeneous system for expressing the content of those constants. By contrast, the minor use of language involves putting expression to work in order to create variations of content that could change how a hearer or reader may understand and experience the world.

In the case of the major usage, it operates in a major language (Spanish) and is established by the socially dominant segments of Novohispanic society, namely, the Spaniards on the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas (so-called *Españoles*) who largely held sway over economy, politics, and government at the highest levels. This tendency to use *México* in speech and writing—usually spelled as *Mégico* or *Méjico*, with the latter form been sanctioned by the Real Academia de la Lengua as the standard orthographic form in 1815—is of a more established and formalized sort, its content fixed in the signifier's form (*Méjico*) and uttered in a way reflects already-established thinking and does not break the semantic form of the signifier.<sup>24</sup> In this majoritarian framework, the political and governmental preoccupations of the Bourbon monarchy and extensive state apparatus define *México*'s meaning. In turn, these major uses suppress *México* as a term denoting a broader swath of territory or one that conveys a political idea. This is shown in the ways *México* appeared as a restricted and localized space in a territorial hierarchy that makes *España*, *las Indias*, or *la América Septentrional* as field of which *México* is one part. These major uses of language stress that *México* as a locality or site of life, labor, commerce, and government, and *mexicano* as an indigenous population and the Nahuatl language. These meanings of *México* are operative to the extent that their historical connotations remain deactivated from the present and limit the importance of pre-Cortesian past to the present.

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Revolutions in the Modern World (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 7, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 6, 27.



By contrast, minor uses of language emerge in relation to the major language, where the writers and speakers of the minor language soberly master the major language, only to continually create variations in the language that the major and minor uses share. Here the difference between terms ‘major’ and ‘minor’ is not a quantitative opposition where more the majority of people use the major, standard, language. Rather, the difference is between one of constancy and homogeneity in the majoritarian use and of creativity, potentiality, and becoming in the minoritarian use.<sup>25</sup> The second tendency emerges from the investigations of creole thinkers, whose notions of *México* are less circumscribed but enter into . Thus, when later readers and practitioners pick up those texts and begin elaborating concepts of their own, minor languages enter into the system of constants that make up the major use of language, with minor uses circulating in New Spain in fragmented ways and creating conditions for the possibility of language variations in New Spain. And this kind of tradition will invite even more explicit formulations of *México* as a concept, such as the one that Mier works out in the “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos.” This chapter will examine formulations of *México* in the regimentation that structured the discourse of Spain’s imperial rule. It will then examine a set of creole conceptions of *México* and the politics of imperial/colonial relations, which for various reasons that I will elaborate upon, were either marginalized or not well-received by Crown authorities. To make this point, I will discuss the works of Jesuits exiled by Charles III’s expulsion of the Society of Jesus from New Spain and the writings of José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, who was among New Spain’s most important and well-regarded scientist and scientific journalist of the late eighteenth century.

### *Majoritarian Usage: Indias, América, México*

Texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sympathetic to the Spanish Crown tend to regard *México* in at least three ways in which history, nature, population, and governance intersect. Under the first, *México* is as a site, space, or field; under the second, *México* refers to a population and jurisdiction in the circuitry of the Crown’s governance and administration of Novohispanic society; and under the third, *México* refers to a historical civilization and the indigenous peoples inhabiting Mesoamerica before the arrival of the Spaniards. Investing these connotations into the term *México* evokes the image of a highly differentiated geographical and social space created by the crossings of people, institutions, and their operations. The major formulation of *México* represents a point bound by the broader geopolitical, geographic, and practical preoccupations of Bourbon governance. Among other places these preoccupations find voice in discourses of territory, governance, and history.

### *Territorializing México: from place to space*

Even though determinations and designations of spaces are inseparable from political and governmental matters, examining the spatial and territorial connotations of *México* with a such a

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<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 105-106.

fine degree of distinction has utility. For as Beatriz Rojas notes, the Bourbon Reforms inaugurated a way of using space as the material from which a political logic of government authority establishes territories.<sup>26</sup> It is by examining the ways that the political and governmental logics of the Bourbon Reforms about *México* in terms of space and spatial references that its significance and value relative to other spatial determinations that a contrast with other contemporary and subsequent formulations comes into sharper relief.

Majoritarian uses more or less consistent with the reformist logic of the Bourbon Regime posit *México* as a discrete point that could be marked on a broader field of experience. In these uses *México* appears as a city within the expanse of Spain's transoceanic empire whose broader contexts include, *la Nueva España*, *la América Septentrional*, *América*, *Indias*, and *España*. In the *Theatro Americano*, José Antonio Villaseñor y Sánchez exhaustively describes over one hundred cities and towns in the Kingdom of New Spain, with each description beginning with the site's latitude and longitude in the page's margins. Within the first few sentences of each of every description Villaseñor states the location's distance from Mexico City in leagues, variously referring to the city as "*la Capital México*," "*la Ciudad de México*," and just "*Mexico*."<sup>27</sup> In the *Theatro Americano* and several other texts, *México* does not even approach to constitute a comprehensive field of experience for the King's enlightened counselors and those who sought to persuade those ministers to govern in a certain way. Rather, it is a point of reference, a dot on an imaginary or cartographic map, or a component of a set-piece in which strategies play out. For instance, one of the *Cartas político-económicas* attributed to Campomanes' authorship shows *España* appearing over fifty times, with *América* and *Américas* appearing in approximately a dozen places, and *Méjico* appearing only twice.<sup>28</sup> One passage in the fourth letter concerning the territorial and administrative divisions of the Spanish empire puts this hierarchy of territorial concepts on full display.

A republic's interior economy is an eternal treasure. Spain sees itself in the precision of regarding its commerce as the great chain that should keep her tied to her vast overseas dominions; but Spain, having in its heart greater wealth than the Americas, should take care to secure these territories than to leave them exposed. We lost Flanders, we lost Italy.

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<sup>26</sup> Beatriz Rojas, "Orden de Gobierno y Organización Del Territorio: Nueva España Hacia Una Nueva Territorialidad, 1786-1825," in *Las Reformas Borbónicas, 1750-1808*, ed. Clara García Aylluardo, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Historia. Serie Historia Crítica de Las Modernizaciones En México 1 (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 131-63; 133.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Antonio de Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Theatro Americano: Descripción General de Los Reynos y Provincias de La Nueva-España, y Sus Jurisdicciones...*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (México: en la Imprenta de la Viuda de D. Joseph Bernardo de Hogal, 1746), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5323537608>.

<sup>28</sup> The late Spanish economic historian Gonzalo Anes Alvarez remarks in a note from 1967 that the author of the *Cartas político-económicas* was not Campomanes, but rather León de Arroyal, a founder of the Sociedad Económica in the town Vara del Rey in La Mancha; he also aimed at establishing a "Junta de Caridad," a charitable board, and sought to improve the municipal administration of Vara del Rey. From 1786 he frequently corresponded with the Council of Castille in Madrid, requesting that the Crown would take measures to improve the economic well-being of his town. See Gonzalo Anes, "Las cartas político-económicas al conde de Lerena," *Edición digital a partir de Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 216 (1967): 611-14, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/las-cartas-politico-económicas-al-conde-de-lerena/>.

Why should we not lose Mexico and Peru? In that case, what would be our role in the world?<sup>29</sup>

In spite of the specious reasoning that would justify an intrinsic wealth to Spain exceeding that of the colonies it exploits to acquire its wealth, Campomanes/León de Arroyal regard Spain's overseas commercial activity as a binding agent that secures its possession of American dominions. For all of Spain's purported wealth, Campomanes/León de Arroyal shudders to contemplate what losing Spain's two major American capitals would do to Spain's geopolitical standing.

Likewise, Bernardo Ward's *Proyecto Económico*, with all of the attention it pays to America and the Indies, places *España* at the center of his discourse, drawing on the term over 500 times, with *América* figuring into his work just over 100 times and *Nueva España* only 11. Even in a text that pays greater attention to the role of transatlantic trade in the Spanish Empire, *México* appears only seven times, with one appearance placing *México* in a similar geographical hierarchy. In a passage arguing for liberalizing Spanish trade with its overseas colonies, Ward replies to criticisms of free trade by pointing to how its diminished commercial relationships with the Americas, namely with Peru and Mexico, vulnerable to non-Spanish opportunism.

But these are not arguments; they are only words. All that can be opposed and replied to by saying that a method that has reduced a commerce such as America's to almost nothing and has transferred Mexico's and Peru's treasures to Spain's enemies cannot be good. And the opposite should be the good, a method which has made happy those nations that follow it.<sup>30</sup>

More importantly is again, is how this illustration places *México* squarely into a hierarchy of geographical references, where it is subordinated to a region in the Spanish Empire: *América*.<sup>31</sup>

One last item from the period, an illustration for the frontispiece of José Antonio Villaseñor y Sánchez's *Theatro Americano* from 1746 offers an apt visual metaphor for *México*'s position in the spatial hierarchy of the Spanish Empire. The illustration shows the name "Mexico" appearing

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<sup>29</sup> Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, *Cartas Político-Económicas* (Madrid: 1878), 161, [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b633676](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b633676).

<sup>30</sup> Bernardo Ward, *Proyecto Económico, En Que Se Proponen Varias Providencias, Dirigidas á Promover Los Intereses de España, Con Los Medios y Fondos Necesarios Para Su Plantificación* (Madrid: La viuda de Ibarra, Hijos y compañía, 1787) <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/U0102099020/MOME?u=ucberkeley&sid=MOME&xid=db64c77d>, 281. It is worth mentioning that this passage appears word for word in Campillo y Cosío's *Nuevo Sistema*. See José del Campillo y Cosío, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico para la América: con los males y daños que le causa el que hoy tiene de los que participa copiosamente España, y remedios universales para que la primera tenga considerables ventajas y la segunda mayores intereses* (Madrid, 1789), 167, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5323535492>.

<sup>31</sup> José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez, *Tardes Americanas, Gobierno Gentil y Católico: Breve y Particular Noticia de Toda La Historia Indiana ...: Trabajadas Por Un Indio, y Un Español* (México: En la nueva imprenta Matritense de D. Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, calle de la Palma, 1778), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5325290273>, 28. The use of such a hierarchy was not limited to writer-statesmen concerned with political economy. It found expression in works of historical literature that were intended to guide the governance of New Spain.

hidden in the shadows of a globe, a globe perched on a pedestal on the edge of the American coast. Attending the globe is a figure of America seated on its left, next to a tall prickly pear bush and a palm tree. On the right-hand side, the globe is flanked by a Novohispanic writer, ostensibly Villaseñor y Sánchez himself, presenting a book to King Felipe V, who is standing atop the globe. Above the King is a banner that reads “Digna Orbis Imperio Virtus,” or “The Power Worthy of Empire” (See Fig. 1).<sup>32</sup> Magali Carrera reads the frontispiece as portraying New Spain as the South to Spain’s North, with a woman on the left side of the globe representing *América*, and as the text of governance being offered to the sovereign by a figure on the right of the globe. The part of the banner reading “Digna Orbis” flies above a woman representing of New Spain and the portion of the banner reading “Imperio Virtus” flies over the male figure corresponding to Spain.<sup>33</sup> But at its base, Carrera remarks that the text and the print makes New Spain an “ancillary space in the world...that may be reduced to a text, readable, and thus knowable.”<sup>34</sup> On the globe and under the King’s foot, *México* stands in for the *América* that Villaseñor will go on to describe in rather formulaic prose throughout the work’s 800 pages.

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<sup>32</sup> The expression “Digna Orbis Imperio Virtus” in early modern visual representations dates back at least to Jean Audran’s engraved print after Charles LeBrun’s painting from 1699-1708, a print depicting Alexander the Great’s victory at the Battle of Arbela. See Jean Audran and Charles Le Brun, “La Vertu Est Digne de l’empire Du Monde (Virtue Is Worthy of the Empire of the World)” (The British Museum, 1708, 1699), [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1854-0614-164](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1854-0614-164). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Alexander the Great was often regarded as a model of kingly virtue, especially for Louis XIV, as well as for painters and image makers of the eighteenth century, including in Bourbon Spain. See Pierre Briant, *The First European: A History of Alexander in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2017), 29–31.

<sup>33</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Traveling from New Spain to Mexico: Mapping Practices of Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 52–54. Carrera writes, “In this print, New Spain becomes an ancillary geographic space in the world, Digna Orbis, locatable in relation to Spain, Imperio Virtus. (54)

<sup>34</sup> Carrera, 54.



Figure 1. Frontispiece to José Antonio Villaseñor y Sánchez's *Theatro Americano*, 1746. Note the annotation "Mex<sup>co</sup>" beneath a cross indicating the capital city in the lower part of the globe upon which the Spanish King stands.

Villaseñor y Sánchez's *Teatro Americano* created a stage on which *México* was circumscribed by the political and governmental concerns of the Bourbon regime. Wittingly or not, the ways that the Bourbon regime used the terms *México* and *mexicana/o* show that these major uses carefully attenuated the meanings of *México*. In effect, the meaning of the term *México* was constrained to a geographical point, a "patria chica" or region, despite its size and importance to the commercial, economic, and political fortunes of the Spanish Empire .

Although *México* refers to a point on a larger grid of experience going by the names *Nueva España*, *la América Septentrional*, or *Indias*, Bourbon functionaries did not simply neglect *México* as an empty abstraction. On the contrary, the reason *México* does appear as a point is so that the Crown could exert more control over by intervening in the life of the city in countless ways. Spanish and Novohispanic functionaries at various levels use the term *México* as a principal node in the multi-continental network of territories, institutions, and activities making up the Spanish Empire. Because of this position, a multitude of political forces converged on Mexico City, forces that gave the city a complex identity. All at once *México* was the capital of a major overseas dependency, one of the largest and most powerful footholds of the Catholic Church in the Americas, a major commercial and financial hub, the largest city in the American continents and the Spanish empire (including Spain), and the urban center of Novohispanic life replete with its

plurality of peoples coexisting amid the extremes of poverty and wealth.<sup>35</sup> Thus it was a city defined by multiple political axes and interests: imperial, ecclesiastical, and local.<sup>36</sup>

In the *Theatro Mexicano*, Villaseñor y Sánchez describes Mexico City along as a site of economic, commercial, and political heft, portraying it as “Mexico City, Court, Capital, Metropolis, and Trading Center of the Indies” (*La Ciudad de México, Corte, Capital, Metrópoli, y Emporio de las Indias*).<sup>37</sup> The 1786 Real Ordenanza de Intendentes recognized Mexico City as the “Capital Metropoli” almost forty years later.<sup>38</sup> The Visitor General and later the Minister of the Indies José de Galvéz in 1771 regarded it as the principal site of administration in New Spain.<sup>39</sup> These examples imply that for the purposes of governing, the majoritarian tendency of thinking on *México* understood it to mean a site for a local entity with substantial reach, extending outward along other provinces of New Spain and la América Septentrional. This reach was also intercontinental in scale, extending to various quarters of Spain, namely Cadiz and Madrid, among other locales in the European and Asian continents. Mundane documents produced in the course of everyday administration in various quarters also bear this out, with the Provincial Intendant of the Mexico administering duties and customs referring to Mexico City as “esta capital,”<sup>40</sup> a treasury official in Acapulco requesting that the Viceroy allow him to convalesce in his home city (“esa capital<sup>41</sup>”), a government minister in Madrid asking that the Viceroy receive a member of the Brothers of Mercy to return to the Mexico City of his birth (natural de esa ciudad... para regresar a su patria).<sup>42</sup>

A formulary for tax harvesters also shows the centrality of Mexico City as the capital. To survey the indigenous inhabitants of their jurisdictions in order to determine each inhabitant’s obligation to pay taxes and tributes to the Royal Treasury, the Viceroy issues a printed paradigm showing the way that those censuses should be recorded. The first page of the formulary indicates, much in the manner that Villaseñor y Sánchez delineates in the *Theatro Americano* that the town should be listed in the following terms, “Town, Head and Government of Saint Mary of such, of the Curate or Doctrine<sup>43</sup> of such, with a distance from the Capital of México *so many*

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<sup>35</sup> Sharon Bailey Glasco, *Constructing Mexico City: Colonial Conflicts over Culture, Space, and Authority*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 22.

<sup>36</sup> Bailey Glasco, 45–46.

<sup>37</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Theatro Americano*, v. 1, 1:31.

<sup>38</sup> New Spain. and Spain, *Real Ordenanza Para El Establecimiento é Instruccion de Intendentes de Ejército y Provincia En El Reino de La Nueva-España* (Madrid, 1786), 2, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001278425>.

<sup>39</sup> Galvéz, *Informe general*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> AGN, GD 68 Intendencias, vol. 68, exp. 19, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>41</sup> AGN, GD98 Real Hacienda, vol. 68, exp. 19, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>42</sup> AGN, GD100 Reales Cédulas Originales. vol. 192, exp. 19, fs. 2-4, March 15, 1804, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>43</sup> Usually referring to a body of ecclesiastical or legal teaching, the term *Doctrina* has another special usage when referring to American territories during the colonial era. In the case of the Americas, *doctrina* also designates an ecclesiastical district administered by a priest to evangelize an indigenous community. *Doctrina* can also refer to a recently evangelized indigenous community not yet tied to a parish or curate. See RAE, “doctrina,” in

leagues” (Pueblo, Cabecera y Gobierno de Santa Maria de tal, del Curato ó Doctrina de tal, dista de la Capital de México *tantas* leguas).<sup>44</sup> The Capital of México is the only reference in the formulary to an actual location, allow Viceregal functionaries to situate a particular location in an otherwise vast Novohispanic territory.

Implicit in this conception of *México* as an administrative capital was that the city itself as a site for enacting the Bourbon policies of control on its inhabitants. It was a form control that extended from individual behaviors and the community affinities of individuals to those communities’ relationships with the Crown. It is especially so during the later portion of the eighteenth century, as the Crown took on the task of controlling the population in the expectation that its policy could produce economically productive subjects defined by their compliance, orderly conduct and self-control.<sup>45</sup> Census-taking and creating registries [*padrones*] were central instruments for cutting up space into segments that could produce information on the population,<sup>46</sup> whether for harvesting taxes and tributes, raising militias, or regulating how people used urban space.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, one of the most telling references to *México* or *mexicana/o* outside of Mexico City during the Bourbon Reforms have to do with how these terms refer to demographic segments of the Novohispanic population. A set of documents concerning a fiscal dispute in the Tlanepantla district of the Villa de Tacuba offers a glimpse of how second- and third-tier Crown functionaries used the appellations and attributions of *Mexicano*. A *doctrina* under the administration of Franciscan missionaries and secular priests from the sixteenth century until the late eighteenth century, Tlanepantla lay in the grain-rich region northwest of Mexico City, and was considered a *Republica de Indios* (Republic of Indians) subject to the Crown’s tributary regime.<sup>48</sup> The compiled documents contain accountings and testimonies related to the governance of what the document calls, “la Nación Mexicana de Pueblo y Cabezera de Tlanepantla” (the Mexican nation of the town and head of Tlanepantla) at the time headed by Manuel Hilario Caballero.<sup>49</sup>

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«Diccionario de la lengua española» - Edición del Tricentenario (Madrid: Real Academia de Español), accessed August 11, 2020, <https://dle.rae.es/doctrina>.

<sup>44</sup> AGN, GD11 Bandos, Vol. 17 Exp. 49, Fs. 259-267. December 30, 1790, f. 261 recto, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>45</sup> Pamela Voekel, “Peeing on the Palace: Bodily Resistance to the Bourbon Reforms in Mexico City,” 183.

<sup>46</sup> Viceroy Revillagigedo’s 1791 census is noteworthy in how explicitly it seeks the racial and caste affiliations of the populations being counted. Revillagigedo’s census sought to procure an exact count of the neighborhoods [vecindarios] populated by “Españoles, Castizos, Mestizos y Pardos in order to determine “the number of families and useful men that exist in the Jurisdiction to defend the Patria, Religion, and the Reign of the sovereign.” See AGN, GD56 Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 18, Exp. 36, Ff. 256-258, 1791, AGN GD56 Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 18, exp. 36, ff. 256-258, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>47</sup> For a broader discussion of government regulation of urban space in Mexico City, see Bailey Glasco, *Constructing Mexico City*, 106–17, 128–54.

<sup>48</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Theatro Americano*, 74-76, cited in Emma Pérez Rocha, *La Tierra y El Hombre En La Villa de Tacuba En La Época Colonial* [Recurso Electrónico] (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2018), 68.

<sup>49</sup> AGN, GD113 Tributos, vol. 2, exp. 4., 1791, f. 125 recto, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

Caballero's own writings refer to his constituents as "los Naturales de los Pueblos sujetos a mi gobierno" (the natives to the towns subject to my government), while reports and testimonies supporting Caballero's cause and are addressed to the Fiscal Officer of the Royal Treasury, refer to Caballero's constituents in Tlanepantla as the "Pueblo de Mexicanos en Tlanepantla" (the town of Mexicans in Tlanepantla) and Tlanepantla's population in the collective form "Parcialidad de Naturales Mexicanos" (group of native Mexicans).<sup>50</sup> Similar references to *la Nación Mexicana* appear alongside mentions of other indigenous *naciones* (such as the Otomí) that inhabit various regions that Villaseñor y Sánchez describes in the *Theatro Americano*.<sup>51</sup> The designation *Nación* in these texts mark the *Mexicano* or *Mexicana* as an indigenous population among others, a population to be governed, administered, and to be regarded as a source of fiscal revenue. Subject to the hierarchies of linguistic values attached to names and places, majoritarian uses of the *Mexicano* during the eighteenth century referred to, among other things, one demographic segment, much in the way that it also referred to a linguistic denomination that defined the identity of those populations.

Viceregal uses of the term *México* as the capital such as the ones just mentioned drew on three centuries of Spanish usage, place the word squarely within the signifying regime established by and emanating from the Crown. In those majoritarian usages within that signifying regime, *México* is an intensely local concept that gathers meaning from its internal relations, for as revolutionary and early historian of the Insurgency Carlos María de Bustamante remarked of the city, "...es una casa de vecindad," or an insular and gossipy tenement house.<sup>52</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, officials divided Mexico City into eight major quadrants, with each quadrant in turn holding four minor quadrants.<sup>53</sup> The insurgency induced a sense of urgency on the part of the Viceregal authorities and loyalist corporations. Likewise, according to Juan Ortíz Escamilla, although there were pockets of insurgent sympathizers and partisans of Novohispanic autonomy in the city, virtually every sector of society rejected Hidalgo's insurrection and shared the Viceroy's anxieties.<sup>54</sup>

An 1811 census of Mexico City manifested the authorities' exigency;<sup>55</sup> it likewise illustrates just how the deeply localized *Mexico* was a reference for the Crown's functionaries (Figure 2). Viceregal authorities assiduously cataloged and sorted the names of every street in Mexico City.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> AGN, fs. 129 recto, 133 recto, 137 recto, 138 recto.

<sup>51</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Theatro Americano*, 1:115, 139.

<sup>52</sup> Carlo María de Bustamante, *Cuadro histórico de la Revolución Mexicana*, t. 1, in Juan Ortíz Escamilla, "La Ciudad Amenazada, el control social y la autocrítica del poder. La guerra civil de 1810-1821," *Relaciones* 84 XXI, Otoño (2000): 34.

<sup>53</sup> Manuel Miño Grijalva, "La Ciudad de México en el tránsito del virreinato a la república," *Destiempos* 14, Dossier: Virreinos (2008): 460–71.

<sup>54</sup> Juan Ortíz Escamilla, *Guerra y Gobierno: Los Pueblos y La Independencia de México, 1808-1825*, Segunda edición, corregida y aumentada (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México: Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, 2014), 19–20.

<sup>55</sup> Ortíz Escamilla, 109–10.

<sup>56</sup> An alphabetical index of the names of every street, alley, bridge, plazas, corrals, inns, and neighborhoods



They surveyed the space and population to control the movements of the City's inhabitants, recruit counterinsurgent militias, collect tax revenues, and enforce social hygiene. These *padrones* marked the urban space, identified and named routes, established points for security forces, and created a space saturated with jurisdictions, authorities, guilds, and civil and religious corporations. As the insurgency escalated in intensity and violence by the middle of 1811, royalist governors and townspeople alike established local patriotic militias in cities, towns, villages, and ranches in Novohispanic territories.<sup>57</sup> Felix Calleja elaborated a plan to form urban militias at the neighborhood level of the *vecindad* and *barrio* for policing and defensive purposes, so as to dedicate regular army troops for offensive military measures in the field. The plan also called for establishing a security and policing committee that served to duplicate existing policing and military functions.<sup>58</sup> The census report of the 30th minor quadrant (*cuartel menor*) in the eighth major quadrant in Southwestern Mexico City illustrates how intensively government authorities surveyed the principal landmarks of about six square blocks and how closely they documented the principal function of the quarter's buildings, and tracked the human population according to sex, race, and marital status. This simple geometric plan and brief population report alludes to the heavy policing and security measures, the powerful and even repressive control of a population, that made Mexico City a forbidding target of attack. Though politically and militarily vulnerable from within and outside, the capital remained the primary center of Spanish power in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. With Spain controlling the terms on which *México* has meaning—a point not likely lost on the insurgents—the term has a representational force that, at least with respect to the practical dimensions of space, makes the term an epithet congruent with the Spanish government. As Francisco Severo Maldonado corroborated in his acerbic commentary on the moral affectations of Viceregal discourse in his paper *El Despertador Americano*, “Pure Sincerity.” All of the hispanic-mexican government's conduct inhales it in these turbulent times” (*Pura sinceridad. Respirándola ha estado toda la conducta del gobierno hispano-mexicano en estos tiempos turbulentos...*).<sup>59</sup>

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in Mexico City from 1793 offers such an instance. It is more than notable that not a single street or sites in Mexico City's eight major quarters and thirty-two minor quarters is named México or has México as part of its name. See AGN, GD11 Bandos, Vol. 17, Exp. 41, Fs. 197-203, 1793.

<sup>57</sup> Ortiz Escamilla, *Guerra y Gobierno*, 132, 138.

<sup>58</sup> Ortiz Escamilla, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Alfredo Ávila, ed., *El Despertador Americano*, 1. ed, Summa mexicana (México, D.F: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2010), 26. See also, Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, “La Insurgencia de Los Nombres,” in *Interpretaciones Sobre La Independencia de México*, ed. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., 1. reimpr., Colección Raíces Del Hombre (México, D.F: Nueva Imagen, 1999), 103–22; 111.

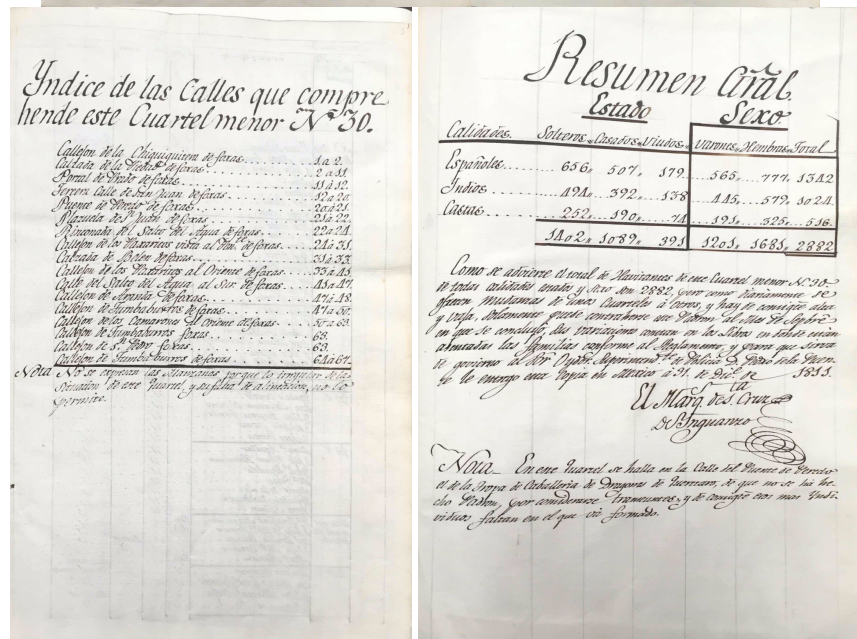


Figure 2. Padron del Cuartel Menor n. 30 de la Ciudad de México (AGN Padrones, vol. 78, fs. 2).

### México as Historical Object

One of the many achievements of Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra's groundbreaking work on eighteenth century Spanish and Spanish-American historiography is in showing the central role played by historical scholarship in the decisive political debates around the relationship between the New World and Europe. The content of historical narratives and the ideas of history they within the scholarship also played roles on this politicized staging of historical inquiry and

discourse. If it had not already been clear, Cañizares-Esguerra's work on patriotic epistemologies underscored how writing history was in itself an engagement in political questions.<sup>60</sup> This notion of historical writing as a political intervention also underscores that historical writing can mobilize ideas about what constitutes or counts as history and to support its own political uses. This is no different in the case of the writings from the era of the Bourbon Reforms, as is manifested in the differences in how a majoritarian tendency of Spanish and Spanish-American writing treats history in referring to an object, which in these instances, *México* is the object. Thus, when these dominant historical narratives refer to *México* as an object, they reduce *México* as an attenuated past, while selectively depriving that past of conditioning the time in which those narratives are being written.

At its simplest, a majoritarian tendency of historiography mobilizes a circumscribed concept of Mexico as indicating kind of history whose past is distant and is indicative of an erstwhile barbaric empire. A telling passage found in both Bernardo Ward's *Proyecto Económico* and Campillo y Cosío's *Nuevo Sistema* is exemplary in this regard:

Without leaving America we know that Mexico and Peru were two great empires in the hands of its natives, and amid their barbarism. And under a discrete, political nation, provinces that could be among the richest in the Universe, being uneducated, unpopulated, and almost completely annihilated. Therefore, what to make of this enormous contradiction? Doubtless it consists in that our system of government is completely corrupt to such a degree that neither the abilities, zeal, and effort of some of our Ministers, nor all the authorities have been able to remedy the antecedent damage and disorder. Never shall it be remedied until a government may be founded in those dominions upon different maxims that until now have been followed.<sup>61</sup>

Campillo here renders *México* as an historical remnant meant to teach the reader a political object lesson regarding a condition that neither the 'barbaric' empire of the Mexicans nor a torpid Spanish government could resolve. Bourbon Spanish thought perceived *México* as the name of a vanquished empire whose political unity was presumably destroyed on account of the factors most relevant to the Bourbons: deficiencies in education, a dearth of population, and a desolate and uncultivated territory with an untapped potential for generating wealth for the Crown. Such judgments took it as a universal premise that the interconnections between wealth, nature, and population could be applied to any historical situation, as these were regarded as the hallmarks of civilized life.

The *Theatro Americano* refers to *México* in a way that reiterates the visual and geographic subordination of *México* found in the work's frontispiece in narrative form. Villaseñor y Sánchez describes the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire of 1519-1521 as the act of, "...subjecting all of the vigorous strength of the Mexican nation's barbaric spirit to the obedience of our Catholic Monarch" [...*subjectando à la obediencia de nuestro Católico Monarca toda la pujanza esforzada del*

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<sup>60</sup> Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 133-134.

<sup>61</sup> Campillo y Cosío, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico para la América*, 2-3.

*barbaro brio de la Nación Mexicana*].<sup>62</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez devotes a few pages to the political history of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, largely focusing on the ascent of the Mexica (which he calls *la Nación Mexicana*) as they came to establish an empire in the same terms of subjection that he describes the Spanish subjection of the Mexica, “...they were first in Empire and Power, who subjected to the spirit of the Toltecs, Chichimecs, and Alcuhalas to their yoke, dominating all of the land” (fueron tál primeros en el Imperio y poder, que sujetaron à su yugo todo el brio de los Tultecas, Chichimecas, y Achulhuas, dominando toda la tierra).<sup>63</sup> And consistent with the way that Ward and Campillo regarded pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and *México*, it is as a living antiquity, an idolatrous nation whose diabolical Gods demanded bloody sacrifices. The Spanish takeover in Villaseñor’s estimation, added to the opulence of the erstwhile Aztec Empire by endowing Mexico-Tenochtitlan’s heathenism (*Gentilidad*) with a political beautification, a beautification that, in a stroke of irony left neither trace nor memory of the years of imperial rule preceding Cortes’s arrival.<sup>64</sup> Thus *México* is vanquished, overcome, and made history, despite the living traces of Nahuatl in spoken language, the names of places like Mexico City (whose use as *México* truncates the Nahuatl name *México-Tenochtitlan*, and the persistence of members of *la Nación Mexicana* amid Novohispanic society. That *México* persists as an entity in this majoritarian tendency, it is as an entity domesticated [*domado*],<sup>65</sup> severed from its partner in the syntagm (*Tenochtitlan*) and meanings it might have had during pre-Hispanic subdued. And like in the frontispiece to the *Theatro Americano*, *México* is relegated to the lower, darkened part of the Imperial globe.

A preliminary survey of how terms such as *México* or the *mexicana/o* appear in various contexts—spatial, administrative-governmental, and historical—shows that the most frequent uses of *México* did not denote a consistent or cohesive concept. Tellingly, this majoritarian tendency suppresses Mexico as an overarching or comprehensive idea, as indicated by the ways that *México* marked a restricted and localized space in a territorial hierarchy that makes *Spain*, *las Indias*, or *la América Septentrional* the principal field of references. More practically oriented discourses likewise emphasize the character of *México* as a locality or site of life, commerce, and government, and *mexicano* as an indigenous population and language. But these references are operative to the extent on that *México* remains disconnected from its pre-Cortesian past.

Several institutions cross the space marked by Novohispanics as *México*, a space whose aggregated and concentrated *población* becomes a *público* through the legally sanctioned policing of social roles, a robust, highly regulated print culture, and the modes of subjectivation that these forms normalize. Terms such as ‘*naturales*’, ‘*Indios*’ and other social designations make visible the governable elements of the *público*. The differentiating social compositions performing varieties of roles, the performance of operations geared toward *producción* (production), *utilidad* (profit), *riqueza* (wealth), and *felicidad* (felicity) as goals, and the relationships of force/power animate the operation of this complex, if unruly, colonial machine. To ensure this machine’s continuous

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<sup>62</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, *Theatro Americano*, 1:13.

<sup>63</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, 1:32.

<sup>64</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, 1:33.

<sup>65</sup> Villaseñor y Sánchez, 1:73.

operation, *México's* role as a capital designates that locality as the head of New Spain and the site of surplus capacities in the form of goods, money, administrative capacity and power, population, and the equipment. What this multiplicity of connotations suggests is that *México* figures in the Bourbon system of thought as a point where multiple references converge, and these references are mostly functional and practical in composition. Even the writings about the history of New Spain and Mesoamerica subordinated to the practical demands of governance. They rendered *México* as a persistent rudiment whose presence was predicated on determinations that deactivated the term from the field of conceptual significance; these determinations relegated *México* to a field of non-conceptual reference significant to the necessities of everyday practice and the exigencies of *la ciencia política*.

### *Variations in the Minor Key*

Minor uses of language can only function in relation to a major language as they apply pressure on the major language to create variations.<sup>66</sup> And for all the Crown's grand designs for rationalizing Spanish and Spanish American institutions, implementing those reforms was riddled with inefficiencies and beset by hitches and resistance at localized levels. These deviations and resistances thus became opportunities minor uses of language to make visible fissures in the majoritarian uses, discern problems that those fissures reveal, and motivate deviations from, and alterations to, the major use of language.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the discourses of administration, the reconfiguration of power relations, and campaigns at "Castilianizing" the colonies had done the work of setting the stage upon which acrimony, hostility, and conflicts would pass or fail. Despite the attempts of the Crown to weaken the influence of the Viceroy and the established corporations in New Spain, Crown functionaries on the peninsula were aware of the gravitational pull that Mexico City asserted as the capital city of New Spain, with the Intendant of Puebla Manuel de Flon telling the General Superintendent of the Royal Treasury Diego de Guardoqui that, "Mexico shall always endeavor to take everything toward itself and is so interested that it does not even want to divide the most extreme efforts."<sup>68</sup> The same can be said to be taking place in New Spain's Republic of Letters. Thus, as the majoritarian notion of *México* prevailed in the Spanish-speaking world during the eighteenth century, Novohispanic writers on both sides of the Atlantic were elaborating divergent ideas about *México*, ideas that were either regarded as out of the norm or even politically dangerous. Whether out of practical linguistic necessity or poetic liberty, figures such as José Eguiara y Eguren and José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez in Mexico City and exiled Novohispanic Jesuits such as Francisco Clavijero in Italy drew on sources from what to them were well-known, yet under-recognized, archives. In what amounted to a form of resistance that came from an affirmation of traditional institutions and an unwillingness to abandon them<sup>69</sup>,

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<sup>66</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 105.

<sup>67</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 101, 103, 471.

<sup>68</sup> Horst Pietschmann, *Las reformas borbónicas y el sistema de intendencias en Nueva España: un estudio político administrativo*, 1. ed. en español, Sección de obras de historia (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), 284.

<sup>69</sup> Pietschmann, 291. This normative pattern situating Mexico City as the primary political and juridical

works such as theirs brought the weight of a repressed history to bear on what *México* meant and could mean in the future.

Through their inquiries and works, cultural elites began consolidating an “americano” identity during mid-eighteenth century. One aspect of this consolidation involved re-vindicating and reappraising pre-Columbian history, language, and terminology such as “tierra de Anáhuac” and the “Imperio Mexicano.”<sup>70</sup> Several chapters from Galvéz y Granados’ dialogue between an “Indio” and “Español” in *Tardes Americanas* track the genealogy of Mesoamerican rulers, with the Mexicans emerging as the wealthiest and most powerful political force in the region composing what later became New Spain. A principal strategy for such a revindication is by bestowing upon the Mexica-Aztec empire the status of a classical civilization on par with or exceeding those of Ancient Greece and Rome. In the middle of an oration to the Spaniard that exhaustively traces parallels between ancient Mesoamerican rulers and their Greek and Roman counterparts, Granados y Gálvez s “Indio” remarks to his interlocutor that Mexico City was, “...similar to Rome in its grandeur and without equal in its beauty, disposition, and amenity.”<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Granados y Gálvez points to this exalted civilizational quality in the sphere of language by endorsing Boutrini’s acclamation about the elegance of Nahuatl or ‘la lengua Mexicana’ exceeding that of Latin.<sup>72</sup> Granados y Gálvez reveals frankly the objective of this transposition of Mesoamerican history in a sonnet ending the first chapter to affirm that the Indians are humans and civilized peoples rather than animals, as well as to counter European contempt for Mesoamerican peoples, which involves confronting how Europeans have made the truths of Mesoamerican history worthy of disgust.<sup>73</sup>

José Eguiara y Eguren’s 1755 vindication of Novohispanic letters states, the *Biblioteca Mexicana* qualifies the *mexicano* as “...having been born in *la América septentrional* or having been born in other places, pertain to her by virtue of residence or study, and have written something no matter the language; and especially those that have distinguished themselves by their signal deeds or for any other class of works, printed or unedited that are dedicated to the progress and foment of Catholic faith and piety.”<sup>74</sup> And though Eguiara conceives of *México* as

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center of gravity, Linda Arnold reminds us, began taking hold in the Novohispanic juridical system as early as the 1600s. Also see Linda Arnold, “El mandamiento virreinal y auto de concordia del siglo xvii sobre la extradición entre la Audiencia de Guadalajara y la Audiencia de México,” in *Historia del derecho. X Congreso de Historia del Derecho Mexicano*, ed. Óscar Cruz Barney and José Luis Soberanes Fernández, vol. 2 (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016), 3–21, <https://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/bjv/id/4248>.

<sup>70</sup> García Martínez, “La época colonial hasta 1760,” 109. Strongest identifications among the general public were largely regional and local.

<sup>71</sup> Granados y Gálvez, *Tardes Americanas*, 226.

<sup>72</sup> Granados y Gálvez, 95. Granados y Gálvez in the same footnote affirms the dominance of Nahuatl in the pre-Columbian empire, lauding its stylistic sophistication and broad use across social classes: “Es lengua la Mexicana tan Señora, como lo fue su basto Imperio, muy culta y política en su estilo: tiene distintivos en sus frasismos para hablar con el noble y el plebeyo.”

<sup>73</sup> Granados y Gálvez, 13, 130. On page 130, the “Indio” states: “Así juzgan, Señor mió, los que han visto y miran nuestras cosas con desprecio, formando ascos de la verdad de nuestras Historias.”

<sup>74</sup> Ana De Zaballa Beascochea, “Eguiara y Eguren y el nacionalismo historiográfico mexicano,” *Qué es la*

distinctly Catholic, that is, that *México* is the prize of the Spanish conquest *for the Catholic religion*, the *nación mexicana* affirms, absorbs, and preserves the memory of its pre-Columbian ancestry, including the acuity and contributions of *los indios mexicanos*. For Eguilara, the *nación mexicana* is more than a past relic, but a reality in his historical present affirming the indigenous, the Spaniard, and the Novohispanic creole as compatriots.<sup>75</sup>

Among the events precipitating some of the most decisive re-thinking and expressing *México* was when the Crown roughly expelled the Society of Jesus in 1767. With the Jesuits forcibly removed from New Spain, Novohispanic society lost a group teachers and writers whose erudition was as critical to the development of religion and letters in Northern America as any of the other religious orders or Crown functionaries. Displaced from their birthplaces and residences in the Americas and beset by the sorrows of their precarious circumstances while maintaining a communal life in Bologna, exiles such as the influential Jesuit teacher José Rafael Campoy, the Jesuit poets Francisco Xavier Alegre and Rafael Landívar, and the erudite historian and linguist Francisco Javier Clavijero.<sup>76</sup> Each in their own manner and according to their respective scholarly and artistic dispositions, Landívar and Clavijero would compose pieces of literature that took *México* as their object. In Landívar's case there is the *Rusticatio Mexicana*, a neolatin poem that in fifteen books rhapsodizes on the natural wonders along the fields (*campos*) of the countryside (*rusticatio*). Landívar conceives of *México* more amply than those for whom it pertains to the confines of Mexico City or its historical empire, in part because he recognizes in the preface to the *Rusticatio* that Europeans commonly refer to the entirety of New Spain as *México* without distinction: "I have entitled this poem *Rusticatio Mexicana*, not only because nearly everything contained in it relates to the fields of Mexico, but also because I realize that it is customary in Europe to call the whole of New Spain, Mexico, without taking into account the different countries."<sup>77</sup> The poem renders this greater Mexican countryside through a series of odes to various natural phenomena: Mexican lakes, Guatemalan waterfalls, the cinder cone

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*historia de la Iglesia: citas del XVI Simposio Internacional de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra*, 1995, 789–96; 792–793. Beascochea's study on the connections between religion, history, culture, and nationality in Eguilara's work translates the subtitle as: "Biblioteca mexicana o sea historia de los varones eruditos que habiendo nacido en la América septentrional o visto la luz en otros lugares, pertenecen a ella por su residencia o estudios, y escribieron alguna cosa no importa en qué idioma; y en especial de aquellos que han destacado por sus hechos insignes o por cualquier clase de obras, impresas o inéditas, encaminadas al progreso y fomento de la fe y piedad católicas." Also see Juan José de Eguilara y Eguren, *Bibliotheca Mexicana Sive Eruditorum Historia Virorum: Qui in America Boreali Nati, Vel Alibi Geniti, in Ipsam Domicilis Aut Studijs Asciti, Quaris Linguâ Scripto Aliquid Tradiderunt* (Mexico: 1755), title page, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5324256996>.

<sup>75</sup> Juan José de Eguilara y Eguren and Agustín Millares Carlo, *Prólogos a la Biblioteca mexicana*, 209–12, 214, 219–21, quoted in Ana De Zaballa Beascochea, "Eguilara y Eguren y el nacionalismo historiográfico mexicano," 792–793.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Laird, *The Epic of America: An Introduction to Rafael Landívar and the "Rusticatio Mexicana"* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 24, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Rafael Landívar, "Rusticatio Mexicana (1782)," in *The Epic of America: An Introduction to Rafael Landívar and the "Rusticatio Mexicana"*, ed. Andrew Laird, trans. Graydon W. Regenos (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 122–23. Original Latin: "Rusticationis Mexicanæ huic carmini prææfixi titulum, tum quod fere omnia in eo congesta ad agros Mexicanos spectent, tum etiam quod de Mexici nomine totam Novam Hispaniam vulgo in Europa appellari sentiam, nulla densorum regnorum ratione habita."

volcano *Jorullo* in Michoacán, wildlife, and commercially viable products such as cochineal and other items used in dyes, livestock, precious metals, and sugar. Landívar closes the *Rusticatio* with verses on the games and sports of the Mexican countryside: cockfights, bullfights, ballgames, and the spectacle of *voladores* strapped to lines on a tall pole that unwind them into a path circular flight. The pastoral scene that the *Rusticatio* paints is that a greater *México* defined by its connection with a natural world that he urges his readers to enter into a more profound relation with the natural world surrounding:

Behold, O youth, glorying in the enthusiasm of your early years, whom nature has permitted to enjoy the kindly sky, to listen to the sweet songs of birds, and to watch them flying through the air posed on wings on many colors, for whom the field provides on every hand green meadows always bright with sweet-scented flowers, behold, to you my song is directed in which I have tried to beguile my grievous cares and my leisure hours spent near the banks of the turbulent Reno. Learn to esteem highly your fertile lands to search out and determine with care the riches of the field and the matchless blessings of heaven.<sup>78</sup>

Here the dynamic and at times volatile idyll of the Mexican countryside stands in stark contrast to the tempestuous river passing by the Bolognese urbs, a river that also serves as a metaphor for the bitterness of expulsion and the pains of exile that attend to being forcibly removed from one's *Patria*. Yet Landívar's pain is only multiplied, for he speaks to a *patria* that no longer existed. While exiled in 1773, a series of catastrophic earthquakes destroyed the Guatemala City that he knew—then known as Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala., thus occasioning the capital's move in 1776 to its present-day location in the Valle de Ermita, the new capital named la Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción.<sup>79</sup>

Francisco Javier Clavijero elaborated elements of an idea of *México* in the natural wonders and the historical indigenous peoples of New Spain, but in a more prosaic form than his confrere Landívar. In a compendious tome spanning four volumes, the *Historia Antigua de México* moves into the realm of historical inquiry, producing a systematic account of the flora and fauna of New Spain and a political history of the pre-Columbian peoples involved in the formation of México-Tenochtitlan as the center of the Mexica empire. The *Historia Antigua's* fourth volume condenses the central claims of the previous three volumes into a set of ten dissertations rebutting European historians of the Americas like Cornelius de Pauw and the *encyclopedíste* Count of Buffon, prominent thinkers who had the ears of rulers and the scientific community on the continent. These writers, in the estimation of some Spanish and many Creole intellectuals, grossly misrepresented the Americas by portraying its natural resources as degenerating into a state of

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<sup>78</sup> Landívar, 258.

<sup>79</sup> Rafael Landívar, "Canto a Guatemala," in *Cara parens: ensayos sobre Rusticatio Mexicana*, ed. Lucrecia Méndez de Penedo, trans. Benjamín Moscoso (Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar, 2009), 13–16. English translation from Spanish mine. Moscoso's Spanish Translation follows: Estos recuerdos alimentarán siempre mi amor a la Patria / y serán para mí dulce alivio en la crucial tribulación/Pero ¡ay! Me equivoco: inquieta mi apacible ánimo la / imaginación falaz y vanos ensueños burlan mi espíritu. / Pues la ciudad que hasta hace poco fuera fortaleza y / gloriosa capital de noble reino, / ahora es un promontorio de piedras. / A la población no le quedan ni casas ni templos, / ni calles ni por donde, segura, dirigirse a las / cumbres de la montaña."



decline and its native peoples as savage, weak, and morally vicious.<sup>80</sup> Clavijero responds in the sixth dissertation, opening a line of thought that until then had not been stated in Novohispanic literature about Mexico or the Mexica—that of culture. His account of culture is anthropological, noting that a set of human practices falling under the name *cultura*—ranging from, among others, agriculture, manufacturing, the use of money, artistic practices, law, language, war, and organized religion.<sup>81</sup> In using such a broad category, Clavijero helps recover the substance of both this peoples and histories that would otherwise be passed over by major uses of language.

History figures as a central aspect of Clavijero’s anthropological reasoning, for it allows him to draw contrasts and parallels with Greco-Roman and Semitic histories to vindicate the culture of the Mexica as no less civilized than the civilizations that the European scribes cite in their works.<sup>82</sup> For the system of thought supporting Western European inquiries, the rationality and dispositions of a civilization’s inhabitants and the qualities of its legal, fiscal, and economic systems stand among the most decisive benchmarks for measuring a civilization’s degree of culture. Clavijero compares Mexican and Roman laws on slavery, noting that the Mexica had laws that were, “far superior to the most cultured nations of ancient Europe.” Denouncing the Spartan’s laws as inhuman and the ‘most cultivated’ Romans as reaching excesses of barbarism, Clavijero conveys that the Mexica affirmed that, outside the capture of prisoners in war, the children of enslaved people were born free and that people who held slaves were obligated to treat the enslaved person as a human and not as a beast. The Mexican law, according to Clavijero, forbade the holder from expropriating the enslaved person’s property, selling an enslaved person on the market for cases not involving their ‘indocility’, or preventing the enslaved person from taking up independent commercial activity.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Francesco Saverio Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, ed. Mariano Cuevas, 2. ed. rev. y cor., vol. 10, Colección de Escritores Mexicanos (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A, 1958), 8–9. Prominent intellectual historians of Latin America have covered this topic in greater detail. While an important topic, it is one that in this study is more contextual than the direct object of inquiry. See D. A. Brading, *Orbe indiano: de la monarquía católica a la República criolla, 1492-1867*, trans. Juan José Utrilla, 2017, 498–99, <http://www.digitalliapublishing.com/a/47583/> and Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 45–47, 210, 235, 237, 246.

<sup>81</sup> The term ‘cultura’ does not just appear in the Italian version of the Clavijero’s *Storia Antica*. For as Ana Carolina Ibarra reminds readers, Clavijero had first written the *Historia* in Spanish and was then translated into Italian. The Spanish version circulated in lettered circles in Spain and sparked a fierce debate about its significance and utility among historians on the Peninsula. Ibarra also shares a very interesting account of Ramón Diosdado Caballero, a Jesuit abbot in Rome who vehemently opposed the publication of the *Historia Antigua* in Spain, going so far as to spend three years lobbying the Councilor of the Indies José de Galvez. While mindful of the content in Clavijero’s work that ran counter to Spanish political interests (namely the portions that denounced the Spanish conquest), the Council of the Indies recognized its importance and passed on the work to Francisco Cerdá y Rico with the charge excising, redacting, and re-formulating those parts of the *Historia Antigua* the Crown deemed undesirable. It was a task that was never undertaken, mercifully. See Ana Carolina Ibarra, “La Recepción de La *Historia Antigua* y de Su Autor En España y América,” in *Francisco Xavier Clavijero, Un Humanista Entre Dos Mundos: Entorno, Pensamiento, y Presencia*, ed. Alfonso Alfaro et al., Primera edición, Sección de Obras de Historia (México, D.F.: Tlaquepaque, Jalisco: Fondo de Cultura Económica: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas: Universidad Iberoamericana; ITESO, 2015), 301–8.

<sup>82</sup> Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de México*, 10:243–309.

<sup>83</sup> Clavijero, 10:307–8.

Clavijero's fifth dissertation on the physical and moral constitution of the Mexica and the sixth dissertation on Mexican culture in the *Historia Antigua* point to two anthropological conditions upon which the concept of Mexican culture rests. This dissertation—a stunning and passionate rebuke of European distortions of the Mexica in particular and the indigenous Americans he calls “Americans proper” [*los americanos propios, llamados vulgarmente indios...*—contains a discourse on the souls of Mexicans [*las Almas de los Mexicanos*]. In it, Clavijero dispels doubts and slanders accusing indigenous Americans as not having rationality, inferring from his accounts a series of historical and ecclesiastic controversies, his own scholarly investigations into the natural and cultural history of Mexico, and anecdotal evidence from his experience as a priest and educator.<sup>84</sup> In addition to the rationality of the Mexicans being the first of the two sources of Mexican culture, Clavijero alludes to the central role education plays in shaping the soul of the person. In comparing the ways that Mexica and other historical civilizations emphasized the formation of their respective youths, Clavijero reserves his praise for the moral formation of indigenous Mexican youth,

...it can be recognized that Greek instruction in the arts and sciences was not as great as the instruction that Mexican children and youth received in the instruction in their parents' custom. The Greeks applied themselves more to illuminate the mind, the Mexicans to rectify the heart. The Athenians prostituted their youngsters to the most execrable obscenity in those very schools that were destined to teach them the arts. The Spartans accustomed their sons, according to Lycurgus's precept, to steal to make them agile and cunning, and would whip their children when they were caught stealing, thus teaching them not about the sin, but the scarce industry in committing the sin. What is more the Mexicans taught their children, just as with the arts, religion, modesty, honesty, sobriety, the life of labor, the love of truth, and the respect of elders.<sup>85</sup>

Upon his disquisition on the souls and culture of the Mexica people, Clavijero rightfully places the indigenous American on equal, if not higher, footing with the European cultures.

With the history of the Mexica being critical to Clavijero's project of understanding what México in the *Historia Antigua*, his various accounts of the foundation of *México-Tenochtitlan* in the *Historia* and other shorter works affirm the etymological elements of the name *México*. To do so Clavijero maps the crucial events of Mexica history onto the Western calendar to make the chronology of pre-Columbian history legible to his European and Novohispanic readers not versed in Nahuatl. In the second book of the *Historia Antigua*, Clavijero locates the foundation of *México-Tenochtitlan* in the year 2 Calli, which he estimates as taking place in the year 1325, following the calculations of seventeenth century Mexican polymath Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora.<sup>86</sup> During that year, Clavijero recounts, the Mexica completed their migration south

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<sup>84</sup> Clavijero, 10:211–25.

<sup>85</sup> Clavijero, 10:308–9.

<sup>86</sup> Clavijero, 10:66–67. Clavijero repeats the stories of the foundation of México-Tenochtitlan and the etymological origin of México in much more abbreviated form in a compact tract, the “Descripción de la ciudad de México capital de la Nueva España.” See Francesco Saverio Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, ed. Mariano Cuevas, 2. ed. rev. y cor., vol. 7, Colección de Escritores Mexicanos (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A, 1958), 313.

from Aztlán (in what is now New Mexico), a migration punctuated by war, misery, and wandering. After 110 years dwelling in various parts of Anáhuac and the valley of Mexico in Central Mesoamerica, with twenty-one of those years in bondage under the Colhúa, the Mexica come upon the sign that, according to their tutelary oracle, would indicate the location upon which to erect a temple to Huitzilopochtli and create their permanent settlement, a settlement that would be called *Tenochtítlan*, also called *México*: an eagle perched atop a hedge of cactus growing from rocks.<sup>87</sup>

As decisively, a footnote accompanies Clavijero's historical narrative of the founding of *México-Tenochtítlan* that is as important to conceiving of *México* as the image auguring the city's foundation: its name. It is among the most extensive disquisitions on the etymology of the name *México* since Fray Juan de Torquemada's narration of the etymology in the *Monarquía Indiana* of 1615 and Fray Agustín de Vetancurt's brief disquisition in the *Teatro Mexicano* from 1698. Clavijero's account incorporates elements from both of those previous etymologies and shares his rationale for his own determination on the meaning of the word *México*:

Among authors there is much variety regarding the etymology of the name of *México*. Some want it to come from *metztli*, moon, because the mexicans saw the moon represented on the waters of the lake. Others from *mexizquilitl*, the name of the marsh plant that the mexicans nourished themselves during the time of misery. Others say that *México* signifies a spring for having found one in the site of the city with very good water. I thought at one time that the name was *México*, that is to say the middle of the agaves. But afterwards I studied history and disabused myself of that idea and now I have no doubt that *México* is the same as the place of the god *Mexitli*, or *Huitzilopochtli*, who is the Mars of the Mexicans, on account of the sanctuary that they built there. It is by luck that *México* is the equivalent to the *Fanum Martis* [the temple of Mars, which the city of Corseul in the Gallic provinces was known as, since the temple was located there<sup>88</sup>]. In the composition of names, Mexicans remove the final syllable *-tle*, the *-co* is the equivalent of our preposition, 'in'. *Mexicaltzinco* signifies "the place or temple of the god *Mexitli*: and in substance *Huitzilopochco*, *Mexicaltzinco*, and *México* signify the names of the three places that the Mexicans successively inhabited.<sup>89</sup>

In the inquiries regarding the idea of *México*, Clavijero marshals several elements that would come to figure in subsequent formulations of *México*. Like his confrere Landívar, Clavijero surveys the geography, flora and fauna of New Spain, but he includes other elements critical to his idea of *México*: the anthropological validation of pre-Columbian Mexican culture, the rationality of historical—and by extension the actual—Mexicans, a political history of the Mexica tracing the founding of *México* and the Aztec empire, and the etymology of the name *México* that takes seriously the manner in which historical developments and events condition the most plausible

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<sup>87</sup> Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de México*, 7:199–200.

<sup>88</sup> H. Guillaume, "The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites, FANUM MARTIS (Famars) Nord, France.," Perseus Digital Library, 1976, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0006:entry=fanum-martis-2>.

<sup>89</sup> Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de México*, 7:200–201.

meaning of a term. Yet being an expression of a minor tendency in the cultural and governmental politics of Bourbon Spain and New Spain, the idea of *México* found in Clavijero's work appears as a fragmentary notion that would have to take some time to further crystallize into a conceptual form.

Though Clavijero wrote and published from an ocean away, word of his literary production filtered its way into the circles of Novohispanic writers and thinkers. José Antonio Alzate was among the most prominent of these Novohispanic interlocutors with Clavijero's writings. Already a widely-regarded scientist and scientific journalist in correspondence with the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Royal Botanical Garden in Spain, Alzate and Clavijero both understood *México* in the previously-mentioned senses: as spatial-geographical in referring to *México* as the capital of the Novohispanic kingdom, a discrete linguistic designation called *la lengua/idioma mexicana*, a demographic term designating both an historical people and a segment of the indigenous population *la nación mexicana*, and as an historical political identity *el imperio mexicano*. Also, much in the way that Clavijero does, Alzate takes pains to underscore the contributions of indigenous ingenuity and scientific observation that figure into the how the *mexicano/mexicana* and *México* appears as an object.

Alzate's work brings closer together the concepts of nature (*naturaleza*), *México*, and *patria*, a contribution that has its beginnings as early as his publication of the *Diario Literario de México* in the 1760s. His approximations of *México* with *la Nueva España* or *América*, approximations that characterize the blurred lines between these terms, nevertheless place *México* deeper into the discursive mechanisms of the natural sciences (i.e., scientific research, handwritten and printed correspondence among scientists in Europe and the Americas) and their practical applications (i.e., agriculture, mining, medicine, education). Alzate does this in two ways: by vindicating the concept of nature and its robustness as intrinsic to the Americas against the slanders and slights of the highly speculative natural historians from Europe like Pauw, as well as by describing the aspects of the natural world that are singular to *la Nueva España/América* as a region or realm and *México* as a locality. Answering the slanders of the French *Encyclopédistes* whom he accuses of "...injur[ing] our nation with false suppositions, satires, and taunts" and in effect replicating a kind of political disempowerment in the world of letters through a condescension that could be readily recognized as consistent with the colonist's conceit. For he remarks, the *Encyclopédistes* "...have come to do much worse, for it is distorting history to dispossess us of those heroic actions that no other nation could likewise present."<sup>90</sup> One principal effect is to judge and present the fruits of the nature from New Spain useless and thus unworthy of cultivation: "How many materials are reputed to be useless in New Spain, which transported to Europe would be advantageous? More than the gold and silver that capture our senses and make us to not even procure to avail ourselves of every other material that Nature tirelessly provides?"<sup>91</sup> Alzate's statements on this matter betray an awareness of the damaging practical ramifications stemming from misrepresentations that keep Novohispanic society enthralled relatively impractical

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<sup>90</sup> José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez, *Gacetas de Literatura de México*, Reimp., vol. 2 (Puebla: La Oficina del Hospital de San Pedro, á cargo del ciudadano Manuel Buen Abad, 1831), 162, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5324329654>.

<sup>91</sup> Alzate y Ramírez, 2:166.

financial and economic imperatives, imperatives dictated by the Spanish Empire's increasingly tenuous and unsustainable project of financing its participation in the geopolitical struggle of European empires.

While Alzate's discourse against European misrepresentations emphasizes the singular aspects of the natural world in New Spain as evidence, that same singularity is often a source for practical use, exchange, commerce, and profit. Alzate concludes his "Topological description of México" [*Descripción topográfico de México*] from the November 2-16, 1790 edition of the *Gacetas de Literatura de México* with an appeal for his readers and naturalists to pay attention, noting that, "Nature in New Spain manifests many natural portents that should not be ignored by those who dedicate themselves to knowing what nature is and its rare productions."<sup>92</sup> As Landívar's *Rusticatio Mexicana* aims to transform the spaces of the countryside into the unadorned space of productive labor and how Clavijero's short pieces argue for the commercial usefulness of goods from New Spain, Alzate's scientific journalism has its sight directed at similar goals.<sup>93</sup> Several of his works aim to open a path for placing the unique natural gifts of New Spain's and Mexico's into the mechanisms and discourses of political economy, political science, and economic government. Alzate makes some telling remarks on the health and economic benefits of American scientific research in an article from the Summer of 1788. He announces a prize of 800 pounds in Lyon to anyone who can resolve the problem of determining the most parsimonious way to detect and quantify the amount of alum mixed into dark wines in order to best stabilize and clarify them for consumption. But Alzate does not just dedicate this task for simply improving French vinification and oenology, but to also improve the production of domestic spirits, which Novohispanic and American producers can introduce into the circuits of global commerce. He concludes his "Important Notice" (*Noticia Importante*) with the following remarks:

A question of so much interest presented to the world by print does not exclude Americans from competing towards resolving the difficulty. Do we have our hands tied? The wise government does not procure for everyone every means possible to promote education? Let us then pursue to contribute to the resolution that interests the Europeans so much in order to obtain the greatest possible advantage on our part by expending the effects of commerce; and for the inhabitants of America to circulate so many and so rare productions of Nature into the market. Furthermore: how much could it be said that it would redound to the pleasure of our pious sovereign and at the same time be of relief to the most helpless inhabitant of America? The enterprise is grave and delicate: political science, economy, and a prudent moderation should serve as our north star to arrive at our desired port, that which can be gained, if the imagination would be subject to certain rules that are not difficult to follow in practice.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Alzate y Ramírez, 2:52

<sup>93</sup> Antony Higgins, *Constructing the Criollo Archive: Subjects of Knowledge in the Bibliotheca Mexicana and the Rusticatio Mexicana* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2000), 229.

<sup>94</sup> José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, *Gacetas de Literatura de México*, vol. 1 (Puebla: La Oficina del Hospital de San Pedro, á cargo del ciudadano Manuel Buen Abad, 1831), 50, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b4242201>

Inasmuch as the problem that Alzate passes along to his readers is practical, he approaches the problem in a way that is informed by a set of suppositions and objectives that extend beyond the immediate context. It is clear enough that Alzate's writings connect scientific inquiry and commerce; the historian of science Tomás Calvo portrays how Alzate's thought unfolds along these lines. Calvo notes that Alzate's scientific enterprise is primarily pragmatic and readily spills past its immediate boundaries, thus bestowing upon scientific endeavor the status of a gateway to the economic realm.<sup>95</sup>

According to Thomas Calvo, Alzate presented a studied indifference to political questions within the pages of the *Diario Literario* and the *Gacetas*, with his statements relating to politics or governance appearing as implications of having used a form of practical reasoning transformed and heightened by scientific training. To this Alzate remarked early in his career, "The sciences do not affect *patria*; nations change their knowledge, and this is the practice in all times."<sup>96</sup> A critical implication follows from this observation on the part of Alzate: that conceiving of the *patria* depends on the attentiveness of a nation's inhabitants to the singularities, rhythms, and intrinsic wealth of the natural world surrounding the inhabitants. Thus, while Alzate's scientific inquiries do not have politics as their primary object, pragmatic concerns animate his discourse, thus allowing science to affect *patria* indirectly. These metapolitical concerns appear in terms of what science's work of interpreting nature can contribute to the welfare of New Spain through the minds of its inhabitants and leaders, whether in the form of new ways of deriving economic value, improving products or processes, or developing machines for practical and economic benefit.<sup>97</sup> Alzate orients this discourse yet further than these more immediately technological and economic benefits, insofar as these benefits touch upon the objectives of government, the principal of which was *felicidad*, or the happiness or felicity of society and state alike.<sup>98</sup> *Patria* falls within this schema of society, state, territory, and human practices, a sentiment that Alzate draws upon in the opening line of the previously-mentioned *Descripción Topográfica de México* and at the beginning of an article on agriculture, pieces both published in early 1791. In the *Descripción Topográfica* he emphasizes the importance of practical knowledge with respect to the country that one inhabits:

Practical knowledge with respect to the country that one inhabits greatly influences civil uses. It is always useful to know that nature is the terrain upon which one steps, of the waters that nourish, or for the arts the time and directions that the winds blow and the

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<sup>95</sup> Thomas Calvo, "Ciencia, Cultura y Política Ilustradas (Nueva España y Otras Partes)," in *Las Reformas Borbónicas, 1750-1808*, ed. Clara García Ayuardo, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Historia. Serie Historia Crítica de Las Modernizaciones En México 1 (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 116.

<sup>96</sup> José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, *Obras*, ed. Roberto Moreno, vol. 1 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1980), 134–35, Thomas Calvo, "Ciencia, Cultura y Política Ilustradas", 108.

<sup>97</sup> Calvo, "Ciencia, Cultura y Política Ilustradas (Nueva España y Otras Partes)", 117.

<sup>98</sup> Calvo remarks that this particular emphasis on *felicidad* was a widely held presupposition in Hispanic and Novohispanic scientific discourses in the context of the Spanish and Spanish-American Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. He quotes Eugenio Espejo, the physician and lawyer in Quito who lamented the lack of a systematic approach that could advance two linked aims: promoting *Felicidad publica* and directing future life. See Calvo, 90–101.

places that are more or less sickly.<sup>99</sup>

And in the article on agriculture, he extends the domain that particular forms of knowledge and practice can affect onto the broader map of the nation and *patria*. In effectively turning agriculture into a form of patriotic service he praises the lettered enterprise that counters what he understands to be the tendency to alienate agricultural practice from knowledge:

Agriculture, this so profitable art so important and so proper to the destiny of man, doubtlessly deserves some attention from anyone that dedicates himself to serving his *patria* and nation with his industry and lights. And I have not very lively expressions to praise the zeal of those men of letters that have employed their eloquence, to uproot them from the concept of certain men the ill-fated preoccupation that made them regard the cultivation of land like a low and servile occupation, nor with those writers that have procured to reduce the practices of agriculture to the body of doctrine.<sup>100</sup>

Placing these passages in tandem illustrates the way that Alzate's works, like those of some of his other Novohispanic contemporaries, lay out the concepts of Nature, *Patria*, Nation, and human destiny in close proximity to animate the kind of changes of mind and outlook that could stir the desires and passions of readers and to have those readers invest their energies into a budding conception of themselves in the world. And when placed alongside ever more elaborate and sophisticated ways of regarding and thinking about *México*, these terms, concepts, and variables that vary enough from more predominant conceptions of *México* as a geopolitical abstraction.

### *Conclusion: Crisis, Discursive Change, and the Sources of Spirituality*

In 1803, the print house of Doña Maria Fernandez Jauregui—a shop in the heart of Mexico City whose output mirrored very well the intellectual and conceptual changes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—<sup>101</sup> printed and distributed a text by José Ignacio Heredia y Sarmiento, a priest, ecclesiastical court judge, and professor of Rhetoric at Mexico City's Pontifical Seminary College. The titular text, a printed version of a sermon that he delivered regarding the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the basilica dedicated to her on her feast day in 1801 was only well-received by the ecclesiastical censors.

But that printed sermon made up less than half of the book's text. Taking up almost ninety pages of the book's 156 pages, the other text seems largely out of place. For that piece, entitled "Resumen histórico de las principales naciones que poblaron el país de Anáhuac, o el Virreynato de Nueva España" (Historical resumé of the principal nations that populated the land of Anáhuac, or the Viceroyalty of New Spain), is a highly condensed version of Clavijero's history and genealogy of the Mexica and pre-Columbian rulers, replete with full-page illustrations portraying the lives of pre-Columbian Aztecs and a map of the city of México-Tenochtitlan drawn by his

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<sup>99</sup> Alzate y Ramírez, *Gacetas de Literatura de México*, 2:41.

<sup>100</sup> Alzate y Ramírez, 2:133.

<sup>101</sup> Ana Cecilia Montiel Ontiveros, *En la esquina de Tacuba y Santo Domingo: la imprenta de María Fernández de Jáuregui: testigo y protagonista de la cultura impresa 1801-1817* (México: Sísifo Ediciones, 2015), 18.

brother, a well-known surveyor and architect. In this second piece, Heredia y Sarmiento recounts the well-known story of the founding of Mexico City and its meaning:

Here they found a cactus upon a stone, and an eagle seated atop it: for which they called that lineage of nobles and its new foundation Tenochtitlan. The Mexica(ns) took possession of that site, which was composed of various islets within the lake, where they build a cabin to their God Huitzilopochtli, and around it the most meager of habitations, made of canes and reeds.

This was the beginning of the Grand City of Tenochtitlan, which with time came to be the Court of an immensely powerful Empire, and the largest and most beautiful City of this new world. They also called it *México*, which signifies the place of Mexitli, their tutelary God commonly known as Huitzilopochtli. México was founded in the year *Ome Calli*, or 1325, when the Chichimec Quinatzin reigned in Tezcucó.<sup>102</sup>

That the book passed muster with the ecclesiastical licensers and censors indicate that they hardly read Heredia y Sarmiento's texts as being controversial. However, this approval came at the cost of dissociating the indigenous Mexicans of the bygone era from those of the early nineteenth century. In a withering judgment that expropriates the history of the indigenous people from its subjects and heaps contempt upon the indigenous Mexicans of 1803 and the paganism of the pre-Columbian Mexica, Fr. Manuel de la Anunciación still finds some usefulness in this history. He notes, "Finally, it is a historical summary, but is useful, curious, and helps *form the idea of who indigenous Mexicans were in another time*, completely dissimilar to the present ones: through their idiocy and stupidity want to keep many illiterate and with little instruction, judging of them, that in the middle of their Paganism, accredited themselves as rational, wise, and politic."<sup>103</sup> It is unclear in what way the censor understood the history narrated in the "Resumen Histórico" to be useful. Yet, his remarks about the idea of the indigenous peoples that Heredia conveys in his work stand out, if only for the importance that even a ho the way that it is one of the many master tropes of creole patriotism and Novohispanic nationalism that appear in the same text.

In highly condensed form, Heredia y Sarmiento's book contains the elements of an idea of *México* will unfold in future years: the Virgin of Guadalupe, the political history of pre-Columbian rulers, the retelling of the foundation of México-Tenochtitlan that describes the eagle upon the cactus, the allusions to the *Imperio mexicano*, the etymological reflections on the proper name *México*, the reference *México* as a geographic and historical entity, and as a vanquished

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<sup>102</sup> Joseph Ignacio Heredia y Sarmiento, *Sermón Panegírico de La Gloriosa Aparición de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe: Que En El Día 12 de Diciembre de 1801 Dixo En Su Santuario El Dr. D. Joseph Ignacio Heredia y Sarmiento* (Mexico: Impresa de Doña M. Fernandez Jauregui, 1803), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008418156>. Heredia y Sarmiento explicitly cites Clavijero's text as a source and repeats the etymology of the name México almost verbatim from the Jesuit's writings. Cf. Francesco Saverio Clavijero, *Historia Antigua de Mexico*, ed. Mariano Cuevas, 2. ed. rev. y cor., Colección de Escritores Mexicanos (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A, 1958), vols. 7:200; 10:14. and Francisco Javier Clavijero, "Descripción de La Ciudad de México, Capital de La Nueva España," in *Tesoros Documentales de México—Siglo XVIII. Colección de Documentos Inéditos o Muy Raros*, ed. Mariano Cuevas, Rafael de Zelis, and Antonio López de Priego (México: Editorial Galatea, 1944), 313.

<sup>103</sup> Joseph Ignacio Heredia y Sarmiento, *Sermón Panegírico*, Emphasis mine.



empire whose elements remain almost three-hundred years after the fall of the *imperio mexicano*. Published just eight years before the Insurgency began, Heredia's text integrates some of the minor formulations for *México* in a way that goes by fairly undetected by the gatekeepers of the major language; that it seems so common and unremarkable indicates just how these new variations for understanding *México* were becoming available and were becoming ripe for their future rearticulations.

### *A Return to the Field of Contention: Variant Ideas of México*

As noted earlier in this chapter, the better part of one century's worth of life under a new form of governmental rule produced decisive and lasting changes to Novohispanic society and to the ways that its people spoke, the rules and norms under which they could speak authoritatively, the rules and norms governing these forms and allowances, and the distributions of linguistic patterns and the meaning of concepts. These rules, distributions, allocations, and paths of discourse formed a system of references by which subjects emerged and formed, and which individuals navigated the spaces they inhabited and established a relationship with those places. Its governing semiotic form became increasingly systematic, rigid, surveilled, and disciplined.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the term *México* is put to use along at least two principal tendencies. The first is the constant, standard Spanish expression of *México* during this period, indicative of a majoritarian tendency that circumscribes and limits its usage to spatial and historical coordinates. By contrast, another, minoritarian tendency utilizes *México* in different ways to explore its potentialities and procure variations of its use. This first tendency is aligned closely to a semiotic framework that formalizes expression and orders meaning (a regime of signs), that emphasizes the role of language to express content. In this manner of arrangement, words emanate from the Enlightened Despot who is at its center, while his ministers and functionaries in the bureaucracy who handle language like priests in the secular world who interpret and reproduce the King's will in speech and writing. In this schema, acts of governance compliant with the Despot's will are aimed at returning to the Despot his words in a realized manner.<sup>104</sup> It is a regime that uses history to fix past powers, including that of language, and to apply them in the present. The second tendency, however, operates more furtively, even haltingly. It seeks out different ways of using language, transposing words, and working with the substance of language, imbuing a word with many meanings. It consists not only by using those past and present powers, but by searching out language's potentialities and anticipating its future abilities.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> It is an economy and organization that maps closely with Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the paranoid-despotic, signifying regime, which they call the signifying semiotic. Such a semiotic order, they note, can be identified with the following aspects: "overcoding is fully effectuated by the signifier, and by the State apparatus that emits it; there is uniformity of enunciation, unification of the substance of expression, and control over statements in a regime of circularity; relative deterritorialization is taken as far as it can go by a redundant and perpetual referral from sign to sign." See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 135.

<sup>105</sup> Deleuze, & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 124. One such minor experiment with conceptions of Mexico can be found in the work of another Jesuit writer from the era. Father Diego José Abad, a neo-Latin poet and classicist who was a confrere of Landívar and Clavijero's, published the first two editions of his work *De Deo*,

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the population of New Spain had borne the brunt of reforms to the structure and operation of government that were not immediately directed at the prosperity and *felicidad* of those whose labors benefited the Spanish ruling class in the Viceroyalty and on the Continent. For all of their modernizing impulses, the Bourbon reforms also created blockages that limited the ability of someone born in New Spain to assume more prominent roles in governing the Viceroyalty; those same reforms forced members of indigenous communities in the country to migrate to Mexico City and aggravated their collective immiseration. Those blockages manifested themselves in a decay in social mobility in New Spain, with severe economic inequality and asymmetries of political power exacerbating the sense of immobility and limited possibility, which in turn precipitated the drive for asserting independence.<sup>106</sup> Inasmuch as the Napoleonic invasion of 1808 and the cause of restoring Ferdinand VII to the monarchy precipitated the rise of the insurgency, the Bourbon state's project of enhancing its wealth and political power while attempting to improve the material conditions of its subjects. Yet addressing the Spanish state's expensive priorities came at the cost of its subjects' lives and prosperity. For Novohispanics who were largely shut out of the Spanish state's apparatus, revolting against the crown and destroying the means by which Spain was gathering its power: the military-fiscal bureaucracy.<sup>107</sup>

However, despite the political and fiscal arguments for independence—because new taxation regimes were too onerous or the imperial state too powerful—other arguments and other forces were involved in securing independence. They were also ethical and moral, in the sense that one that could criticize the harms that the Spanish Crown was perpetrating against the peoples and nations of colonized territories, but to also become the kind of subjects that could resist, defend, and rebuild those territories in a new image and likeness. The ways that different members of Novohispanic society used and thought about *México* figure prominently in this political struggle. In the major Spanish-speaking semiotic regimes concerning Spanish America, *México* becomes a function of the political science of governance. While *Mexico* designates a capital point on the surface of rule and governance that is called *Nueva España*, it is used as an instrumental or pragmatic figure. Using *México* to govern is to mark the intersections of several lines traversing space and defining a space. Moreover, the lines crossing the space signified by the term *Mexico* operate in accordance with the priorities of governance animating reformist projects. An unconscious, if unintended, effect of this diminished valuation of the term *México* in the late eighteenth century was that it created a space for some writers and thinkers born in New Spain to evaluate and use the term in different ways. By drawing on extensive archives to reinterpret those local histories, languages, lifeways, and traditions, later thinkers and writers could take those

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*Deoque Homine Carmina Heroica* ('Heroic Verses on God, and on God as Man') under a pseudonym that Hellenized the Nahuatl meaning of the term *México* as the city of the moon—Labbe Senopolitaus (Citizen of the City of the Moon). For as Andrew Laird recounts, Abad's biographer Manuel Fabri clarified the source of Abad's pseudonym, "He called himself Labbe by changing his own name slightly, and Selenopolitanus, or 'Citizen of the City of the Moon'—that is what 'Mexico' Means in the language of his fatherland, as most people believe." See Laird, *The Epic of America*, 26.

<sup>106</sup> Pietschmann, *Acomodos políticos, mentalidades y vías de cambio*, 291.

<sup>107</sup> Arnold, *Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats in Mexico City, 1742-1835*, 3.

sources to discover, invent, and advocate for *México* as more than just a colonial capital with a long-vanquished past.

It could be asked how this chapter is not simply retelling of the story of *creole patriotism* or *creole nationalism* that historians of colonial Latin America have long held. While acknowledging the importance of creole patriotism or creole nationalism as ways to characterize ideological formations, tracking the uses of *México* in language—as well as the practical contexts of those uses and the meanings they convey—can illuminate the kinds of processes that could do more than just foment patriotic fervor or to propagate the nation's myths and origin stories. Rather, mapping the ways that identifying with and recognizing oneself through names such as *la América Mexicana*, *Anáhuac*, *la República Mexicana* show how the subjects of such patriotism emerge and come to be. In short, it is to discern how speaking, uttering, or writing *México* are labors of discursive exertion to generate a collective idea or concept. This struggle for sense would entail adjusting to new historical circumstances, attending to shifting meanings, and creating new ways to understand the world being inhabited and re-formed, all of these are the kinds of adjustments that spiritualities could mediate. The next two chapters will explore different aspects of this discursive labor that political spiritualities performed to better understand how *México* becomes a more defined idea, or even a concept. Chapter 3 will explore the spiritualities implied in the discourses during the protracted struggle for independence between 1810 and 1821 in order to discern what was at stake in the political spirituality of the insurgency. The fourth and final chapter will discuss one important proposal for elaborating a political spirituality within the context of seeking out a more fully developed idea of *México* as the armed struggles near their end and new political struggles unfold in a new paradigm.

## Chapter 3

# Becoming *Americano*: Insurgent Political Spirituality and the Form of Insurgent Subjectivation

### *Introduction: Spirit and the World—Presenting the Self as ‘Americano’*

In the end, there is no explanation for the man who revolts. His action is necessarily a tearing that breaks the thread of history and its long chains of reasons so that a man can genuinely give preference to the risk of death over the certitude of having to obey...

...If there are societies which hold firm and live, that is to say, if there are powers that are not ‘absolutely absolute’ it is due to the fact that behind all the submissions and the coercions, and beyond the menace, the violence, the persuasion, there is the possibility of that moment when life will no longer barter itself, when the powers can no longer do anything, and when, before the gallows and the machine guns, men revolt.

-Michel Foucault, “Is it useless to revolt?”

Because of the Spanish Crown’s and Catholic Church’s centuries-long ties, it is neither novel nor controversial to assert that the religious and theological discourses of Catholicism inescapably permeated the discourses of spirituality and politics before and during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This permeation was global in scale, for Spain’s Empire extended from the East Indies in the Philippines, through the Americas, and across the Atlantic into European territory, introducing administrators from Spain to conduct missionary, educational, administrative, and commercial functions. These conditions over the *langue-durée* of early modernity cultivated a milieu of religion and politics that created different forms of becoming a subject through technologies of law, caste, class, social standing, birth, and wealth. Alongside these technologies, religious discourses mediated both ordinary life and the meaning of political acts on a broader scale. By 1810, conditions were ripe for the Novohispanic insurgency of 1810 and the movements for American independence in South America to draw from that ground of spiritual techniques and create ways of becoming *americanos*, and later *mexicanos*.

These forms of becoming operate amid a political tension that documents from the period of the insurgency, a tension between the insurgent drive for articulating independence and the reactive measures on the part of the Crown and Church. The two poles of this tension make up the general frame in which the political problems concerning the name, idea, and concept of *México* takes form. Proceeding from the supposition that spiritual practices can and do have political functions, this chapter will inquire about the extent to which these practices and

discourses come to bear on elaborating a concept of *México*. How important a role does a political spirituality have in creating a subjective disposition that can speak, hear, and live *México*? To what extent do the discourses and practices of insurgency move in the direction of uttering *México* as a function of political spirituality?

In this chapter I argue that, while *América* and *americano* were the principal political points of reference, the political spirituality of the early Novohispanic insurgency helped create conditions through which the idea of *Mexico* could emerge in later years. Through acts of reading, writing, reflection, and willful practices of identification and appropriation, discourses and practices of political spirituality contested relationships between power, subjects, and language along three lines. First of these is the line of truth and subjectivity. The political spirituality of the insurgency conceived an idea of truth the conditions on which could be affirmed a political achievement congruent with the political aims of procuring better government and political independence from a hegemonic empire. On the side of the subject, political spirituality would play out these struggles between countervailing powers on levels of desire, affection, and enunciation. Secondly, political spirituality during the Novohispanic insurgency made the question of freedom or revolt turn on a dialectical interplay of fidelity and infidelity, with the figure of the rebel becoming the focus of discourses pertaining to pursuits such as militancy, sacrifice, allegiance, or betrayal. Lastly, since the emergence of insurgents pose questions and challenges to the speaking subject and its relationships, these questions stand to and transform the presuppositional terms that allow the name being uttered to be meaningful in different contexts. In the case of the Novohispanic insurgency, the key presuppositional term to be examined is 'nature', or *naturaleza*. It is a term of art used in the political and legal thinking at the time to refer to conventions, norms, and forms of social life; these include ideas of law and rights, social arrangements, concepts of citizenship, and the concept of the nation, which is endowed with the power of being the subject of political history.

While this chapter includes the writings and proclamations of major figures associated with Mexican independence—Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, José María Morelos, Ignacio Rayón and others—the labor of elaborating the idea of *América* or *México* was not theirs and theirs alone to perform. There were of course, the Royalist forces who sought to put down the rebellions, sometimes uttering and writing expressions similar to those that the insurgents themselves used. But these parties had differing notions about the ideas, concepts, or goals of their respective causes. The idea emerges when individual subjects themselves revolt to advance the cause of independence, some of whom the state does not lionize or use as propaganda, people who do not have political or critical biographies written about them. Many of the documents will have names attached to them. Others will for whatever reason remain anonymous, their names not committed to paper or stored in a state archive in Mexico City. Yet whether attributed an authorial name or not, the documents dramatize how the insurgents placed themselves on the farthest reaches of the known, the familiar, the historical, with little guarantee as to the outcome.

## *Truth, Affection, and Desire in Insurgent Political Spirituality*

There is no right to say: 'Revolt for me, there is a final liberation coming for every man.' But I am not in agreement with someone who would say: 'It is useless to revolt; it will always be the same thing.' One does not make the law for the person who risks his life before power. Is there or is there not a reason to revolt? Let's leave the question open. There are revolts and that is a fact. It is through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but that of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life....

-Michel Foucault, "Is it useless to revolt?"<sup>1</sup>

The first few months of the insurgency proceeded at a feverish pace and questions of truth were never distant from the polemics and controversies engulfing New Spain. Activity was taking place on battlefields, meetings of insurgents, and the pages of insurgent decrees, royalist declamations, and statements from Church officials. Within two weeks of Hidalgo having declared Novohispanic independence from the courtyard in Dolores, denunciations from the ecclesial and civil authorities began flying at Hidalgo. Among those denunciations was that of his erstwhile friend the bishop of Valladolid Manuel Abad y Queipo, who on September 24, 1810 delivered the first edict excommunicating Hidalgo and lodged an accusation against Hidalgo before the tribunal of the Inquisition.<sup>2</sup> While the insurgent campaigns proceeded apace, the tribunal of the Inquisition quickly followed suit and issued a blizzard of statements about Hidalgo in early October, culminating in an edict summoning Hidalgo to contest charges of heretical depravity, apostasy, and other offenses.<sup>3</sup> For his part, Hidalgo replied with an impassioned, defiant *Manifiesto* that is one part *apologia*, another part critique of the Spanish oppression of the Americas, and yet another part a proposal for forming an independent government. But it is a document that, couched in the language of a sermon, relies on the discursive practices and techniques of political spirituality to encourage its readers to reflect on their conditions, apprehend the truth of the situation that *Americanos* encounter, and discern their true interests as *Americanos*.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the *Manifiesto*, Miguel Hidalgo defends his name by appealing first to the religious faith consecrated by his baptism. He then turns to counter the charges of heresy by emphasizing the Catholic religion's role in establishing the metaphysical and moral grounds of a truth that believers affirm by adhering to the church's dogmatic proclamations. The objective of this maneuver is to dispel whatever doubts the Inquisition's edicts might have produced in its readers.

Hidalgo's affinity with Church doctrine notwithstanding, he quickly moves to more secular political matters. Because discourses of political spirituality aim to discern truth from falsehood

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, "Is It Useless to Revolt?," in *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, doc. 331, 147-151.

<sup>3</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 342, 176-179.

<sup>4</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 375, 304.

and give form to the subjectivity needed to apprehend and live that truth, documents such as the *Manifiesto* uses the technique of *inductio* to create a virtual dialogue with his reader taking the form of spiritual direction. He appeals to his readers' ability to distinguish the true Catholicism, patriotism, and political liberty of the insurgents from the politically motivated appeals to religion, money, and oppression on the part of the Royalist factions whose character is incapable of sincere forms of political friendship. In impassioned hortatory Hidalgo advances an idea of truth as an anchoring point for correctly discerning the form of life that supports the insurgency's aims and a form of American citizenship. It does so by urging its readers to become attentive and test their impressions, meditate on their genuine interests, and to carefully take measure of and make discerning choices about the political and moral character of their friendships. To that last point, Hidalgo advises his readers to not succumb to the seductive voice of Royalist forces who conceal their greed with religious sentiments and appeals to a specious friendship.<sup>5</sup>

The early insurgency's political spirituality was not just geared toward apprehending or discerning the truth of a situation. It had a more proleptic function; in the urgency of the moment, the truth was something to be declared and fought over as a defining political aspect of being *Americano*. The struggle for truth is a struggle of ordering statements and utterances along forms of power relations and establishing the criteria for distinguishing truth from falsehood, with the effects of power attached to the 'truth.'<sup>6</sup> In the case of the royalists, the struggle was to keep New Spain within the imperial system and to effect a subordination under the paternalistic crown. On the side of the insurgency, the case was not as clear. At first, the insurgency sought to maintain some proximity to what Hidalgo and Morelos regarded as the usurped Spanish Crown. The insurgent break for wholesale independence from Spain was to then assert a struggle to dislodge the power of the truth of *América*, (and later *la América Mexicana*), from the system of Spanish hegemony to establish a governing structure that could ostensibly create a new regime of truth and political power.

As the early insurgency pitched exhortations to truth in situations defined by military struggle, a document from time leading up to the 1813 Congress of Apatzingán directs discourses of truth to the politics of independence and self-governance. A *Manifiesto* from José María Morelos (Hidalgo's chief lieutenant and successor) from February of 1812, invites his readers to become truth-speaking subjects about the nature of the cause of independence, saying:

Americanos. It is now time to speak the truth as it is in itself. The *gachupines* are naturally impostors and with their sophistries they endeavor to hallucinate you so that you do not follow this party. Our cause is not directed at any other thing but to represent America by our own selves in a Council of people chosen from every province in whom, in the absence and captivity of the Lord Don Ferdinand the VII of Bourbon, sovereignty is deposited, that they hand down gentle laws and accommodated for our government, and that fomenting and protecting the Christian religion in which we live, conserve for us the rights of free men, reviving the arts that aid society, covering us from the interior

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<sup>5</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 375, 306-307.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual," trans. Colin Gordon, *Radical Philosophy*, no. 17 (Summer 1977): 12–14, [https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/issue-files/rp17\\_article2\\_politicalfunctionofintellectual\\_foucault.pdf](https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/issue-files/rp17_article2_politicalfunctionofintellectual_foucault.pdf).

convulsions of the evil men and liberating us from the devastation and ambushes with which they stalk us.

It is true that the *gachupines* treat us like heretics, thieves, and murderers, as extortionate, lustful, and impolitical men. Yet pay attention that it is an old custom for them to discredit those who they have as contraries in order to reconcile some people to their will.

Wretches!<sup>7</sup>

Following a classical formulation that makes utterances such as sophisms the diametric opposite to truth, the document ties together acts of truth-telling, the forms mediating the relationship between the *Americano* subject with Morelos, and the tasks and goals for representative self-government that the insurgent government proposes. From a disposition that makes truth-speaking a matter of stating the case directly, Morelos frames self-governance as emanating from a forthright assessment of the circumstances. It is also through speaking truthfully that the American vouches for her sobriety and probity, which allows her to sift through the illusions and impostures coming from adversaries. Furthermore, the ethical quality of the *Americano's* probity makes a body of local representatives a trustworthy repository for directing sovereign power. It is the precondition for creating mild laws, protecting liberty, ensuring security, and animating the practices and arts that support the social life of the *Americano* people.

Because the field of public discourse in the early insurgency was populated with religious and political expressions, apprehending the broader epistemological implications of discourses of political spirituality becomes more difficult. Yet failing to show how truth functions both in the domain of political spirituality and risks isolating truth as a mere subjective impression or dislodging truth from its broader social functions. The concern with truth in political spirituality is not just a question of personal affirmation or adherence to any such statement. Rather it is a matter of locating the words and acts of subjects in systems of thinking and governance. The statements of Félix María Calleja attest to this concern.

Calleja was a general and Crown functionary who, prior to being the Viceroy of New Spain from 1812 to 1816, suppressed the insurgency with extreme prejudice and brutality. He did this in part by enlisting the assistance of local, provincial militias, and creating a military structure that assumed control of civil functions and established militarized localities.<sup>8</sup> He addressed troops in a viceregal message in September of 1814, following on the heels of Ferdinand VII's restoration to

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<sup>7</sup> José María Morelos, "Manifiesto al Pueblo Mexicano para alcanzar la Independencia política. Febrero 8 de 1812", *El Congreso de Anáhuac y la Constitución de Apatzingán: obra documental*, ed. Francisco A. Ibarra Palafox, Primera edición, Serie doctrina jurídica, núm. 771 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2016), 279–83, 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> Alfredo Ávila, Virginia Guedea, and Ana Carolina Ibarra, eds., *Diccionario de La Independencia de México*, 1. ed (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Comisión Universitaria para los Festejos del Bicentenario de la Independencia y del Centenario de la Revolución Mexicana, 2010), 38-39. With respect to the period of Calleja's term as viceroy, Juan Ortiz Escamilla remarks that the war had "consolidated a new political culture linked to the use of arms, to permit a greater participation of society in political and military affairs. For its part, the Constitution of 1812 fortified this practice of upon establishing a series of institutional and social changes, as well as governmental and economic structures. The war and the Constitution permitted the emergence of a new public scene, a new way of doing politics, a new vocabulary, a new discourse, a new system of references, and a new legitimacy."



the Spanish throne. It was just prior to the insurgency establishing its government and constitution in Apatzingán in late October of that year. Addresses royalist troops as a “comrade in arms” [*compañero en armas*]. Calleja issues a military sermon to spur the morale of troops and to link the military labors of Novohispanics in the American continent with the broader Spanish project of restoring Ferdinand VII and defending the monarchy. Calleja avails himself of calling Miguel Hidalgo, then two years deceased, as the apostate who rose up against Ferdinand’s political rights. Those rights, he notes, ensure those soldier’s privileges and political exemptions, which an independent government would stand to liquidate, writing, “Sí soldados; no haya en vuestro pecho mas objeto que el Rey: su servicio os coloca entre los primeros de sus vasallos: por su servicio gozais de los altos fueros que son debidos a los defensores de la Patria y del Soberano y de los quales ibais a ser despojados en el ilusorio sistema liberal.”<sup>9</sup> Calleja’s message to the troops recognizes that more than just personal benefits are at stake. The insurgency proposed a way of governance, a way of distributing benefits and privileges in a political body, and a way of speaking about power and the mechanisms it passes through. By personalizing the benefits of the partaking in the Royalist system of thought, one with several social privileges and hierarchies of control, Calleja illuminates the systemic aspects of Spanish governmental reasoning as having practical and epistemological implications. As opposed to the true system that fidelity to the Spanish King would ensure, the insurgent’s liberal system of thinking and governing is the ephemeral and sophistic alternative. By Calleja’s lights, this alternative system derives from a way of being and acting that he believes characterizes the insurgents: lost, fearful, and monstrous.

Royalist and counter-insurgent officials were sensitive to potential that the insurgents posed to Novohispanic society.<sup>10</sup> They did not regard the insurgency’s work merely persuading or changing the opinions of otherwise obedient Novohispanics; they were actively concerned with how the insurgency aimed at gaining adherents by appealing to their material interests and embodied desires. Two erotic tropes frequently appear in counter-insurgent writings as to describe the work of individual insurgents: seduction and fornication. Manuel Abad Queipo’s first denunciation of Hidalgo from September 24, 1810 describes Hidalgo and the insurgents as “seducers of the people” [*seductores del pueblo*]<sup>11</sup>. In another documents, Don José Simeón de Uría informs Guadalajara’s city council [*ayuntamiento*] of Hidalgo’s movements, reporting that Hidalgo and his comrades have gone from town to town and luring adherents into the insurgency and activating a hatred of Spaniards, writing,

...he [has] seduced [towns] under the deceitful appearance of American liberty, of

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<sup>9</sup> AGN, “AGN GD56 Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 37, Ff. 310-311,” n.d., AGN GD65, Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 37, ff. 201-221.

<sup>10</sup> Daniele Lorenzini, “What Is a ‘Regime of Truth?’” *Le Foucauldien* 1, no. 1 (February 2, 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.16995/lefou.2>. Insofar as the subject of spirituality implicitly or explicitly assents to the utterances and propositions pertaining to the truth of the subject’s alteration that the process of subjectivation takes place. Subjectivation, Lorenzini suggests, “determines the obligations of the individuals who are implicated in it [the system of statements that makes up a regime of truth].” Because these processes of subjectivation occur in and through forms through which the self is constituted, the act of more or less conscious assent also implies that the obligations that the system of truth places upon the subject seep into the fabric of that subject’s desires, affections, and fellow feelings.

<sup>11</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, doc. 312, 92.

tributes, taxes, and of every duty. Their principal object has been to instill a mortal hatred against the Europeans in their hearts, sacking their houses and reducing them in a prison to their ultimate misery.<sup>12</sup>

As used here, the trope of seduction as a term of political art is not uncommon in writings of the time. But it alludes to how conceptions of the body politic were not simply analogies to map aspects of the social order on the image of the body. These and other counter-insurgent writings show a remarkable sensitivity to the workings of insurgent politics as the creation of a spirit and *ethos* stimulated by working on the population's bodily extensions, nerves, and desires.

Troops contesting the armed conflict were no less vulnerable to the temptations of seduction. Commanders were often concerned with how their soldiers would take to the insurgency's purported libertinism of spirit, its desires political independence, and the undoing of the viceregal fiscal and governmental order. The insurgents seemed to be striking a nerve, with royalist figures saw early insurgent efforts as successful. For instance, the *intendente* [provincial intendant] of Guanajuato pleads to Félix María Calleja for military assistance, overwhelmed because in his words, the insurgents had succeeded in seducing towns and troops: "the towns voluntarily give themselves over to the insurgents...seduction is spreading here; security is lacking; confidence is lacking...I have little gunpowder, because there is absolutely none, and the cavalry is poorly mounted and armed with nothing more than glass swords, and the infantry with patched-up rifles; it is not impossible that these troops are seduced."<sup>13</sup>

With the insurgency's early good fortunes prompting genuine concerns about the outcome of the military campaign, royalists and their allies in the Church likewise accused the insurgency's leaders of being agents of seduction, sexual licentiousness, and carnal immorality. Church officials ascribed libertinism and seduction to Hidalgo, claiming that the priest of Dolores both preached and practiced sexual deviance that defied the natural order. The Inquisition's prosecutor charged him with holding views that naturalized behaviors otherwise considered sinful, morally defiling, and against the natural order. But the Inquisitor also accuses Hidalgo of acting on those beliefs to procure women and men for him to copulate with:

.....he holds that pollution and fornication are innocent and licitly as a necessary and consequent effect of nature's mechanism; through his error he made a pact with this concubine that she find him women with whom to fornicate, and he would find her men for the same, assuring her that there is neither Hell, nor Jesus Christ, nor glory.<sup>14</sup>

Further, it is not just that Hidalgo's alleged behavior that the prosecutor finds problematic, but that Hidalgo persuades and seduces others with rationalizations that deny the central object of Catholic Christianity: Jesus Christ. The prosecutor's declamation implies that to support Hidalgo and to support political independence is to entertain an erroneous spirituality and a distorted desire that evacuates the principal source of a believer's spiritual practices and conduct in the world. Declamations on these grounds presuppose that its readers at least share, if not

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<sup>12</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, 61.

<sup>13</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 315, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 336, 163.

understand, the writer's moral assumptions and dispositions. These dispositions did not emerge spontaneously and fully formed; these sets of attitudes, desires, and moral commitments were cultivated to a greater or lesser degree through spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, study, mortification or sacrifice, and socialization.

In contrast to the previously cited declamations, some insurgent documents articulate more affirmative statements that describe and perform affection on multiple registers. Whether furtive briefs or extended discourses, statements of political spirituality, whether couched in religious terms or not, aim to cement the political kinships of its composers and addressees. A letter to Hidalgo from an insurgent militant named María Catalina Gómez de Larrondo speaks to this dynamism of formation. Gómez de Larrondo was a woman of standing and insurgent militant who married a royalist soldier-turned-insurgent. Her letter informs Hidalgo of her intercepting and capturing three royalist commanders on their way to Valladolid, where they were to assume command of royalist troops in a bid to quash the insurrection. The brief missive displays how certain militant acts aim to accomplish a goal consistent with a set of political ideas and aims:

Most Excellent Sir

Having known that three carriages with Europeans headed for Valladolid were to pass through that town, I saw to it that my inspector (given to this) aided with some [men] was challenged to head out and capture them, supposing that in this way it served Your Excellency and cooperated with your ideas. They successfully captured the , the Count of Rul, Intendent of the aforementioned Valladolid and to the Lieutenant Colonel of the Dragoons of Mexico, but with such an advantage that not a drop of blood was shed by our part and all on theirs wound up gravely injured.

I remain gloriously satisfied with having demonstrated my patriotism, and something to credit [to] Your Excellency the feelings of love and respect I have for your person.

God save Your Excellency Many Years, Acámb[ar]o. October 8 of 1811

Maria Catalina Gomez de Larrondo [paraph]

Most Excellent Sir Don Miguel Hidalgo<sup>15</sup>

But the letter also evinces a compound of exalted sentiments: an intense patriotic passion and her pride in faithfully serving the insurgency, both of which converge on Hidalgo's personage, on whom she directs her affections. The *eros* implicit in Gomez de Larrondo's affections for Hidalgo is primarily political, bound in their common love for their *patria*, counter-insurgent rhetoric about Hidalgo's spirituality casting him as aside. Gomez de Larrondo's epistle suggests that political spirituality underlies how she presents and announces her subjectivation as an insurgent in the act of writing, while cultivating military, political, and personal attachments with its addressee.

Because psychic desire and linguistic enunciation make up two aspects of the mechanism by which subjects emerge, take shape, and establish a link to truth claims, discursive gestures such as naming and assigning epithets intimate how subjectivity and truth connect through the

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<sup>15</sup> AGN, "Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 935, exp. 153, f. 293," 1811, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

intricately linked mechanisms of language and ideas. In the polemics of insurgency and counterinsurgency, epithets such as *heretic*, *judaiser*, or *protestant* circulated frequently and made epithets a regular characteristic of Novohispanic discourse. Manuel Abad y Queipo's previously cited edict from September 24, 1810, which denounced the insurgency as a destructive and anarchic plunge into civil war, shows how writers turn to names and epithets to direct the subject toward an affirmable idea about people, their deeds, and their position in the social order. For example, after commenting on what he understands to be the social and political effects of Hidalgo's project, Abad y Queipo calls the insurgency sacrilegious because, in his analysis, Hidalgo's preaching incites his listeners, especially indigenous peoples and an ignorant, less informed, general public, to commit crimes. What makes the actions sacrilegious, according to Abad y Queipo, is that the insurgency cloaks their provocations in religious garb, under the color of honoring God, the Virgin Mother, and the Catholic religion. He concludes by extending his judgment in more severe, canonically weighty terms: "not only is said project sacrilegious, but manifestly and notoriously heretical" ("...no sólo es sacrilegio dicho proyecto, sino manifiesta y notoriamente herético").<sup>16</sup>

Another document from the Governor of Querétaro from around the same time denounces Hidalgo as a "cura hereje" (the heretical priest). But it also associates the insurgents with a moral and spiritual taint that can harm indigenous Americans. The Governor poses the following questions in an imagined colloquy with the insurgents: "But perchance this judgment is as wrong as it is harmful to the *naturales* of America? Foolish if you have found men of vice and heresy who have had the disgrace of learning from you, or by force or against their will follow your delinquent's path..." (¿Pero por ventura no es este juicio tan errado como injurioso a los naturales de América? Mentecato si has hallado hombres del vicio y de la herejía que han tenido la desgracia de aprender de ti, o que violentados y contra su voluntad siguen tus pasos de delinquentes [sic]...).<sup>17</sup>

Of course, epithets such as a "heretic" do not remain in the province of political opinion; they make their way into the investigations and proceedings of the Inquisition, where a determination of a priest as a heretic, as in the case of Hidalgo, would become grounds for defrocking him, stripping him of his ecclesiastical rights (especially in relation to the Spanish Crown), and subjecting him to civil procedures, where he could be put to trial and executed.<sup>18</sup> The *Dictamen*, or initial ruling, of the Inquisition put forth to reopen Hidalgo's case for theological censure, accuses him of being Jewish for declaring that there is no original scriptural text demonstrating the arrival of the Messiah, which would question whether he was Christian, much less Catholic, in the first place.<sup>19</sup> Later on, if only to make sure that Hidalgo's heresy was complete, the Inquisition would add that Hidalgo simultaneously held to Lutheran doctrines of

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<sup>16</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, doc. 331, 149.

<sup>17</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 353, 211-213.

<sup>18</sup> The amount paperwork generated about Hidalgo far exceeds his written output. In the last year and a half of his life, the Inquisition solicited and received dozens of *denuncias* charging him as a heretic, with the final edicts leading to his defrocking developing with the inputs coming from the testimonies gathered.

<sup>19</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, doc. 333, 159.

the Eucharist and auricular confession,<sup>20</sup> with an Inquisition's informant claiming—almost to the point of absurdity—that Hidalgo held ambitions that were larger and more diabolical than Martin Luther and Thomas Munzer and planned to create an Anglican Church in America.<sup>21</sup>

Even though naming has the power to determine forms of subjectivity by describing the spiritual condition and ethical conduct of its objects, ethical conduct, an excessive reliance on overdetermining the subject of a statement risks exposing the weaknesses of the semiotic system governing their use. In the case of Royalist statements, which rely on a circular relationship of signs that emanate from and return to the sovereign, piling terms with variable meanings atop of one another risks rendering those terms meaningless. Simultaneously using terms as Lutheran, Anglican, Jewish, Heretical, Sacrilegious, Atheist in the same document cannot but raise the question: who does the Inquisition really think that Hidalgo is? What is the difference between a Jew and a Protestant? Is a Protestant not a Christian? If he is an atheist, a Protestant, and a Jew, are Protestantism and Judaism essentially atheist? Such a circular logic implied by the royalist determinations portends a collapse of meaning, a collapse that would offer an insurgency the chance to find ways to break out of the circle. Breaking out of that circle requires finding a different line through which to elaborate a concept, create names, and form subjects in a way that elude the discursive regimen centered around the King and his extension, the Bourbon-Napoleonic State.

### *Fidelity and Revolt: Forming Insurgency as a Subjective Mode*

Meeting no small amount of resistance, these movements encountered a powerful machine that could spell their demise, in part by being subjected to a storm of denunciations, interpellations, and epithets from authorities. These broadsides turned to discourses of political spirituality, while insurgents were proposing spiritualities of their own. Each spirituality posed truth and the importance of the fidelity to truth and truth speaking. These forms of speech and fidelity formed subjects by inducing practices of reflection, meditation and writing, as well as by working on addresses' sentiments, affections, and senses of friendship and community. While the insurgency sought to elaborate new ways of becoming, the Royalist forms of spirituality sought to shore up and maintain the circulation of language to support the monarchy's power to rule by the King's word or signature.

Thus, the contest of political spiritualities during the Novohispanic insurgency made truth and becoming center around an interplay of fidelity and faithlessness. The figure of the rebel emerges from this interplay to become the focus of political discourses, many of which branded insurgents as religious apostates. However, these determinations were not simply religious in scope or function. Rather, they sought to use irreligiosity as a criterion to rule out or exclude the political aspirations and practices of the insurgency. This section will inquire whether, besides the heretic or the non-Christian, what were the less explicitly religious or theologically motivated figures were available to actors in the Novohispanic political arena? What subjective conditions does the political spirituality of the insurrection both contest and advance? How does the

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<sup>20</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, docs. 344, 351 182, 199-202.

<sup>21</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 364 247-248.

insurgency's polemic between fidelity and revolt figure into the function that truth and truth-telling have in this critical period? If proper names can designate ideas or concepts, how do proper names figure in the insurgency's forms of truth and truth-telling? What relationships do the insurgent forms of spirituality have with notions of life and death?

Three non-religious figures of revolt emerge during this period to identify and classify insurgents: *pícaros* (rogues), *infidentes* (infidels), and *rebeldes* (rebels). While the *infidente* tag transposes a term from the religious and theological spheres, those of the *pícaro* and the *rebelle* emerge from the relatively more secular spheres of politics and war. As many of the documents cited in this chapter suggest, counterinsurgent documents offer no shortage of instances where their writers bestow opprobrious denotations upon their adversaries. Some documents include traces of gestures that divulge their implications, as is the case with a letter from a royalist captain in August of 1811 regarding the case of Ignacio Liceaga, the brother of a key figure in the early phases of the Novohispanic insurgency, José María Liceaga. Most notable in this document is the way that the writer, Don José Manuel Gutiérrez de la Concha, strikes through his designation of Ignacio Liceaga as "aquel Individuo," or "that Individual." De la Concha's strikethrough connotes Liceaga is not to be treated as an individual deserving of political and legal rights, but a dissolute communicator with traitors. Having dispensed with his captive's individuality, Gutiérrez de la Concha turns to two other pieces of business: seeking out deserters, and attending to some bandits in a nearby hacienda, each with the intention of meting out punishment. He writes:

Yesterday they have brought Don Ignacio Liceaga to this City's Jail, whom I sent to you by orders and to here conduct here to my disposition for the denunciation that he gave to You the lieutenant of the three Villages Don José Maria Obregón through whom ~~that Individual~~ maintained correspondence with his brother the traitor José María Liceaga, about whose particular situation I await that You tell me the most that you know to instruct so as to deliver the prisoner to the corresponding indictment.

I have ordered to prosecute the volunteers that with notable scandal have deserted this Division of your command, and I shall impose the punishment they deserve.

Although we have lost the initiative of surprising the wad of Bandits in Dos Rios, it is not for that reason that I abandoned Your [Excellency] the enterprises so that those pícaros receive the punishment their evil deeds with which I respond to your three tasks from the 23rd of this month.

God [save, etc.] Guanajuato August 25, 1811

Sir Captain Don José Manuel Gutierrez de la Concha<sup>22</sup>

In a last sentence that blurs the lines between counterinsurgent military operations and the otherwise routine task of policing property, the Captain refers to a gang of bandits (and possibly insurgents) as *pícaros* not explicitly identified with Liceaga, whose cunning appeared to have repelled Gutierrez de la Concha's surprise attack.

Commentary on Dos Rios drawn from archival research by Benjamín Arredondo notes that

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<sup>22</sup> AGN, "Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 177, exp. 149." August 25, 1811, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

the hacienda of Dos Ríos during the insurgency was in private possession, suggesting that the term *pícaro* is reserved for a kind of figure that may differ from the rebel or the infidel. Because the property was held by neither royalists nor insurgents, the term *pícaro* in this context conveys a sense of uncertainty in deciding whether the *pícaros* of Dos Ríos were either petty criminals or a band of rebels.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, by designating the subject of his last paragraph as *pícaros*—the very embodiment of the values that the Spanish ruling class abhors—he signals the bandits as rogues devoid of honor who cannot be shamed into obedience. Their quick wits and inventiveness portend trouble, for they are neither identifiable nor governable.<sup>24</sup> Alongside this tacit interpellation of the bandit as *pícaro*, Gutiérrez de la Concha characterizes the bandits' actions as *maldades* (wrongdoings), which recalls a frequently used epithet by royalists and insurgents alike: *malvado*, which can mean 'evil' as a predicate or as a subject such as 'villain' or 'evil person.' This instance of naming gives a glimpse as to how conventions of naming or designating can affix predicates to other subjects, sketching for readers a model for imagining and conceiving them without needing to have previously seen them.

Insofar as the previous example refers to ascriptions that deal with more or less non-religious themes (which religious discourses can mobilize), one concept in the discursive system appeared frequently, performing a considerable amount of work to connote qualities of insurgents and their acts: *infidente* (infidel). The term blurs the boundary between a description of moral character, in the sense of being unfaithful or disloyal, and religious category, as not being a faithful Christian. On the religious side, however, faithlessness (*infidencia*) seems to refer less to an act of apostasy, or an abandonment of a Christian faith, but a kind of misguided faith contradicting, according to Crown officials, the Catholicism of the Spanish-American authorities. An 1813 tract from a repentant insurgent in the Viceroyalty of Perú and reprinted in Guadalajara in 1814 by self-described "patriots, lovers of the truth" (*varios patriotas amantes de la verdad*) opens with a paragraph devoting attention to what sympathizers to the Spanish authorities would implicitly associate with *infidencia*. The tract's points rely on discourses of spirituality to link assertions of truth and the subjective dispositions of the adversary and to thus vindicate the royalist position as a conclusion drawn through the correct judgments of reason. The tract's author, Luis Quijano writes:

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<sup>23</sup> Citing records from the Archivo Histórico Municipal de Salamanca in Guanajuato, Arredondo notes, "...la propiedad ya estaba dividida y con distintos dueños, lo volvemos a encontrar en el documento que en plena guerra de Independencia, se levanta el comandante Antonio Linares (6), en el cual anota que Los Dos Ríos, Cañada de los Ortigas, Mesas de Acosta y Don Lucas son de varios dueños y están en el dominio de ellos mismos, lo cual quiere decir que no están tomados ni por realistas ni por insurgentes." Archivo Histórico Municipal de Salamanca. Gobierno. Censos y Padrones, Caja 84. Leg.1 See Arredondo, Benjamín "La hacienda Dos Ríos en la municipalidad de Salamanca, Guanajuato", *El Babel*, 25 August 2014, Accessed January 14, 2019, <http://vamonosalbable.blogspot.com/2014/08/la-hacienda-de-dos-rios-en-el-municipio.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Yiramihu Yovel's fascinating genealogy of the *pícaro* traces its origins in 16th century Spanish literature. Yoval reads Mateo de Alemán's 1549 novel *Gúzman de Alfarache* as an ironic response to the existential conditions of Conversos in 16th Century Spain. It is likely that residues of an anti-Semitism contaminated cultural connotations operative in Spanish notions of the *pícaro*. See Yirmiyahu Yovel, "The Birth of the Pícaro from the Death of Shame," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2003): 1297–1326, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/558614/summary>.

The surprising variety of the strange occurrences that abound in the calamitous era in which we live has blinded the spirits and preoccupied the souls in such an unusual way that it has managed to pervert public opinion and disturb generally received ideas, even varying proper sense and genuine acceptance of the most common and known voices, seeing that it is not possible to move the true nature of things. As such, rebellion is called fidelity, tyranny is called liberty, general disorder and disorganization are called good regimens, and misery and every disgrace are called happiness.<sup>25</sup>

Juxtaposing fidelity and rebellion in this manner maps neatly on the Viceroyal practice of prosecuting apprehended rebels on the grounds of *infidencia*. Additionally, this passage from Quijano indicates that the spirits and souls of subjects are the objects of his discourse and directs his piece toward remedying the ills that or mis-form a person's capacity to reason.

But a point well into the tract disabuses the reader of the sense that *infidencia* is merely a perversion of spirit or a tendency to erroneously conflate opposing categories. In a movement that proceeds to leverage the moral weight conveyed through discourses of Christian opprobrium, Quijano goes beyond faithlessness is a collaborative effort of the supernatural and the natural, the Devil and fallen man alike. "The prevaricating Angel who was the first rebel, fell from the heavens to the abyss for having tried to leave the sphere which the virtue of the Almighty had placed him in. Our first father [Adam] was created free and happy, and dominated everything to his will, but then he wanted to be independent and he lost everything; he disgraced himself and his posterity."<sup>26</sup> Eliding the difference between disobedience to the divine and the work of political independence in this way compresses the religious, the political, and the quotidian. By drawing a line from Satan through Adam and to Hidalgo in terms of a spirit of rebellion, insurgency, untruth, and vice, Quijano's broadside induces the reader to enter a space of uncertainty and a potentiality for evil and catastrophe, a space where the boundaries between rationality and faith, the revealed Christian cosmos of heaven and earth with politics and everyday life, things and words fuse. An expression like Quijano's this one shows how an expression of political spirituality can create an ontotheological binding agent, one that gives political gestures their moral and aesthetic consistency. By transporting the reader between these domains, tropes of faithlessness or infidelity prepare the ground for political theological discourses to become legible in terms of the will and willfulness and in terms of a metaphysics of reason and nature. An implication of this maneuver is that fidelity or faithlessness becomes an index of more remote ends in a system of political thinking, such as *felicidad*—happiness, the ultimate end of political activity.

But other variables come between the uses of political spirituality and how they apply to fulfilling ethical desires or ideals. Political spirituality would simply be a matter of ideology if the only what mattered was how the discourses and abstract ideals they hold to conceal material conditions. Vital, material stakes are in play in these discourses, stakes that expose their subjects

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<sup>25</sup> AGN, "AGN GD56 Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 37, Ff. 201-221," n.d., AGN GD65 Impresos Oficiales, Vol. 37, ff. 201-221. This source is a printed book archived in the AGN's Colonial Collections, entitled *Discurso sobre la insurrección de América, que escribía el Dr. Quixano, Secretario que fué del Gobierno Revolucionario de Quito*. Guadalajara: D. José Furtos Romero, 1814.

<sup>26</sup> AGN, f. 209.



to great risks, incalculable existential debts, and, in the case of under-resourced insurgents, even the means of subsistence. Some insurgent partisans sought to meet basic needs by appealing to their common cause with interlocutors, as was the case of a soldier by the name of José Miguel Hernández, who is writing in February of 1812 to the insurgent officer Colonel Francisco Ayala. Once an efficient royalist police official, Hernández had held out from entering the royalist army, much less join the insurgent cause. But a case of mistaken identity in May 1811 led to Royalist troops fatally shooting his wife, effectively turning him against the Spanish side.<sup>27</sup> From Ysucar, which Morelos had defended against a counterinsurgent attack in December of 1811, Hernández, ostensibly stationed there under Ayala's command to secure and hold the town for the insurgents, wrote to his commander pleading for long-awaited material support to satisfy his hunger, stay warm, and secure a means of transport. But he only does so once he attends to the apparent formalities that would signal to Ayala his good faith, patriotism, and devotion to *la América*. After stating his position within the corps of insurgents, he opens the note with a remark of due respect and notes that despite a mule delivery of wheat and armament, he issues the following request in terms of the risks and sacrifices he has taken as token of his faithfulness “a la Patria y a la América,” including his brother's own risk of life and limb to the insurgent cause. Hernández' letter follows:

Colonel and Commander in Chief Don Francisco de Ayala

José Miguel Hernandez, originally of San Salvador de Verde, soldier of this fourth Company of Chatula of Captain Don José Gomez. I place myself before the feet of Your Lordship with the debt I owe you, and I say: that having been the subject of the complaints about the three groups of mules that were brought to the Hacienda de Tustepec on my account, one loaded with flour and two rigged for work; nevertheless, that in this to demonstrate my fidelity to the *Patria* and to *America*. For it is thus recognized that I completely exposed my life and the life of my brother (who until now I do not know what end he might have met in Atlixe, though I know that they took him) to complete risk.

Sir I am also well-informed about all of those who denounce European goods who have been offered some part in them [confiscated European goods]. That being how it is; I do not know how Your Lordship; for I have been awaiting word. And seeing me in such an unhappy state as I find myself I do not have [more than] the clothes that I wear, without having anything to cover myself with [at] night, nor with an animal to get around on, nor other [...] I am only attending to reach a small morsel of food or so.

To Your Lordship I strongly plead that Our Mother Lady of Guadalupe is servant, that you may send me something, for it seems to be Ju[st?] that I wait upon Your Lordship's benign heart....Ysucar, 7 February 1812, [...] form to not proceed from a place of malice and I sign.

Jose Miguel ernandes [paraph.]<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Alejandro Villaseñor y Villaseñor, “Francisco Ayala,” in *Biografías de Los Héroes y Caudillos de La Independencia*, vol. 2 (México: Imprenta “El Tiempo” de Victoriano Agüeros, 1910), 93–96.

<sup>28</sup> AGN, “Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 717, exp. 20, f. 43.,” February 7, 1812, México, Archivo General de la

Consistent with the ways that spirituality draws upon religious and theological tropes to animate the spirit of a message, the last third of the letter appeals, in the name of the Lady of Guadalupe, to the goodness of Ayala's heart to deliver the kinds of provisions he needs. He followed the directives of the insurgency to denounce European goods, in spite of having been offered such goods. Whether Ayala met Hernandez' particular request or not, this minor epistle suggests that textual demonstrations of standing were important ways to signal the kind of spiritual and moral standing that would allow readers in positions of making decisions to believe that their acts of beneficence would not be committed in vain.

Among officers and warfighters in the field, their deeds—narrated and couched as they were in with tropes and formulae that are both political theological and politically spiritual in character—could allow them to climb the ranks or obtain titles. A fragment of a letter addressed to Ignacio Rayón, then at the head of the Junta Nacional de América in Zitácuaro, from 1811 illustrates how the discourse of political spirituality could help establish an interpretive frame that could place the otherwise grim business of seven months of battle into context, with the unnamed writer recounting the troop movements and exploits that resulted in thousands of dead royalist soldiers.

The letter appears to have met its objective, since an administrative note at the top of the document notes that the governing Junta granted the title the writer sought. But three excerpts from the request stand out from the viewpoint of this inquiry. The first has to do with the name under which the writer attests to be soldiering for: *la Nación Americana*. The name is and its attendant connotations are the overriding paradigm occasioning the writer's soldiering and the reportage. In pursuing the cause of the American nation, the anonymous writer appeals to Rayón in the idioms of military obedience, vassalage, moral and political virtue, Christian obligation, and a militant devotion to the Patroness of the Insurgent Cause, the Lady of Guadalupe. He writes:

To Your Excellency's power, with the greatest submission and respect that I owe before your excellency, for this I appear and say: That I do not understand the happy fortune of seeing Your Excellency since I had come from Guadalajara, with the order that was imposed upon me concerning the execution that should be effectuated in the persons of the two D.D. Francisco Teranes, Europeans that were found in this land, of whom under the order of your excellency I proceeded to its execution, undertaking to form an army as Your Excellency has commanded for the defense of the American nation as the just cause that we follow against the Europeans.

In the day I have received very much applause and rejoicing at seeing in these reconquered Provinces, the General Vicar and Colonel of the American Armies instructed that a proclamation be published, given so that the inhabitants understand, being Your Excellency Our Most Excellent Lord General of the National Junta, to whom we owe respect and obedience: of which as a faithful vassal, and affection for Your Excellency's generous attention, I give thanks owed to Our Lord God who had granted so singular a task, making the efforts of spirit, for whom with the greatest prudence and fidelity, may

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Nación.

grant the success of the enterprise in which we find ourselves against the Europeans and in favor of the Nation, Patria and Religion.

The proclamations and edicts that I brought from Your Excellency's hand, were shared at their destinations as you ordered. The first to each Chief, Captains, as with governors and Mayors of the town's indigenous, and to the Lord governor and Commander Don Felipe Landaberde, I went along sharing, to wherever the recognition of America reached, and exhorting to the compatriots that they pass along word to the rest of the nearby neighbors to take charge of their content. And the bandos were published in each reconquered town, as the shown by the Certifications that I requested that the parish priests distribute and end in my power...

In Toliman we found most of the town demolished, burned houses, Christian graves, being many the iniquities that [the Europeans] employed, taking some prominent families with them[...] some goods that were around there, such as coins of those who were given liberty by the work of god; insolently treating the parish priest and charging him of being an insurgent [...] who I passed on to bury all of the cadavers we found.

Until today I am faithful, sacrificing my life for the [...] of God, and to defend the nation in the name of Our Patron Queen Most Holy Mary of Guadalupe, to the point of shedding my last drop of blood for the faith and law that we profess as Catholics and faithful Christians.<sup>29</sup>

This letter is coherent and effective to the extent that it is a discursive artefact bringing to light how a militant form of political spirituality takes shape. Its writer locates the spirit at the point where a gratitude for the good fortune of serving ends and the exertions needed to achieve the just cause begins. His effort entails—as much as practical acumen and prudence allow—aligning the subject's spirit with the channels of conduct that pour into the insurgency's tactical goals: prosecuting the insurgency, retaking royalist strongholds, spreading the word about the American cause, and recruiting others in the work of the achieving political independence. Given the different tasks assigned to the care of military functionaries in the field of battle and the President of the governing junta of the insurgency, reading prose about otherwise general political conditions (save that of the conflict between Americans and Europeans and the cause of independence) would strike a reader as jarring or out of place. It would be against the writer's credit to issue a political screed instead of recounting the deeds performed in the service of the cause, for it would read as a form of unsubstantiated flattery or pandering. The quality of the actions he describes in his chronicle is the kind of evidence needed to have a reasonable chance of earning a title, as the actions are imbued with a subjective disposition, a sense of priorities and practical direction, a set of concrete or verifiable actions on his part, and a measured devotion to the cause that he could invoke. That way, he could reassure Rayón that he is directing his zeal in a way that is legible because it is lodged within a system of references and signals aligned with the insurgency's aims, that it is reasonable because it is measured and thought out, and that granting the request would bring further rewards because the writer further disposed to acting on behalf of

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<sup>29</sup> AGN, "Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 932, exp. 18, fs. 20-31," December 11, 1811, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

the insurgency.

This demonstrative text inserts the discursive force of political spirituality to achieve a variety of ends, beside the proximate end of persuading the insurgency's governing officials—in this case Ignacio Rayón—to grant him a title for the many feats he accomplished during this extended campaign. Alongside the Junta's decision (the anonymous writer's request was granted), there is a longer-term goal that discourses such as the ones above seek to achieve; it is to propel the movement of an insurgency from a militant form to a more formalized military and political structure.<sup>30</sup> Offering recognition and material benefits sustains the energy of the militants, propels their subsequent movements, and channels militancy into a broader project of nation-building.

However, from the viewpoint of this letter, the goal remains remote and all but certain. By the time of this letter was sent out and its request granted, royalist forces had executed first wave of insurgent leaders—Miguel de Hidalgo, Ignacio Allende, Juan Aldama, and José Mariano Jiménez—by firing squad, and their severed heads sent to hang from cages on the corners of Guanajuato's Grain Exchange, the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, where they would hang for another ten years. The Junta Nacional Gubernativa convened in August of 1811 and was in the early stages of directing the insurgency in the absence of their principal leaders, and José María Morelos was waging campaigns to the south and west of Mexico City, and would not become Captain General until late June of 1812.<sup>31</sup> Thus responding to a request such as the one analyzed above would be of some material importance to maintaining the insurgency amid its losses.

### *The Insurgent Force of Names*

Insofar as discourses are statements with a material existence,<sup>32</sup> and political spirituality functioned in the mechanisms that link truth to subjectivity and materialized outcomes through acts of reading, reflection, exercise, militancy, or zeal, it follows that one of the effects that these discourses induce or produce in a subject is that the subject anticipates some material outcomes come to pass, even in the immediate favor of the subject performing the spiritual labor. Put more crudely, what did the subjects of political spirituality stand to win through their fidelity? As it pertains to the role political spirituality in the discursive realm, there were two important

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<sup>30</sup> Congreso de Anáhuac, "Decreto Constitucional Para La Libertad de La América Mexicana" (Camara de Diputados, Octubre 1814), [http://biblioteca.diputados.gob.mx/janium/bv/md/LXII/Decreto\\_Const.pdf](http://biblioteca.diputados.gob.mx/janium/bv/md/LXII/Decreto_Const.pdf). Articles 105, 108, 111, 112, 159, and 160 of the Constitution of Apatzingán of 1814, drafted by the Insurgent Congress of Anáhuac, contemplate that the Supreme Congress has the powers of raising and regulating a militia, declaring war and ratifying peace, providing for internal tranquility and national defense, as well as placing those powers under the purview of the Supreme Government's executive power. It likewise establishes three secretariates, of which war is the first (Art. 134), and with the secretariates of treasury and governance, alternate the presidency annually, with Congress seeing to that selection process.

<sup>31</sup> Francisco A. Ibarra Palafox, ed., *El Congreso de Anáhuac y la Constitución de Apatzingán: obra documental*, Primera edición, Serie doctrina jurídica, núm. 771 (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2016), 374–75.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, 1st ed, Lectures at the Collège de France (New York: Picador, 2006), 322.

quarries. The first was to be able to contest the terms of the discursive struggle, while the second was to put forth a more meaningful alternative to names such as *Novohispano* or subject of the Spanish King.

Insurgent counter-signifying answered to the Royalist slurs with proleptic arguments, anticipating the doubts of Spanish Americans not swayed by the insurgent cause and contesting the moral quality of political allegiance through religious tropes. As importantly is how those forms of counter-signifying display an especial attention to how names and nomenclature function in their statements. In Hidalgo's *Manifiesto* defending himself from the Inquisition's edict, he appeals to *americanos* and urges them to reflect on their true interests. Turning the tables on the state's assumption of clerical matters, Hidalgo claims among other things, that the Crown and Miter were not Catholic out devotion but out of a political expedience that would stand to enrich the *gachupines*—Spanish functionaries.<sup>33</sup> To put oneself forward as an *americano* was to hold and advance political interests contesting those of the *gachupines* or *Europeos* sympathetic to Royal interests on the Iberian Peninsula.

In a similar vein, Francisco Severo Maldonado openly considers the problems raised by the sermons from Crosier friars in Querétaro accusing the insurgents as heretics, noting that besides being *gachupines*, their arguments abuse religion by placing the desire for independence on the same plane as heresy: "They add that heresy and independence, as we presently cite, are ideas so unconnected and distinct from each other, like heaven and earth: and that such a disorder needs to be looked at. [They] will say that it is a persistent error against the faith to take up arms and accomplish the judgment of overcoming or dying before subjecting oneself to the usurper Joseph Napoleon, and to the *gachupines* who pretend to hand us over to that intruder king."<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Maldonado inverts the Crosier formulation that links otherwise disparate concepts, making independence a sacred cause, with the insurgent clergy being the apostles who spread the cause of independence and among the soldiers prosecuting it; the Napoleonic takeover of the Spanish Crown invalidates the sovereign connection between the legitimate Spanish king and his subjects, and the functionaries now operating in the name of the Crown serve an illegitimate ruler and forcibly impose the Americans' dependence on a unjustly usurped power.

If—with the blessing of Church officials vetted and supervised by the Crown—the American insurgent is the Spanish Crown's heretical figure *par excellence*, insurgent counter-signifying discourse posits the *Americano*—the early insurgency's most commonly used political demonym—is the individuated form of a life in a jurisdiction called "América." But reaching such a point required an amount of labor that is difficult to quantify. But examining the discourses of political spirituality can illuminate the kinds of effort needed to do so. To realize this construction the early figures of the insurgency elaborated and wove together the strands of discourse to create the association of the proper name *América* with its subject *Americano*. The relative continuities from Hidalgo to Morelos and their successors around the idea of *América* prepare the rhetorical and intellectual grounds that later elaborations of *México* and *Mexicanos* change character from an object of derision or repulsion identified with the Spanish adversaries to a national designation

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<sup>33</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, Doc. 375, 306.

<sup>34</sup> Alfredo Ávila, ed., *El Despertador Americano*, 1. ed, Summa mexicana (México, D.F: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2010), 63.

overtaking *América*. While resistance to the condition of Spanish domination was a principal means of securing independence, it is neither the exclusive emphasis of the political spirituality, nor is it simply a negative response to the *gachupín* or the dominant theological spirituality binding the Crown and Miter. The insurgency advances a notion of governance and an idea of happiness (*felicidad*) that, while sharing discursive similarities with Spanish iterations of political ends, contains oftentimes conflicting premises and impulses: formal equality, constitutional republicanism, the aspirations of creating a Catholic nation, and the place of the indigenous and other castes in the new American nation.

### *Insurgent Political Spirituality and the Concept of 'Naturaleza'*

All the forms of liberty acquired or claimed, all the rights which one values, even those involving the least important of matters, doubtlessly find revolt a last point on which to anchor themselves, one that is more solid and near than 'natural rights.'

—Foucault, "Is it useless to revolt?"<sup>35</sup>

...amor a la patria...una impresión de la naturaleza.

—Insurgent Proclamation, 1810

With discourses of political spirituality and their practical realization working hand in hand, the Novohispanic insurgency was able to address its adversaries in theatres of struggle as important as the positions on the battlefield: the theaters of veridiction (where competing claims to know and speak the truth are organized and contested)<sup>36</sup> and subjectivation (the sites where the moral subject is constituted).<sup>37</sup> These two fronts converged on the figure of the rebel and its way of becoming through an interplay of fidelity and revolt. Becoming-insurgent in early nineteenth century New Spain entailed a set of commitments tied to acts of speaking truth as a way to politically contest the terms of power and governance and to present the self as faithful to a cause that was becoming increasingly legible as *América*. Elaborating an insurgent spirituality in New Spain during the early nineteenth century involved re-directing the widely used and accepted language of Guadalupan devotion toward a minor usage. Instead of forming the self in a way that could accommodate governance according to the demands set by the political will of the Spanish Crown, whether in the form of the monarch, regency, viceroy, or whoever administers their causes (*Justicia, Policia, Hacienda, Guerra*), the subject of revolt/rebellion interpreted its will to truth as a matter of fidelity from which a body of knowledge of its direct objects can derive.

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<sup>35</sup> Foucault, "Is It Useless to Revolt?" 133.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method," *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow, vol. 3, *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984* (New York: New Press, 2000), 233.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold I. Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," *History of the Human Sciences* 24, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 25–41, 28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695111411625>.

Such a secular fidelity permeated an individual subject's desires, interests, knowledge, statements, and accomplishments, but had to draw on some source that, while departing from the circuit of the King's "Yo," could contest the terms on which that circuit of power, discourse, and subject-formation develops.

Several of the documents previously cited in this chapter, both insurgent and royalist—the Insurgent proclamation drawing on Cicero, Morelos' *Manifiesto*, the Inquisition's *Dictamen*, and Luis Quijano's broadside—draw on a tropology of nature and the natural (*naturaleza*) to advance their claims. The political spirituality of the insurgency questioned the concept of nature as it impressed itself on the life of the *Americano*. Because *naturaleza* was a common plane of reference that could give consistency to manifold phenomena across broad domains, insurgent political spirituality could turn to the concept and its close variants to extend the subject's intensity of affect, appeal to a *sensus communis*, animate the political spirituality of creole patriotic nationalism, and transpose the products of that spirituality into the domains of law, governance, and state-formation. An equally important part of that translation of *naturaleza* in political spirituality involves how, by stabilizing ideas in discourse, the concept connects the individual subject with proper names and presents the nation as a subject of history with the proper name *América*.

When assembled, the documents that employ the concept of *naturaleza* form a bricolage offering a glimpse into the concept's tactical uses, its discursive strategies, and the domains it entered into and connected. The frequent appearances of nature in the first insurgent newspaper *El Despertador Americano*, published by a priest and friend of Hidalgo's in Guadalajara named Francisco Severo Maldonado, affirm how the political struggle's intellectual contest turned on conceptions of nature. *El Despertador's* first issue, where Maldonado delivers a critical reply to two Royalist documents; the first was an anti-Napoleonic proclamation from the Spanish Regency about the political situation of the Spanish Americas. The second document in Maldonado's sights was a gloss from Viceroy Francisco Xavier Venegas, who passed on the proclamation to New Spain. That gloss argued that the Spanish resistance to the Napoleonic usurpation consists of inviolably sustaining the rights of nature (*los derechos de la naturaleza*) underpinning Spanish sovereignty. Further, the viceroy locates true Novohispanic liberty (*verdadera libertad*) as deriving from the Spanish empire in the care of the Regency, an argument that fundamentally contrasts with the insurgency's notion of liberty.

Maldonado devotes a brief section of his polemical critique to how the notions of natural right and the right of nature pertain to the insurgency. There he responds by claiming that the Viceroy understands Novohispanic rights as being the natural rights of *Spaniards*. This conception implies that the children of Spaniards in America should conform to a Spanish nature. Maldonado counters with blunt reply: "but we who are of American nature [*de naturaleza americana*] labor in accordance with the interests of American nature, arranged by the precept of Christian charity that says: *primum mihi* [I, first]."<sup>38</sup> Here the subject of natural right is the subject as habituated in and by the natural, customary, and historical space in and of *América*. Thus, in Maldonado's estimation of the American subject, the Regency and the Viceroy are asking Americans to disregard their self-evident interests, or at least subordinate them to Spanish

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<sup>38</sup> Ávila, *El Despertador Americano*, 27.

political interests.

Another article from *El Despertador Americano* points out a principal implication of this notion of nature, with Maldonado remarking that Spaniards seem to view rebellious Americans as de-natured (*desnaturalizados*) Spaniards rather than to recognize Spanish Americans as naturally American.<sup>39</sup> To this point, Maldonado likens the political problems of 1810 to the struggles of the Spanish conquest of the 1500s: in both he identifies a struggle between a God that enriches American soil and ensures its prosperity, and the Spanish *gachupines* on the American continent bent on keeping *Americanos* from partaking in the fruits of God's creation, human labor, commerce, and political authority.<sup>40</sup> The response associates current Spanish domination with the historical immorality and cruelty of the Spanish conquest and implicitly correlates the *Americano* with the Mexicas and other indigenous pre-Columbian peoples that the Spaniards had oppressed. In yet another number, Maldonado makes a case for the generous quality of an American nature that is humane, tolerant, and naturalizes and extends American citizenship and liberty to those who do not wish to impede on the liberty of other Americans or upon the *Patria*, thus belying an erroneous impression that *Americanos* are people of little spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Maldonado's comrade Miguel Hidalgo deploys nature as a comprehensive ontological category in his October 1810 *Manifiesto*. There he appeals to the concept of nature by arguing that the Inquisition's determinations not only made a mockery of the Church and sullied its sanctity but justified oppressing the American nation and depriving it and its people of their natural liberties. The passage cited below is a crucial turn in Hidalgo's argument, for it ties the concepts of nature and America, and locates its human bearers in the population of those born on American soil. He directs the argumentative force of the concept of nature in unanticipated directions and turns the Inquisition's meaning of nature against itself. He appeals to his fellow citizens, stating how the bloody conduct of denatured *gachupines* shakes at the very core of human affect and desire in a way that makes the friendship at the center of political unity difficult, if not impossible:

Do you persuade yourselves, beloved co-citizens, that **the gachupines, de-naturalized men**, who have torn the most intimate ties of blood — **Nature shudders!** — for abandoning their parents, brothers, wives, and their proper children, that they are capable of having affects of humanity for another person? **Could you have with them any bond that is superior to those that the very same Nature placed in his familial relations?** Do they not run over everyone only for the interest of making themselves rich in America? Then do not think that any men nourished with these sentiments could maintain sincere friendship with us; every time that vile interest is presented to them they would sacrifice you with the same freshness with which they abandoned their proper parents.

...Americans, let us break these ties of ignominy with which they have bound us for so long; to do so, we need nothing but to unite ourselves. If we do not fight amongst ourselves, the war is concluded, and our rights safe. Then let us unite ourselves, all who

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<sup>39</sup> Ávila, 50.

<sup>40</sup> Ávila, 51–52.

<sup>41</sup> Ávila, 74–75.



have been born in this blessed soil. From today, let us regard those who are not Americans as foreigners and enemies of our prerogatives.<sup>42</sup>

In such a condition, Hidalgo argues, the only proper course of action to guarantee good governance is to establish a representative form of governance in a Congress that, as he notes, “within a few years its inhabitants would enjoy all of the delights that the sovereign author of nature has shed over this vast continent” (...de pocos años disfrutarán sus habitantes de todas las delicias que el Soberano Autor de la naturaleza ha derramado sobre este vasto continente).<sup>43</sup> Hidalgo’s concept of the *Americano* depends on its connection to *naturaleza* in several senses: that of the physical world of Creation, of the lives of humans interacting with nature and being part of nature, and historical forms of sociability and political life able to successfully realize that life as ordained by a divine creator.

However, in the historical circumstances defining Novohispanic independence from Spain, the work of revolt involves advancing a project that departs from the given, seemingly naturalized world. In that case, engaging in the acts of creation that threaten to destroy an established order requires the insurgent to push the logic of similarity and stability to its breaking point and step outside of the given order in order to restore or redeem that order. For the insurgent, the divine source of nature tasks the insurgent to realize *América* by forming militant spirit among its natural children, a spirit able to turn the fortunes of the American people in a direction favorable to fulfilling the desires for independence and representative government. It is a militancy that flows from the patriotism that nature as an historical force impresses on the body of the American. Revealingly, Hidalgo composed the *Manifiesto* at nearly the same time that the insurgency issued a proclamation invoking the Ciceronian dictum where the patriotism is a mark that nature imprints on the human. The insurgent conception of nature and the forms of patriotism is a historical task that flows with an awareness of political history. In the case of the insurgent proclamation, the historical examples of Greece, Sparta, and Rome illustrate the point that the most important element of its military and political successes is the “impetus” of those combatants giving themselves over to the nation as *patria*. It also calls on Spanish Americans to recognize themselves as subjects of inalienable rights and liberties and points to the North American zeal for liberty as a model for those who proclaim themselves as enemies of oppression.<sup>44</sup>

Notions of political spirituality mediated through theologically and politically charged conception of nature make it possible to transfer the subject’s formation as a patriot into a broader framework of legal and governmental authority. One such instance involves ordinary subjects’ encounters with functionaries and their bureaucratic apparatuses in the service of verifying citizenship. Verifying citizenship becomes an act where *naturaleza*, the individual subject, and the law converge. An example of this dynamic comes from the royalist side, where the Courts Regent of Cádiz who in April 1813 sought to standardize and streamline the way that bureaucrats recognized, preserved, and effectively protected the applicant’s civil and political

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<sup>42</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Vol. 3, doc. 375, 306-307.

<sup>43</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 375, 307-308.

<sup>44</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 411, 402-404.

rights as a *natural* (or what is roughly equivalent to a national according to the provisions of the 1812 Constitutions) and as a citizen. To do so, Regency functionaries disseminated the decree to the Viceroy of New Spain in September 1813, which would not likely realize the intent of the decree well into 1814. Nevertheless, these bureaucratic interventions appear to reside at the point where political spirituality and subjection to the law blend into one another, thus offering a hint as to a way that Spanish and Spanish American forms of governance draw on discourses and practices political spirituality, capture it, and integrate the subjects of political spirituality into the Crown's legal and administrative apparatus.

The most pertinent portion of the decree has to do with how the formula for *Cartas de Naturaleza* establishes the conditions for affirming both the concepts of *naturaleza* and citizenship. It first sets out the generic language for letting the Crown know about the natural status of a given person while providing alternate language in the case of contingencies:

Mr. N.N. *Natural* of such-and-such town, of such-and-such province, in such-and-such Kingdom, in solicitation of a *Carta de Naturaleza*; and having recorded being Catholic, Apostolic, Roman, and concurring in the circumstances and qualities that would deem him worthy of this grace; we have seen (if it is the King speaking), or the Regency of the Kingdom has seen fit (if this is speaking) en proposing it to the Courts, which have granted by Decree of such of said month and year to the referred Mr. N. N. A *Carta de Naturaleza* for it to be and had by such and enjoy the rights that correspond to him, and in the same terms that the political Constitution of the Monarchy expresses and is subject to the duties and obligations that the same Constitution and laws impose upon Spaniards.<sup>45</sup>

This formulary implies that two conditions must be met for verifying one's natural character, consistent with that of the nation. First, that the person must have a record of being a Roman Catholic, presumably verified through baptismal or parish records, thus satisfying the religious test for elaborating national identity. Secondly, the applicant simultaneously demonstrates the kinds of qualities and habituations that would make such a form of living recognizable as Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman to a priest, functionary, and fellow Spaniard alike. This second criterion, though more difficult to verify, gestures to how *naturaleza* pertains to a standard and default state of affairs that could be recognized as naturally Spanish in disposition, attitude, and civic capacities.

The Decree's first formula differs significantly from the formula for citizenship; this later formula makes no explicit mention of the religious requirement for naturalization. Rather, the citizenship letter emphasizes either the person's Spanish nationality by birth or a ten-year length of residence for naturalized persons born abroad. Moreover, the naturalized foreigner should, according to Article 20 of the short-lived 1812 Constitution, "...be married to a Spaniard having brought or established in the Spains [*las Españas*] some appreciable invention or industry, or acquired real estates which he pays a direct contribution, or established himself in commerce with his own and considerable capital in the judgment of the Courts, or has rendered services signaled

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<sup>45</sup> AGN, "GD100 Reales Cédulas Originales. Fecha: Mayo 2 de 1813. Vol. 208, exp. 179.," May 2, 1813, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

for the good and defense of the nation.”<sup>46</sup> Citizenship in this schema involves a further extension intensification of the lived and habituated experience of the *natural* or *naturalizado* mentioned the first decree, especially in the case of the naturalized foreigner, who must materially demonstrate his good faith to Spain. This demonstration of good faith seems to be geared toward further confirming the kind of nature formed and induced through everyday acts of political spirituality.

Although this document emerges from the Spanish Crown, insurgent documents such as Morelos’ *Sentimientos de la Nación* and other early founding documents also turn on the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman character or *naturaleza* of the nation. For even though the insurrection sought a political break from Spanish domination, the independence was less a matter of breaking into a new general pattern or form of subjectivity that could constitute an *Americano* or a *Mexicano*, than it was about who can better discern and decide upon what makes that form of life and on which interpretation of that national character those determinations can be rendered.

While the proclamations of Hidalgo and *El Despertador Americano* posit a notion of nature that is tied to patriotism, natural right, historical right, and a militant spirit, the idea of the America as the nation in the form of a speaking subject remains underdeveloped in those works. A fiery jeremiad that Morelos addresses to the Europeans of Tehuantepec in December of 1812 containing discourses of political spirituality that hail a nation as a world-historical subject under the chorograph *América* while forcefully countering Spanish slanders. In doing so, the discourses perform two functions. The first is to denounce the Europeans in blistering terms by elaborating a chain of interpellations about the Europeans corresponding to an imputed litany of falsehoods and immoralities that create a regime subjecting *América* to disillusionment, destruction, and untruth—a regime that Morelos describes as a “diabolical system.” These imputations of non-insurgent Europeans as perverse, blasphemous, impious, heretical, sacrilegious, and diabolical emerge around a brief analysis of the figure of the denaturalized *americano* not worthy of the name, which illustrates the political terms on which the ascriptions of nature apply for the countersignifying discourse of the insurgency. The quality of political conduct marks the nature of a subject, whether born on American or Spanish soil. Morelos writes:

It is also certain that you have a small portion of vile and unhappy sons, **de-naturalized** from this realm, **unworthy of the name Americano**, whose iniquity and depraved customs could not find more sponsorship than among you. But you cannot negate that some Europeans follow our flags and are disposed to incorporate themselves once they have seen our armies, unless you think that they ignore the armies of this America. **Yet she [América] is disappointed. Listen, listen for your confusion and shame for what not even the day knows, understands, believes, and hopes from all of you, for all the votes are now unanimous.**<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Luis González Obregón and Aurora Gómez Galvarriato, *La Constitución de 1812 en la Nueva España*, vol. 1 (México: Archivo General de la Nación: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades: Museo de las Constituciones, 2012), xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>47</sup> Ernesto Lemoine Villicaña, ed., *Morelos: Su Vida Revolucionaria a Través de Sus Escritos y de Otros Testimonios de La Época*, 1st ed. (México: Universidad Autónoma Nacional de México, Publicaciones de la Coordinación de Humanidades, 1965), 248–49.

Following this passage, Morelos's proclamation takes a metonymic turn, personifying *América* as a knowing subject in a feat of prosopopoeia that uses Morelos' authorial voice as a conduit. Morelos' discursive position as a vessel for the national voice in this document does not appear idiosyncratic, for it prefigures his stated desire to be called only *Siervo de la Nación* and *esclavo de mi patria*—servant of the nation and slave of his *patria*—in response to being designated by acclamation as the head of the executive power under the Congress of Chilpancingo on September 15, 1813. He remarks in that response that whatever progress in the armed struggle can only be attributed to subordinating himself to the univocal voice of political union animated by a spirit to advance the nation instead of an individual.<sup>48</sup> In any event, by subordinating his own voice to the imperatives of a natural spirit emanating from the *patria*, Morelos dramatizes an ascetic practice, setting his self aside so as to allow the voice of *América* to speak on what she knows about the *gachupines*, the royalist cause, and the desire for independence. Through Morelos' ecstatic pen, *América* speaks her knowledge (*conocimiento*) of the denatured, avaricious, weak, and cowardly spirit that is complicit in destroying the nation, looking down upon Americans and perpetuating their oppression by deceiving them about their abilities and rights.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to plumbing the depths of the royalist character, the American nation grasps the world-historical conditions surrounding the political crises in Spain and its empire, and it knows (saber) the degraded condition of the law in New Spain, such that religious authorities subordinate their pronouncements to the will of the gangs of Spanish functionaries and royal orders become corrupted as they travel across the ocean and are never obeyed once in New Spain. Furthermore, *América* understands full well that the Crown's actions have stripped the law of any legitimacy and reduced matters to a condition where the dictates of a politicized will stand in for reasoned principles connected to justice (*stat proratioine volunta*).<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the historical subject *América* is a subject that is itself endowed with a political spirituality and a political credo attuned to the cycles of destruction wrought upon it by Spanish conquest and colonization. Morelos passes on that she bears the hope of dispelling the error, confusion, and untruth fomented by Spanish oppression, and that she places her messianic hope in God and the Lady of Guadalupe's intercession to mete out punishment on Spanish insolence and perfidy, avenge the injuries of the people in the Novohispanic countryside at the hands of the royalist forces, and to thwart the efforts of the viceroy, his generals, and religious officials. From that spirituality issues a stern warning to fear *América's* righteous wrath and the justice of her cause, manifested in apocalyptic warnings about how God and his Holy Mother's wrath will atomize the *gachupines* and relegate them to oblivion.<sup>51</sup> Rendering the nation—whose politonym is *America*—through the prosopopoeia that personifies *América* as a subject with human faculties, is possible to the extent that discourses of nature (*naturaleza*) provide the tropological mechanisms for articulating the relation between *América* and *americano*.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibarra Palafox, *El Congreso de Anáhuac*, 172.

<sup>49</sup> Lemoine Villicaña, *Morelos*, 250.

<sup>50</sup> Lemoine Villicaña, 251.

<sup>51</sup> Lemoine Villicaña, 253–56.

### *Conclusion: Political Spirituality at the Threshold of México*

Where the force of arms sought to coerce an opposing faction into surrendering or to eliminate the enemy on the fields of battle, political spirituality was an instrument in a protracted, bloody, and exhausting struggle that played out on a different front: upon and within the subjects who were prosecuting their respective cause. A cacophony of discursive struggles for the soul of the nation suffused through the territorial surface of New Spain and its center in Mexico City and sought to move their addressees toward the cause of either remaining a subject of the Spanish Empire in the colony or becoming the kind of free citizen that would realize the ambitions of national independence. The voices in the din spoke from venues as diverse as the viceregal palace (Name), the battlefield, (Hernandez/Calleja), the pulpit (Abad y Quiapo), municipal Audiencias, the university, the prison cell, printed notices, handwritten reports (Anon.), and the intimate communications between comrades (Larrondo). Amidst this diversity of forms, Royalist and the Insurgent texts partook of a common tendency to draw on religious and theological tropes to frame a given author's political and moral fidelity to his community of discourse, provide the theological premises informing and transferring their meanings to political expressions, forming the sensibilities and affections of a citizenry and a national body politic, interpellating friends and adversaries, and defining the natures of *América* and of being Spanish American.

Hidalgo and the figures of the insurgency that succeeded him drew on a closely imbricated set of political impulses: one a sense of loyalty to the usurped Spanish Crown and the other a fidelity to a moral-political discourse suffused with Catholic imagery and tropes that were as much a part of Spain's architecture of empire as it was a source of spiritual fortification and protection. But frustration with the Crown's intransigence and suppression forced the movement for independence to establish its moral and political discourses along different lines. This chapter claimed that while the *América* and *americano* were the principal points of political reference for the insurgents, their political spirituality created the discursive conditions through which a living idea of Mexico could later emerge. Through acts of reading, writing, reflection, and willful practices of identification and appropriation, discourses and practices of political spirituality contested relationships between power, subjects, and language in three basic ways: in terms of truth and affection, the formation of subjects, and ideas of nature and the natural. Contestants on both sides of the political struggle for New Spain readily utilized tropes and expressions of political spirituality to ascribe moral, ethical, political, and legal qualities to the human objects of their statements. Inquisitors, bishops, pamphleteers, journalists, soldiers, generals, priests, and captains, among others spilled no small amount of ink to advance their causes and produce perceptions of their adversaries either deceitful, insensitive, unreliable, unfaithful, and disconnected from the natural order of things. These figures waged a battle for the spirit of the Novohispanic population in multiple venues: public squares, theatres of war, ecclesiastical, governmental, or rebel desks, letters, and other spaces contained by subscription lists or conventions of silent reading.

What came of these ways of speaking among several actors in different spheres of activity? The effects were broad in scope yet targeted towards producing three sets of related outcomes. First, the political spirituality advanced in these discourses aimed at producing a subject who could discern a truth about her condition and internalize the truths that the insurgency rested upon. However, the truth of the *Americano* condition amid imperial domination and colonization

was not simply an intellectual exercise. As well as affirming an idea, the political spirituality of the insurgency became a way to create relationships to other subjects through bonds of affection, desire, and common cause. Against the backdrop of Spanish colonization, becoming-*Americano* implied that it would take place in forms of revolt whose ideas of liberty and independence were predicated on how faithful one spoke and behaved and how intensely the subject sensed those ideas. Finally, the political spirituality of the insurgency measured fidelity and truth in terms of a presupposition of nature [*naturaleza*] and the natural, a presupposition that would allow the spirituality and its products to resonate and function in broader ranges of practical activities. But the insurgency's political spirituality was not content with letting nature be a neutral medium, an abstract object of movement and circulation; that American political spirituality proposed ideas of nature that the subject of spirituality can recognize, internalize, and identify as harmonious with one's surroundings by birth or by an acquired affinity. Such an appropriation of nature makes possible the *Americano*, and later *Mexicano*, acts of affirming herself or himself as a distinct natural and historical form. By contesting nature, political spirituality claimed to change what nature is and means. By changing what nature is and means, language must change and invent new names that could signify and make concrete what is changing. Thus, with changing natures, there are changing concepts, and with changing concepts, there are changing names.

The early phases of the insurgency saw its discourses of political spirituality affirming the usurped Spanish King, much in the way that earlier attempts mentioned in Chapter 2, like those that Granados y Gálvez, Landívar, Clavijero, and Alzate undertook. Given the intransigence of the Viceroyal authorities, this early spirituality gave way to form of spirituality that could articulate a more nuanced claim for political independence that aligned with the demands of liberal republican political governance. That more subtle claim located sovereignty in the people and advocated that political power be channeled through representative bodies operating locally, regionally, and nationally, a development that Hidalgo, Morelos, Victoria, Guerrero, and the insurgent parties would push for as an integral part of successfully achieving political independence. Such an achievement depended on the insurgency using political spirituality that attacked a circular organization of language and power that centered around the King from whose sovereign body the word emanates and to whom it returns as the locus of the divine on earth. The insurgency's political spirituality would introduce an opportunity to strike out on a path that could form subjects along different lines, one in which the subjects of enunciation and the statement encounter one another in a system of altered power and social relations, one in which the people become the arbiter of the proper name *México*.

A patriotic calendar that José María Morelos and the insurgent Congress promulgated in 1814 illustrates how *México* and the *mexicano* were beginning to become part of the insurgency's store of political commonplaces. Until about the late summer of 1814, the insurgent legislators gathered in Chilpancingo under the collective name El Congreso de Anáhuac (the Congress of Anáhuac) continued referring to the national entity as *la América* or *la América Septentrional*. But during the late summer and early fall of that year, as the Constitution of Apatzingán was being drafted and ultimately proclaimed in October 20, the Congress would refer to the nation, its government, and the people it addressed and sought to represent respectively as *la América Mexicana*, *el Gobierno Supremo Mexicano*, and *Méxicanos*. Morelos's aspirational document gestures to the ways that the insurgency could likely draw upon the spiritualities and discourses of politics and religion in the service of establishing a state form. The calendar designates the

patriotic character of *la América Mexicana* in manner consistent with the religious and political ideals that the early constitutions used to define the nature of the nation. It styled itself as Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, with no tolerance of any other religion. For the insurgent government to contemplate issuing a patriotic calendar like that one suggests that these items are more than either ideological or propagandistic. It is a document that contemplates a broader temporality appropriate to a theological, cosmological, and universal history. The Congress sets the insurgency—then entering its fifth year—in a cosmological frame, seeking to acknowledge the purported creation of the world according to the Roman Martyrology, Biblical events such as the Great Flood and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and celebrations of Catholic saints. Its preamble reads

### Epochs

The number of years from the creation of the world, according to the Roman Martyrology, 7014; of the Universal Flood 4772; of the Julian calendar 1856; of the Gregorian correction 233; of the founding of the Mexican Court 408; of its usurpation by the gachupines 284; of the miraculous apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe 284; of the foundation of her esteemed collegiate church; 65; of the last flood 186; of the pontificate of our most Blessed Father, the Lord Pius VII, 16; of the installation of the Supreme Mexican congress, the 5th year; of the division of powers, new form of government and the publication of the Provisional Constitution, year 2; of the Mexican Independence year 6; of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, 1815.<sup>52</sup>

The calendar cites other relevant events that commemorate the sources of *la América Mexicana's* national tradition, such as the foundation of the ancient Mexica Court (a point that indicates a desire to establish a more explicit link between the vanquished indigenous civilization and the new nation being created), the Spanish Conquest, and the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Lastly, the calendar lists holidays closer to the everyday sense of time by commemorating as well as “Días de Corte,” or the rough equivalents of civic holidays. Those holidays dedicated August 21 to commemorate the installation of the Supreme Mexican Congress, September 16 for the date on which Hidalgo proclaimed independence, October 22 for the establishment of a government of divided powers and the promulgation of the Constitution, September 29 for the memory of Hidalgo, and December 12 for the patroness of *la América Mexicana*, the Lady of Guadalupe. Items such as the calendar, which also listed monthly feast days, lunar phases, Catholic feast days, and the number and dates of the Sundays in each month, sought to achieve practical ends, namely, to foment the new nation's sense of time and place that its inhabitants live out.

An otherwise pragmatic document to help plan future events, the “Calendario Patriótico” concludes with two exemplars of the discourse of political spirituality. The first is addressed to the Insurgent cause and its guiding patroness, the Lady of Guadalupe; the second octave appeals to the fervor of a sacrosanct patriotism and the sacred object of its fealty: the freedom and self-

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<sup>52</sup> Supremo Congreso Mexicano, “Calendario Patriótico Dispuesto Por El Gobierno Insurgente Para El Año de 1815, Diciembre de 1814,” in *El Congreso de Anáhuac y La Constitución de Apatzingán: Obra Documental*, ed. Francisco A. Ibarra Palafox, Primera edición, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas. Serie Doctrina Jurídica, núm. 771 (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016), 279–83.

determination that would hasten the end of the war and unite a fractured populace.

OCTAVE

Supreme Empress of heaven and earth  
To whom all mortals give you vassalage.  
End, Guadalupe, this cruel War  
Come, come peace: come from on high.  
Hatred and disunion banish all,  
Despotism and insult banish.  
May independence and liberty reign,  
May truth succeed deceit.

ANOTHER

Sacred love of my Patria,  
Adorable, unknown virtue,  
To the evil man, whose tyranny,  
Desires to extinguish your already lit flame.  
Extend your efficacy: illuminate a day  
When disunion is seen to be extinguished.  
Oh beloved liberty! May your glory triumph,  
Grant unto us a speedy victory.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Supremo Congreso Mexicano, "Calendario patriótico," 283. See Spanish text below.

OCTAVA

Suprema Emperatriz de cielo y tierra  
A quien todo mortal da vasallaje.  
Acabe, Guadalupe, esta cruel Guerra  
Venga, venga la paz: de lo alto baje.  
El odio y desunión todo destierra,  
Destierra el despotismo y el ultraje.  
Reine la independencia y libertad,  
Al engaño suceda la verdad.

OTRA

Amor sagrado de la Patria mía,  
Adorable virtud desconocida  
Del hombre malo, cuya tiranía,



Unfortunately, the war would not see its end, neither in Morelos' lifetime, nor for another six years. But the sentiments these discourses sought to stimulate, mobilize, and bring to bear on the course of events were not simply a way of stoking the psychological home fires. Their reading, much like prayers, and their celebrations, much like liturgies, were the words and forms that would foster an attitude or way of relating to a truth that could overcome the caprices of deception, darkness, disunity, tyranny, and oppression. They are two ways that political spirituality could orient the subject of insurgency towards becoming a free *Americano* or *Mexicano*.

The historical figures of transcendence that the "Calendario" puts before its readers make the pre-Hispanic past available in ways that could vary according to time and circumstance. However, these gestures could only take form by virtue of the insurgency's achievement of making a space for the *mexicano* and *México* to enter into the field of discourse in a manner that on the one hand, drew on the wealth of locally produced knowledge about New Spain to recover aspects of its history that the Crown took pains to marginalize, while on the other hand needed to invent a way for the political spirituality informing a concept of *México* as a modern nation. The mechanisms of desire and enunciation making up the tools of insurgent political spirituality were vital to inducing changes of mind and introducing terms and norms for their use. Servando Teresa de Mier's *Carta de despedida a los mexicanos*, as will be seen in the next chapter, will propose a form of political spirituality centered on affirming *México* and demonstrates what happens when he avails himself of that political spirituality.

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Quiere apagar tu llama, ya encendida.  
Extiende tu eficacia: alumbre un día  
En que la desunión se vea extinguida.  
¡Oh amada libertad!, triunfe tu gloria,  
Concédenos muy pronta la victoria.

## Chapter 4

### Political Spirituality as a Pedagogy of the Concept of *México* in Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos"

The previous chapter traced discourses of political spirituality in documents composed during the insurgency and observed tenuous connections between acts of political spirituality and the emergence a concept of *México*. But there were enough connections that later writers who thought about *México* along conceptual lines could develop. This chapter moves to the end of the insurgency and returns to Fray Servando Teresa de Mier and the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos", a document that is the culmination of earlier efforts that had been developed under pressures of war, the urgencies of militancy, and the marginalization of Novohispanic thought in the Spanish Empire. The occasion for Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's composing the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos" in February of 1821 was the effect of two lines intersecting. The first, political-historical line consisted of the struggle between the insurgents and royalists that continued after Spanish forces executed the head of the Insurgency, José María Morelos, on December 22, 1815. A second, political-biographical line involved Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's return to the American continent in 1816 after twenty years in exile in Europe.

Although the Novohispanic insurgency had been set back on its heels after Morelos' execution and the subsequent span of time between 1816 to 1821, there were enough pockets of insurgent resistance and entreaties between both sides that the Spanish Armies could not retake its Novohispanic territories in one decisive campaign. Moreover, virtually every quarter of Spanish America had already been in open revolt against the Spanish Crown, with otherwise loyal subjects of Ferdinand VII bristling at his order to station thousands of Spanish troops in preparation of a re-conquest of the Americas.<sup>1</sup> But before the Crown could accomplish that task, a liberal revolution took place on the Iberian Peninsula in 1820 amid a wave of similar revolutions then taking place across Europe. In Spain, the ascendance of the liberals meant forcing the hand of King Ferdinand into adopting the 1812 Cádiz Constitution, which reorganized the Spanish State along the lines of a constitutional monarchy and offered Spain some respite from the absolutist rule that characterized the repressive years of the Restoration. The 1820 revolution also meant that the Spanish government would change tack with respect to Spain's responses to developments overseas; instead of suppressing revolts, generals were now ordered to negotiate

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<sup>1</sup> Linda Arnold, *Bureaucracy and Bureaucrats in Mexico City, 1742-1835* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 16.

with the insurgents.

Meanwhile, Servando Teresa de Mier spent the early years of the insurgency in London, where he moved to in 1811 to continue his efforts to broker the cause for Novohispanic independence with European, British, and Anglo-American liberals and engaged in debates that would prove decisive for the development of his political thought.<sup>2</sup> By 1816, Mier was busy conspiring with a young liberal lawyer and battle-tested Spanish officer, Francisco Xavier Mina, to set up an expeditionary force and prosecute the cause of independence in New Spain. After setting sail from Liverpool in April 1816 and arriving in Norfolk, Virginia two months later, the older friar and the younger officer continued organizing the expedition and raising an expeditionary force, which Mina would later call the Auxiliary Division of the Mexican Republic [*División auxiliar de la República Mexicana*]. Between arriving at Soto de la Marina with Mier in tow as the Division's chaplain in April 1817 and his capture at the Rancho el Venadito in October 1817, Mina's forces cut a path westward from the central gulf coast in Tamaulipas towards Guanajuato in a series of battles and sieges, including an eight-day siege in the village of San Luis de la Paz. During that siege, two Royalist witnesses later testified, that one of Mina's Captains upon calling a cease fire, cried something that would seem befuddling to many Novohispanics in this era, "long live the Mexican Republic" (que viva la República Mexicana).<sup>3</sup>

The two lines—political-historical and biographical political—cross in Soto de La Marina. Mier remained behind in the fortification, where the Auxiliary Division could receive newer members and store its supplies. That mission would be short-lived when Royalist forces besieged and captured the fort in July 1817 and captured Mier, who was remanded to the custody of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico City. This capture marked the beginning of yet another extended period of detention in Mexico City and Veracruz. As with other instances in Mier's biography, this detention would be decisive, as it was the first time he would set foot in Mexico City since 1794, when the Archbishop of Mexico at the time, Alonso Nuñez de Haro, exiled Mier to Spain for what he understood was a scandalous sermon on the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the three-and-a-half-year period from July 1817 to his extradition and later escape in February 1821, the struggle between the insurgency and the Spanish Crown had reached a point of stasis, resulting in a general climate of fear—whether of foreign invasion or internal sedition—that gripped swaths of Novohispanic society. Viceroy Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, whose strategy of

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<sup>2</sup> Santa Arias, "Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's Patriotic Cosmopolitanism: Paris, London, and Philadelphia," *Vanderbilt E-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies* 9 (2013), 16, 21, <https://doi.org/10.15695/vejlhs.v9i0.3941>. Arias describes the importance of Mier's residence in London in the following way: "Beyond finding a new model of government, while in London Mier defined the struggles, found solutions, and wrote the history of his own political cause. In Paris, his profound knowledge about [Bartolomé] Las Casas served him well in his intellectual exchanges with Grégoire. It was in London, however, where he found strength in exile and for the first time devoted time to reflect and write on the earlier history of colonialism with Las Casas as its central protagonist." (21)

<sup>3</sup> AGN, "Operaciones de Guerra, vol. 929, exp. 10.," September 23, 1817, México, Archivo General de la Nación.; AGN. Guadalupe Codinach notes that Mina and his compatriots referred to la República Mexicana as if it actually existed. See Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, "Xavier Mina y sus 300 combatientes: un relámpago de gloria y esperanza," *Relatos e Historias en México*, September 13, 2020, <https://relatosehistorias.mx/nuestras-historias/xavier-mina-y-sus-300-combatientes-un-relampago-de-gloria-y-esperanza>.

rapprochement with different elements of society such as the clergy, bureaucracy, and merchants also extended to insurgent cells, offering amnesties and some political guarantees.<sup>4</sup> Yet in the process, the viceroy succeeded in militarizing political processes and politicizing the military, implementing the regime of political surveillance initiated during the restoration of the Spanish Monarchy in 1814. Measures included restricting press freedoms and zealously policing and criminalizing seemingly dangerous political and religious speech.<sup>5</sup> The 1820 revolution headed by liberal military officers in Spain uncorked pent-up demand along multiple quarters of Spanish and Novohispanic society for sweeping political changes and an enthusiasm for liberal ideas and the discourses of constitutionalism, even if the mutual influence of politicization and militarization limited how extensively those changes could take effect.<sup>6</sup> 1820 also revealed the social and political fissures that the militarization of New Spain had produced, most notably, the emergence of regional power centers that began acting with increasing autonomy from the Viceroyalty in Mexico City, thus raising the question of how a Constitution can govern the relationship between a putative central government in Mexico City and the rapidly entrenching regional and local powers.<sup>7</sup> Thus by 1820, Mier began confronting questions about the political nature of constitutional government, popular representation in the legislature, and the role of the executive power as a check on regional and local military chiefs.<sup>8</sup>

These circumstances help put the significance of Mier's *Carta* and its proposals into greater relief. In Chapter 1, I analyzed how Mier thought of Mexico as an idea or concept in his *Carta de despedida a los mexicanos* and the discursive strategies that he implements to convince his readers. Mier's poetic and rhetorical strategies turn on making historical discourse enact a linguistic transformation by changing the content of the idea expressed in the word *México*. In that chapter, I argued that the "Carta de despedida" operated according to a passional semiotic regime whose principal effects were extra-linguistic transformations to concepts and subjects alike. In harmonize with the newly signified concept, namely, producing the kinds of subjects for whom concepts or ideas resonate on affective registers. Picking up the thread of subjectivation as an effect of passional, post-signifying discourse, this chapter asks about the kinds of procedures and practices that make up the political spirituality implicit in the "Carta de despedida," practices that are oriented toward subjectivating the *mexicano*.

The current chapter revisits the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos" to discern the elements of the spirituality proposed in it. I will do so by paying special attention to key aspects of

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<sup>4</sup> Ernesto de la Torre Villar, *La independencia de México*, 2. reimpr, Sección de Obras de Historia (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica [u.a.], 1995), 123.

<sup>5</sup> Alfredo Ávila and Luis Jáuregui, "La Disolución de La Monarquía Hispánica y El Proceso de Independencia," in *Nueva Historia General de México*, ed. Erik Velásquez García, 1. ed (México, D.F: Colegio de México, 2010), 386–89.; François-Xavier Guerra García, *Modernidad e independencias: ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, 3a ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, MAPFRE, 2000), 317.

<sup>6</sup> Torre Villar, *La independencia de México*, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Ávila and Jáuregui, "La Disolución de La Monarquía Hispánica y El Proceso de Independencia," 389.

<sup>8</sup> Ávila and Jáuregui, 389.

that spirituality: truth and truth-making, subject-formation, and the politics of language. In this chapter I argue that in the “Carta,”—a document born of heretical (or at least heterodox) speech—Mier posits a spirituality that locates the archive as a venue for producing truth, the codex as the model for giving a discernible form to an individual subject as *mexicano* and México as the collective national subject of history, and the study of history and language as the activity through which the *mexicano* cultivates and nourishes the sensibility of becoming-*mexicano*. I further argue that Mier draws on his biography to rehearse the kind of self-tutelage and reflection that he sees as needed to form a subject as *mexicano*. To support this claim, this chapter will limn the biographical and historical contexts of Mier’s life to determine where he could have drawn on his own biography to elaborate some of those elements of his spirituality. The key implication of Mier’s autopoietic performance is that the archive and the codex become the principal mechanisms for concentrating the resources needed for producing the desire and will to enunciate the term *México*.

To model these practices of becoming-Mexicano, Mier presents himself as a codex formed in an archive or archival space. Using these tropes helps Mier negotiate and comprehend the heterogeneous relationships between geography, biography, and spirituality, relationships that make up the intelligibility immanent in the concept *México*. configures in its purview to make *México* resonate as a consistent and stable term to designate *México* a field of experience. By admonishing his readers “stop barking and instruct yourselves”, Mier creates an opening for readers to engage in the exercises of political spirituality through which a pedagogy of the concept of *México* can take place. Mier’s political spiritual exercises seek to give form to the *mexicano/a* as a child formed in and through the archive, a subject driven to narrate and re-narrate the historical origins of *México* as space and nation. For in such a telling the *mexicano/a* can create a national identity from an original and authoritative history, one that could support a people’s singularity in historical space and time. For without such acts of affirmation, the very source of the new nation’s sovereignty—the people—would remain inchoate and the people would be hindered from assuming its rightful place in the self-government of a new republic.

Mier’s tutelary project of forming the subject *mexicano* and the concept *México* happens through a form of spiritual direction whose object is the presence of the messiah in history in the very name *México*. This chapter argues that the *Carta* intervenes in the politics of language and the language of politics of its time. The ontology of language and its historical capacities for variation are at stake in Mier’s farewell epistle, for the *Carta* enters into public circulation during a key juncture in the linguistic history of Spanish in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when Mexican Spanish emerges as an historical and localized variant of Spanish in New Spain. Mier’s push for a singularly Mexican conception of México coincides with a development that comes to implicitly define the linguistic identity of an emerging nation, a Mexican politico-linguistic identity whose history and unfolding differ from the language of empire: Peninsular Spanish.

### *The Archive as Alethurgical Venue*

Archives are the principal venue of self-formation and truth-making in Mier’s letter. It is a

venue that he refers to in the *Carta*'s opening. It is a curious sentence for a valedictory—both with respect to how he characterizes his circumstances and the principal concern animating his letter. Remarking that his return to Anáhuac after twenty-two years of exile was met with his detention under the Inquisition's jurisdiction, he offers a somewhat extravagant metaphor to describe the confines of the Holy Office: the archive. He writes:

On returning from the other [old] world, which is almost as worth leaving the dungeons of the Inquisition, where the government **had me archived for three years** *out of mere convenience*, where I encountered a great variation in orthography and the [letter] *x* excluded from the number of strong letters, for as much as it claims [to speak upon] the origin of words.<sup>9</sup>

On its face, Mier describes the space of detention as archival in its form if not in its function. In his *Manifiesto Apologético* from the same spell of writing, he similarly described these three years as an *archivamiento trienal* (three-year archivement). Mier's characterizing his detention in the Inquisition as an archivement implies that the Inquisition operates as archival space or a space where archiving happens. Describing his confinement under the Inquisition in this way contrasts with what he reports about conditions in San Juan de Ulúa, the notorious prison where he wrote the *Carta de despedida*. Noting his confinement alongside a group of insurgent priests also headed for Spain, a group which he called *la legión de los muertos* (the legion of the dead), he recounts the harsh conditions of his incarceration, especially when he reports that no one he knew from his previous incarceration in San Juan de Ulúa in 1795 had survived (*Nadie vive de cuantos aquí conocí hace veinte y cinco años*).<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the pretext for Mier's detention in the halls of the Inquisition, it was a space that differed from the Spanish Crown's jails in form and function. Because he left New Spain a Dominican friar in 1795, his inauspicious return to Mexico City in 1817 meant that the Church needed to resolve his status as a cleric before he could be tried in a criminal court. An ecclesiastical debriefing, where scrutiny of his life and works would be needed to achieve such a resolution, if only so he could be remanded to royal authorities.<sup>11</sup> And though the Inquisition had redirected its surveilling gaze towards philosophical works and the political conduct of priests during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Mexican Tribunal had not abandoned the task of policing the circulation of printed books in New Spain. It remained the principal

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<sup>9</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida a Los Mexicanos Escrita Desde El Castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, Año de 1821," in *La Revolución y La Fe: Una Antología General*, ed. Begoña Pulido Herráez, Biblioteca Americana. Serie Viajes al Siglo XIX (México, D.F: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013), 376.

<sup>10</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Escritos Inéditos de Fray Servando Teresa de Mier*, El Colegio de México. Publicaciones Del Centro de Estudios Históricos (Mexico: El Colegio de México, Centro de estudios históricos, 1944), 124. During the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, many of its members were detained within the halls of San Juan de Ulúa, including one Francisco Javier Clavijero.

<sup>11</sup> For all intents and purposes, he remained a Dominican friar in spite of his failed bid to become secularized in July of 1803, something perhaps unbeknownst to the Inquisition when he arrived.

apparatus for vetting books for their orthodoxy, censoring them, and limiting their distribution.<sup>12</sup> With its predilection for collecting and storing paperwork for the sake of fulfilling its tasks, the Tribunal in Mexico City used its investigative powers to track down what José Abel Ramos Soriano calls “los delincuentes de papel” (paper delinquents, delinquents of paper). In its policing duties, the Inquisition was not concerned merely with the activities of those associated with the production and circulation of books—writers, readers, clerics, officials under Crown employ, book sellers, printers, merchants, military officials and others—the second sense of ‘delinquents of paper’. It was also preoccupied with patrolling the delinquents *made of paper*: the books themselves and their content. Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, it appears, was suspected of such delinquency in both senses of the term, for his writings and the contents of his library attracted suspicion as much as his activity as an insurgent.<sup>13</sup>

As a *delincuente de papel* himself, the conditions of Mier’s detention in the Inquisition lend themselves to Mier styling the Inquisition as an archival space and his status as some kind of document. In contrast to the deathly bowels of the coastal fortress, the Holy Office’s confines become a decisive *mise en scene* that lends itself to characterizing the Inquisition-*qua*-archive a space of formation and fashioning, even within the limiting and concealing conditions that detention imposed upon Mier. For a Dominican friar like Mier, the Palace of the Inquisition occupied a space that was never far away from his earlier years. Proximately, the Holy Office of the Inquisition was housed in a building just across the street from the monastery of St. Dominic on the then-called Calle de la Perpetua, where he spent his early years as a mendicant friar with the Order of Preachers.<sup>14</sup> Confronting the Inquisition also meant confronting the specters of the two families that shaped his life: his family of origin and the family of his religious community. Coming before the tribunal that Christopher Domínguez Michael calls the pride and embarrassment of the Dominican Order, entailed being an accused individual in a court where his uncle José de Mier Villar sat among its prosecutor/inquisitors.<sup>15</sup> With respect to the family of his religious community, being tried as a priest obligated him to assume mantle of his past as a

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<sup>12</sup> Monelisa Lina Pérez-Marchand, *Dos Etapas Ideológicas Del Siglo XVIII En México: A Través de Los Papeles de La Inquisición*, 2a ed. (México, D.F: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2005), 109–18, 178–81.

<sup>13</sup> José Abel Ramos Soriano, *Los Delincuentes de Papel: Inquisición y Libros En La Nueva España, 1571-1820*, 1a ed, Sección de Obras de Historia (México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 226–28.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Domínguez Michael takes pains in his extensive biography of Mier to emphasize the historical and biographical forces, contradictions, and affinities passing through his person. That the Dominican order, whose friars were known as the “hounds of the lord”, a play on Domini canes, were instrumental in the historical founding of the Inquisition to prosecute the Albigensian Crusades in the 13th Century makes Servando’s status as a Dominican a source of privilege and prestige, even if he was being subject to a tribunal notorious for perpetuating racism and antisemitism through its opaque processes and reputation for meting out cruel punishments. He writes, “En alguna medida, la Inquisición era una deformación grotesca del convento y, asumida como el pecado original de la Orden, ése era el sitio teológico adecuada para la expiación”. See Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 1. ed, Biblioteca Era (México, D.F: Ediciones Era: CONACULTA, INAH, 2004), 522.

<sup>15</sup> Domínguez Michael, 525, 538.

Dominican friar, along with the social and legal privileges afforded to members of religious communities in New Spain. Being the subject of investigation by the Inquisition as a Dominican was to face a tribunal that had been created and administered by his predecessors and contemporaries in the religious order. However, Mier was no prodigal son to the Inquisition; the inquisitors did not exactly treat him with forgiving warmth, nor was he inclined to ask forgiveness for his life and work.

The Holy Office of the Inquisition operated on the presumption that it was a relatively benign pastoral proceeding concerned with saving the subject's soul in part through a thoroughgoing inquiry. To persuade the inquisitors about the state and soundness of his soul since his expulsion from New Spain, Mier was tasked with mounting his own defense before the tribunal,<sup>16</sup> which demanded he account for two decades of his life away from the confines of New Spain. This includes reviewing his escapes, his itinerant movements passing through Lisbon, Paris, Rome, London, and the United States, as well as his ill-fated insurgent expedition with Francisco Javier Mina in Soto de Marina.<sup>17</sup> Given Servando's comments about the space of detention under religious auspices as an species of archiving and the implication that the Palace of the Inquisition becomes the archive that holds stray documents like Mier, the idea that the Inquisition-as-archive becomes the stage on which he re-invents himself and narrates refashioned history to the Novohispanic world becomes all the more plausible. For as Christopher Domínguez Michael remarks, "he invented himself by writing his own life...there is no other Servando than the one Mier wanted to be in 1819".<sup>18</sup> In one such instance, where Mier recounts from his early days as a preacher who crossed a line by preaching an infamous sermon on Novohispanic Catholicism's most important figure—the Lady of Guadalupe—1794, he writes himself into being.

### *Early Intimations of Archives as a Topic in Mier's Writings The Dominican Monastery of Las Caldas*

Confined in the Inquisition's archival space and limited in his ability to move about, Mier describes himself as an item typically held in reserve, perhaps to be useful as resource for the crown: a discontent document to be disciplined and regimented. In his *Memorias*, written in the Inquisition's custody in 1819, Mier recounts an instance from late 1795 or early 1796, where, upon being sent to Spain to serve a sentence in conventual seclusion at the orders of Mexico City's Archbishop, he escapes from his cell in the Spanish monastery of las Caldas and heads toward Madrid. He loses his way en route and confides in a man who sends Mier toward the town of Carriedo. After hearing Mier's story and assisting him, the man reports Mier to the local

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<sup>16</sup> As an institution whose reputation rests on its conducting austere trials, torturous interrogations, and harsh punishments over centuries, to describe the Inquisition's work as 'benign' drips with an irony that is too cruel to not mention. This is one of a bevy of matters in Domínguez Michael's biography worth taking issue with. For it alludes to an anti-analytic stance that indulges a viewpoint which fails to countenance the intricate connections between procedures performed upon bodies and the formation of souls in enterprises such as the Inquisition.

<sup>17</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 518, 538.

<sup>18</sup> Domínguez Michael, 543–44.



authorities, who later apprehend him. Disoriented and tasked with navigating unfamiliar territory, Mier describes himself as a specific kind of document:

..I went by horseback, finding myself on the road to Madrid. In the afternoon I came upon a house next to the hill, and for half a buck a man led me to Zaro de Carriedo, to the house of an indiano [Spanish American] who was on board with me [from New Spain to Spain]. Had I taken the road to Cartes, I would have readily arrived in Buelna de Asturias, where my family's ancestral home is, and she would have protected me. But the same porter that led me to Carriedo, became surprised at my having told him that I was in Las Caldas on the order of the King. [The man having] portended my defeat and seeing how I was clearly wearing the [Dominican] habit, I was quickly found. The royal order had been shown to the senior mayor of the Valley of Carriedo, and **I had to return to be archived in las Caldas, like a stray codex**.<sup>19</sup>

On the roads of northern Spain drifts a stray codex, an out-of-place file from the across the ocean seeking relief at the empire's nerve center. Among Mier's mentions of the archive, the passage above is the only one where he extends the trope of the archive beyond that of it being a space of containment. In the passage above he is a living piece of paperwork moving along the routes of Spain's clerical and administrative bureaucracies. But it also suggests that those circuits cannot contain his energy, for Mier is a restless document, out of place in Spain, rudderless and at the mercy of the *peninsulares* that scorn him as an *americano*. He is out of place in the Dominican monastery of Las Caldas and its rat-infested cells, where Mexico City's archbishop Alonzo de Haro Núñez y Peralta ordered him to serve his sentence of conventual reclusion.

What markings or what documents does the stray codex have recorded upon it? The event that occasioned his removal to Spain was his sermon on the Virgin of Guadalupe made before members of the highest echelons of Novohispanic society. Mier's notes for the sermon made extensive reference to indigenous languages and their significance in understanding the image and its tradition. In contradistinction, the Archbishop's evaluation of the sermon shows the divergent political implications implicit in their conflicting narratives. Where Servando's notes show that he engaged with and drew on Nahuatl and draws to understand pertinent terms of Novohispanic Catholic traditions, the Archbishop's declaration appears to show no such engagement. In a gesture that pits Servando's spirituality against a concept of religion animating the Church's power, De Haro takes pains to list the names and positions of the canon priests—clerics, university theologians, historians, and lawyers—involved in pursuing Servando's case, crediting them as exercising their faculties. The declaration states,

with the most judicious criticism, with the most profound erudition, and with the most complete instruction in the rules of Theology, Sacred and Profane History, particularly that of this America, and of the extremely solid foundations that support the received

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<sup>19</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Memorias*, 3rd ed., Cien de México (México: Secretaría de Cultura, 2016), 193–94.

tradition of Our Lady of Guadalupe...<sup>20</sup>

For such an extensive and explicit listing of the qualifications bringing their faculties to bear on the case, the absence of officials familiar with the indigenous languages that Servando draws on for his sermon is striking. Equally striking is that in turning to past Creole or indigenous Novohispanic and European writers on Guadalupe, Nuñez de Haro refers to D. Fernando de Alva—a castizo writer from a line of New Spain’s indigenous nobility—without listing his last name: Ixtlixochitl. These gestures lend the impression that Nuñez de Haro’s edict performs an additional political function that turns the Archbishop into a metonym to denote the Spanish Crown’s presence in New Spain, a presence that selectively chooses who or what to include in the Church’s discourse.<sup>21</sup> The ambivalent way that Nuñez de Haro regards indigenous sources gestures to this work of selection on his part by effacing the indigeneity of his sources while acknowledging the contributions of local intellectuals. Moreover, in the failure to appreciate the ethical implications of these gestures of selection and partial attribution, Nuñez de Haro’s statement manifests a violent appropriation of language as an instrument for pursuing practical ends that have little to do with doctrine in the end.

Consistent with the notion that Nuñez de Haro’s text was less a doctrinal than it was a political statement in a theological disquisition, the terms describing the nature and effect of Servando’s sermon indicate that his interest was more than merely doctrinal. The Archbishop describes the sermon as, “...a new and false history...with many other impious propositions, errors, and fables unworthy of that holy place...which left the entire public scandalized...”<sup>22</sup> But the declaration’s final determination adds layer after layer of opprobrium to condemn the sermon and demand the local Church’s compliance to the accepted tradition. It reads:

...we declare the History of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that the cited Fr. Mier preached, as false, apocryphal, impious, and improbable, and his sermon thus contains a scandalous doctrine, alien to the sacred place where it was made public, injurious to very serious Spanish and Foreign Authors, foments the inflation and arrogance of one’s own judgement against the Apostolic precepts, perturbs devotion, religion, and piety, combatting a constant, uniform, and universal tradition, at least in this America, and qualified as pious by the Apostolic seat.<sup>23</sup>

In condensed form, Nuñez de Haro’s fulminating edict piles one condemnation upon another, lending the impression that his animus towards Mier’s conduct extends far beyond the initial

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<sup>20</sup> Alonso Nuñez de Haro and México (Archidiócesis), *Nos El Dr. D. Alonso Nuñez de Haro y Peralta ... Arzobispo de México ... A Nuestros Muy Amados Venerables Hermanos El Deán y Cabildo de Nuestra Santa Iglesia Metropolitana, El Abad y Cabildo de La Insigne y Real Colegiata de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe ... y á Todos Los Fieles de Ambos Sexos ... Predicó Un Sermón El P. Dr. Fr. Servando Mier, de Esta Provincia de Santiago de Predicadores ...* ([Mexico City?]: n.p., 1795), 5–6, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009281646>.

<sup>21</sup> Nuñez de Haro and México (Archidiócesis), 5–6.

<sup>22</sup> Nuñez de Haro and México (Archidiócesis), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Nuñez de Haro and México (Archidiócesis), 12.

event. As noted in the previous chapter, declarations and denunciations of insurgent figures repeat this gesture of saddling their target with a host of interpellations. The major difference between the 1795 edict and the counter-insurgent documents is that the latter pieces from Spanish military, governmental, and ecclesiastical authorities frequently straddle both the theological and political, oftentimes conflating the rebel with the heretic and consigning the accused as a dead man walking. Instead, De Haro enforced his edict by sentencing Fray Servando to ten years of exile and confinement in the Dominican convent in Las Caldas.<sup>24</sup>

For an Archbishop whose sympathies lay squarely in the Church's established structure, it is no major leap to affirm a critical implication from a sermon such as Servando's. It is that an erudite and eloquent young preacher will be troublesome to the Church and its prominent place in Novohispanic life. His inventiveness and wile make him ungovernable, for he and his ideas are difficult to harmoniously absorb into the circuitry of Viceregal and Ecclesiastical power. More severely, the young preacher becomes a moral danger to the Church when he would inevitably cross paths with the Archdiocese's largely indigenous flock, a flock that Nuñez de Haro likewise finds impressionable and ungovernable. Servando very much obliges that impression, as demonstrated in a 1796 letter from one an administrator in Spain's royal court updates Archbishop Nuñez de Haro on one of his escapes from detention. In it, the Crown's Minister of Grace and Justice Eugenio de Llaguno y Amírola informed the Archbishop of their restive charge the following remarks:

Most Excellent and Honorable Sir:

The King apprised of what Your Excellency espoused in your Letter No. 30, dated 31 March of the prior year, from which resulted from the testimony that accompanied the file advanced against the Dr. Sir Servando Mier of the Order of Saint Dominic, motivated by the scandalous sermon that he preached on 12 December [1794] in the Royal College of Our Lady of Guadalupe in which her apparition is celebrated. His Majesty ordered that, upon approaching Cadiz, he shall be securely transported to the convent of Las Caldas with, where you Your Excellency destined him to go. He arrived on 25 December [1795] and placed in a cell under the care of a fellow religious who would take custody of the key and would only grant him to take leave of his cell to attend choir, go to the refectory, and rest.

I do not comment on the softness of this reclusion; on the morning of 20 January just past, having called him to choir, he excused himself. On the pretext of not being well-disposed, and at [7:30] when he was brought some chocolate, his religious minder noticed that he fled, forcibly evading a nun and jumping the walls of the market garden.

Having taken note, the prelate took the most swift and efficacious means, and in effect secured his capture in Saro, in the Valle of Arriedo. On the night of the 23 of that same month he returned to las Caldas.

The security of this monastery not being enough to prevent another escape, on the

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<sup>24</sup> David Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano* (México: Era, 1997), 49.

insistence of the prelate that His Majesty transferred him to the monastery of St. Paul of Burgos. And for that the corresponding orders were communicated to the Provincial of Castille with this sheet; of which I apprise Your Excellency for your information. God Protect Your Excellency may years Aranjuez 10 February 1796.

Eugenio de Llaguno

Lord Archbishop of Mexico.<sup>25</sup>

Upon his expulsion from Mexico City, Servando was not content with remaining in one place while the Dominican order contemplated his fate as a priest. The errant, ungovernable friar and the Spanish authorities would remain locked in a dance of pursuit, evasion, transgression and enforcement for over twenty years. That is, until his late 1816 return to New Spain. In that expedition to Soto de la Marina, with Javier Mina in tow, he was set to deliver the blows that could possibly sever the political bonds that kept New Spain subordinated to its mother country: colonial Spain. Be that as it may, Mier's time in Las Caldas became one of the places where he could contemplate his escapes, sketch out his future exploits, and become something other than an out-of-place Dominican friar. The monastery-as-archive of Las Caldas becomes, if only in microcosm, a site of self-fashioning. It is a site that in some ways performs a function similar to what the palace of the Holy Office in Mexico City would become for Mier twenty years later.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Early Intimations of Archives as a Topic in Mier's Writings: Mexico City*

In the portion of his memoirs that mention his confinement in the Palace of the Inquisition, Mier regards himself being in a kind of suspended animation: neither a dead letter nor an active document that is wandering off course. Much in the way that Eugenio de Llaguno described his conditions of detention in Las Caldas as gentle, Mier himself claims that his custodians in the Palace of the Inquisition treated him with a similar gentleness, and even affection. In one instance he recalls the terse farewell that an inquisitor named Tirado bade Mier in 1820, speaking to Mier in what appears to be a perfunctory manner, as though Mier himself was reduced to his case file, a *delincuente de papel*. In a somewhat empty gesture, Tirado retroactively extends Mier if not a gesture of goodwill to draw Mier into agreeing with him: the mere appearance of one: "I have concluded with you. And now see how well we have treated you. That was the only thing that was in our hands."<sup>27</sup> The extensions of *captatio benevolentiae* we find with Llaguno with respect to Mier at Las Caldas and with the Tirado at Palace of the Inquisition resonate with a central assertion about the archive in Derrida's *Archive Fever*: that the archive is a form of house arrest, a domiciliation under the pretext of care in which archives happen.<sup>28</sup> As it

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<sup>25</sup> AGN, "GD14 Bienes Nacionales. Año: 1796, vol. 607, exp. 71," 1796, México, Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>26</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 562.

<sup>27</sup> Domínguez Michael, 562, citing Mier, *Escritos Inéditos*, 100.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2. For a definition of *captatio benevolentiae* as "fishing for goodwill", see Russell, Donald, and

would turn out, the three years of relative rejuvenation and self-collection in the archivist custody of the Inquisition would come to serve him after he was handed over to the United Jurisdictions, where he would begin a feverish spell of writing from the Castle of San Juan de Ulúa.

The ways that Mexico City figures in Mier's life offers a glimpse into how archives and codices could preoccupy Mier. In his early years as a Dominican, Mier inhabited a milieu in Mexico City set abuzz by Revillagigedo's reforms in the early 1790s. For it is a city that in the late eighteenth century was swept up with archaeology, history and the institution of archives. Since his entry into the Dominican novitiate in 1780, he lived in the monastery of Saint Dominic and pursued his studies in philosophy and theology. It was also in Mexico City that he was ordained a priest, became the monastery's Master of Studies, and took up a professorship at the University of Mexico. The talented young Dominican friar and preacher also enjoyed social connections that came with being part of a family of Bourbon clerics and administrators in Monterey, Nuevo Leon, a semi-autonomous jurisdiction northeast of Mexico City whose politics remained under viceregal control. Servando's paternal great-grandfather, Francisco, was named governor and General Captain of the New Kingdom Leon in 1710 and his father Joaquin served five years as a lieutenant general of the same jurisdiction in 1777 and was trained to serve as a functionary of the Bourbon military-fiscal regime. Joaquín de Mier was later named Captain General and Governor of Nuevo Leon in 1787. Servando's great-uncle was the previously mentioned inquisitor Juan de Mier and his uncle and godfather was Cosme de Mier y Trespalacios, an Asturian lawyer and judge in Mexico City who was a widower to Juana María the Countess of Santiago Calimaya and maintained close relations with his powerful adopted family. Mier thus found himself in settings that were closely bound to the histories of the Novohispanic elite.<sup>29</sup>

Being among those figures who occupied a narrow social stratum in Mexico City, Mier was also in close proximity to the Viceregal Palace and the adjacent *Plaza Principal*. This proximity placed Mier in a vibrant intellectual space where projects of governmental reform and public works were moving apace. One such project propelled a ferment of archaeological and scholarly activity: on August 13 and December 17, 1790, excavations to level and pave the *Plaza Principal* (now the Zócalo) led to the unearthing of two key Aztec artefacts that had been buried over two-hundred seventy-nine years prior. In August, crews dug up a twelve-foot-tall, three-ton stone monolith of the Aztec deity *Coatlicue* ("snakes her skirt") that drew the intense curiosity of indigenous visitors and frightened Spanish Americans, in turn making Coatlicue a source of Novohispanic ambivalence to the Mesoamerican past.<sup>30</sup> Four months later, crews excavated a

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Tobias Reinhardt. "captatio benevolentiae." *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. <https://oxfordre-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-1357>.

<sup>29</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 63–66, 75–81. On the positions of Juan de Mier and Cosme de Mier y Trespalacios in Mexico City's oligarchy in the late eighteenth century, see John Tutino, *Mexico City, 1808: Power, Sovereignty, and Silver in an Age of War and Revolution*, Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 44–45, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Leonardo López Luján, "El Adiós y Triste Queja Del Gran Calendario Azteca," *Arqueología Mexicana*, no. 78 (2006): 81.; Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 36.

massive stone disc, the Solar Stone, an artifact that later became mistaken for an Aztec calendar. The massive piece, twelve feet in diameter and weighing twenty-seven tons, was mounted at the bottom of the western wall of Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral and became an attraction for visitors to the Novohispanic capital.<sup>31</sup> With Viceroy Revillagigedo's support to pursue their conservation and study, these discoveries sparked activity by local intellectuals and historians who sought to either interpret the artefacts' meaning (Antonio de León y Gama) or critique the epistemological assumptions of intellectuals outside the Novohispanic world (José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez, Ocelotl Tecuilhitzintli).<sup>32</sup> These findings occurred within blocks of Mier's monastic residence and were a part of a general climate of inquiry on the part of creole intellectuals who attempted to recuperate the pre-Columbian past, better understand Nahuatl, and decode the Mesoamerican hieroglyphs.

Alongside the ferment of the places and times that Mier inhabited, archives—their creation, their purposes, their uses—frequently figured as part of the historical and intellectual developments that surrounded Mier. Personages that played a decisive role in establishing the General Archives of the Indies in Spain and the General Archive in New Spain, as well as the political polemics of historiography in Spain and Spanish America, make up part of the scene that Mier stepped out onto. During the late eighteenth century, political pressures, institutional conflicts, and scholarly bickering among a diverse set of players, including the Council of the Indies and the Royal Academy of History, Spanish officials were beset by a host of problems. Historians were under pressure to meet demands for new histories to address the failings of prior Spanish historians and to counteract criticisms of Spanish conduct in the New World coming from northern Europe, criticisms that echoed the Black Legend. Meanwhile in New Spain, creole intellectuals were busy rebutting the speculative historians from Europe who slandered the people, nature, and history of the New World.

Juan Bautista Muñoz, the Royal Cosmographer in Madrid and a court functionary, argued to Minister of the Indies José de Gálvez that a General Archive of the Indies would contain the answers needed to successfully respond to the criticism leveled at Spain from abroad. He argued that with this archive a new generation of Spanish historians could draw upon the documents needed to demonstrate the Spanish Crown's wisdom and industry to the world. Muñoz advocated tirelessly for the Crown to establish the archive, spending two decades collecting primary documents, with some of those years travelling the Iberian Peninsula with a group of scribes to copy and gather even more documents with. After outwitting rivals set against his project and finally procuring the authority to create the Archive of the Indies in Sevilla in 1784 from Galvéz, Muñoz managed the archive's work of gathering and organizing the streams of documents

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<sup>31</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 37.; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, s (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 268.

<sup>32</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 37.; Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 271.

originating from several locations.<sup>33</sup>

Aside from his role in decade-long labor of establishing the archive, Muñoz figures in Mier's biography in a few material ways. They likely never met in person; Mier's minders frustrated his attempts at meeting Muñoz upon his 1795 arrival in Spain. Yet Muñoz—presumably with the assistance of family connections in Asturias as well—helped Mier navigate the Spanish Court. For the Court was a terrain populated by an army of bureaucrats minding the cave-like storage rooms, whom Mier derisively called *covachuelos*.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Muñoz—as an historian of the Indies and an author of a key work concerning the Lady of Guadalupe in 1793—helped arrange the Real Academia de la Historia's review of Mier's 1794 sermon on the Lady of Guadalupe that occasioned his expulsion from New Spain.<sup>35</sup> Though that review ultimately cleared his name in 1799, Muñoz died just months before Mier's exoneration and conditional restoration of his clerical privileges.

Muñoz would remain, as Christopher Domínguez-Michael writes, a “beneficent phantom” for Fray Servando Teresa de Mier.<sup>36</sup> Muñoz's specter lingers in the texture of Mier's Mexico City even before his exile in 1794. Through royal orders delivered across the ocean, Muñoz traces linger throughout the Novohispanic Viceroy's wish to establish a General Archive in Mexico City. The principal difference between the General Archive of the Indies and the Novohispanic archive is that the latter was designed to serve the pragmatic aims associated with efficient government. As the intellectual force of the General Archive in Seville, Muñoz appears in New Spain as a grandfatherly phantom. His interests and concerns suffuse the sinews of the incipient Spanish American Archive, as Muñoz's plans and designs for the archive became the model from which the Viceroy Juan Vicente Güemes Pacheco y Padilla and José Antonio Bonilla (Muñoz's functional analogue in New Spain) would establish the General Archive of New Spain. The ideas from Muñoz's *Ordenanzas* took juridical form in New Spain with promulgation of the *Ordenanzas para el Archivo General que ha de establecerse en el palacio de Chapultepec, con arreglo a la Real Orden de 28 abril de 1792*.<sup>37</sup> By 1794, Revillagigedo could report on the project's progress to his successor, the Marquis of Branciforte, mentioning the work of organizing, compiling, indexing, and binding royal orders from the past century. Other documents remained sorely in need of attention, especially the confidential viceregal correspondence with the Council of the

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<sup>33</sup> Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 160–71, 196.

<sup>34</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 129, 139, 141.; Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Memorias*.

<sup>35</sup> In his *Memorias*, Mier expresses having pinned his hopes on Muñoz's intervening in his case, only to be frustrated by Novohispanic provincials such as Ganadarias and Archbishop Haro Núñez de Peralta, who were busy writing confidential letters to Crown officials through the *via reservada* to prosecute Mier. Nevertheless, Mier recounts his correspondence and the Dominican Friar Domingo Arana, who was sympathetic to Mier's cause, yet reported having trouble making inroads to the court and Juan Bautista Muñoz. See “” Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Memorias*, 188.

<sup>36</sup> Domínguez Michael, *Vida de Fray Servando*, 138, 141.

<sup>37</sup> Maria Teresa Jarquín Ortega, “Los Archivos Españoles Como Modelos y Antecedentes Del Archivo General de La Nación de México,” *Legajos: Boletín Del Archivo General de La Nación*, no. 7 (March 2011): 23–25.

Indies, and yet many other batches of documents remained partially organized or were still processing. Revillagigedo closes the portion of the *Instrucción Reservada* by wishing that the archive will be useful to his successor, stressing that the principal purpose of the archive was to aid in efficiently carrying out governmental activities: “May Your Excellency find this advantage to ease expediency, and so you may complete the work taking effect according to the proposed plan...as Your Excellency shall come to experience, seeing dispatch as incessant, bothersome, and continuous, with the urgency at which business often happens and piles up”.<sup>38</sup> In tune with the reformist push across the Spanish empire, the designs of Muñoz General Archive incorporated a new function besides creating a historical narrative to support the Spanish Crown’s legitimacy. The archive in New Spain was now a way to catalyze the speedy and expeditious government of a massive territory. Doing so would extend the Crown’s economic, fiscal, legal, and governmental powers, in part by articulating the Spanish Crown’s Reason of State in its colonies. If Mier is cognizant of the different ways that officials and governing institutions utilize the archive, which does not appear implausible, Mier is also affirming that his own archivization by the Inquisition’s officials and in the Holy Office’s palace is a form of being directly subjugated by the Church’s procedures of governing and indirectly by the Crown. Yet, in spite of this scene of subjugation, he does not merely resist or create a counter-discourse in the space of his subjugation. Mier seems to be devising ways of becoming a kind of subject that is difficult for both the Inquisition and the Crown to recognize him without acting against him with a menacing ferocity.

### *The Codex as Analogy for a Form of Subjectivation*

The human body is a fleeting thing, but a virtuous name will never be blotted out. Have regard for your name, since it will outlive you longer than a thousand hoards of gold.

-Sirach (Ecclesiastes) 41.11-13 quoted by Mier as the epigraph to *Memoria Apologética*<sup>39</sup>

At a glance, the *Carta* seems to be the work of a priest-prophet who interprets and explains the *x* of *México* as signifier in a signifying regime, that is, a semiotic register where *México* and *Cristo* signify each other, with the Church and Crown assiduously police how those terms are used. Yet the pragmatic function of the *Carta* as a mobile, printed transmission discloses an irony: a disembodied, printed letter designating and fixing the territorial name *México* is not the problem. Rather, the problem lies in the text itself and its uses. The *Carta*’s idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, and monomaniacal tendencies are not anomalous biographical residues. Rather, they are central to its form of expression because they help discern how the letter functions in

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<sup>38</sup> Juan Vicente Güémez Pacheco de Padilla Horcasitas y Aguayo Revillagigedo, *Instrucción Reservada* (Mexico: Imprenta de la calle de las Escalerillas, a cargo del C. Agustín Guiol, 1831), 304–7, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001144544>.

<sup>39</sup> Harold W. Attridge et al., *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, 2006, 1434.



terms of enunciation and subjectivation, terms that deviate from the semiotic concept of the linguistic sign.<sup>40</sup> Although the *Carta* prosecutes its case on the topics of language and linguistic use, its historical and political struggles play out in a broader space of expression where several variables converge in a discursive regime that forms the sensibilities and subjectivations of those involved in the interlocution: the document, the sign, the enunciating subject, and the subject at whom the statement is directed. Such a meeting point is centered on the powers of language and the language of power. The question at work in Mier's utterance is not primarily the apparent contradictions or linguistic infelicities populating the letter. That particular question supports the assumption that Mier's "Carta de despedida" is the work of an erudite crackpot. Rather, the more relevant questions for a work like the "Carta de despedida" pertain to the kinds of effects that Mier is trying to produce with his discourse and the mechanisms for producing those effects.

These questions bring us back to Mier's 1819 reflections on his detention of Las Caldas in 1795. There, he recalls with some frustration and resignation after being outed and detained in the Spanish countryside, that he "had to return to be archived in Las Caldas, like a stray codex". In using the metaphor of codex as the form a textual body lingering in the archives. And much of what Mier does in the archival space coincides with the way that the codex functions as documentary medium. Cordelia Vissman's history of the codex found in her study, *Files [Akten]*, sheds light on these functions. Vissman recounts how this medium has had its beginnings in the service of reestablishing rule after the fall of the Roman Empire. Around 535 the Emperor Justinian sought to reconstruct and codify the legal legacy of the western portion of the Roman Empire to spread the use of Latin and transfer Roman law to the Eastern Empire. The *Codex Justinianus* remediated otherwise dead legal documents by inventing a device that concentrated the ability of law to function across time. She lays out the codex's three principal operations—breaking, regulating, and recording:

...the Justinian codification aimed at a radical reordering of the transmitted material. Its goal was nothing less than an entirely new arrangement of old legal texts. An ongoing story was to be refashioned by means of a switch from scrolls to codex—and that, after all, is the meaning of codification. A loose chain of tradition that boasted no fixed reference, that had neither beginning nor end, was to be terminated. This file made out of files obliterated the very principle of files and installed the basis for the force of law that was removed from, and immune to, the challenging constellations of power. The codification inaugurated a new economy of texts. It was no longer a matter of unruly records constantly eroding and invalidating each other; rather, their prescribed reduction created a stable legal foundation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 138. As Deleuze and Guattari remark: "It is not simply linguistic, lexical, or even syntactic formations that determine the importance of a true semiotic translation but the opposite. Crazy talk is not enough. In each case we must judge whether what we see is an adaptation of an old semiotic, a new variety of a particular mixed semiotic, or the process of a creation of an as yet unknown regime."

<sup>41</sup> Cornelia Vismann, *Files: Law and Media Technology*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Meridian

By this telling the codex is a productive apparatus of law that gathers a multiplicity of legal texts so that they may continuously communicate with each other. Vissman's description shows how the codex works upon its materials and to produces forms of desire in the subject who uses the textual mechanism. Much in the way that the codex gives the law its effectiveness or force, styling himself as a codex gives Mier's utterances on the name their consistency, singularity, and force.

The history of the medium that Mier invokes as a self-descriptor emerges in close proximity to the archive and it is inextricably related to the eruption of desire and the emergence of a will for order and formalization. The codex breaks into the constantly flowing rolls of parchment, with each roll recording a particular instance of legal force whose power had attenuated over time. Their immediate use lapsed, each parchment on its own is little more than a dead letter heaped atop, beneath, or beside others in a chaotic scene. To inaugurate the law's production, the codex reaches into the indistinct collection of dead letters, dislocates them from their setting, and remediates them into a corpus of texts and statues. Because the codex organizes texts within a single material form, its user can more readily establish relationships, concordances, and cross-references between the texts contained within. Secondly, as a medium that intensifies a text's discursive force, the codex has a built-in code for regulating how it captures and processes what the scrolls transmit. It also conditions the way that the scrolls are translated into this new medium, all for the purposes of investing forgotten texts with legal force (or in the case of the non-legal codex, its rhetorical force).<sup>42</sup> The acts of codification record or memorialize the inclusion of texts and produces records. Therefore, by gathering packets of signs (documents) in its own body, the codex operates along the same principle of consignation that unifies, classifies, and arranges the heterogeneous bunch of documents into a single body, a *corpus*.<sup>43</sup> Finally, much in the way that the machinic assemblage of desire produces residues in the forms of the body of law by placing the law's content and expression into a co-adaptive relationship,<sup>44</sup> the codex also produces residual effects that from which other figures emerge. These are the figures who work with, produce, and consume the codex; they include the indexer, the scrivener, the commentator, and the chancery official, all of whom draw on a practical knowledge of the files to use them and make them operative.<sup>45</sup> Thus the codex produces the conditions of its consumption, the third aspect of a mechanism of desire.<sup>46</sup> Mier writes to become the subject that he presents to his inquisitors and by producing texts and organizing them along the model of the codex.

A text that Mier composed while confined in the inquisition stands out as an example of how he writes his subjectivation and organizes that subjectivation on the model of the codex. In

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(Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008), 62–63.

<sup>42</sup> Vissman, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 71.

<sup>45</sup> Vissman, *Files*, 64.

<sup>46</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Penguin Classics (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2009), 40–41.

1819 composes an uncanny set of letters to addressed to Juan Bautista Muñoz, the man who instituted the General Archive of the Indies and provided the model for establishing the General Archive in New Spain. The letters are backdated to 1797 and deal with the topic of the tradition of the Lady of Guadalupe, the subject of the sermon that got him expelled in 1795. In these letters, supposedly composed for the sake of diversion,<sup>47</sup> Mier draws on Muñoz as a foil for recalling the arguments he had produced twenty years earlier. As a work written before his better-known *Memorias*, the *Cartas a Juan Bautista Muñoz* rehearse his prior arguments, expands on the histories underlying those arguments, and generates some of the materials that he will turn to and repeat in later key writings, including the “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos.” To wit, a footnote in the second of Mier’s *Cartas a Juan Bautista Muñoz* is a brief exposition of the traces of Nahuatl in Novohispanic Spanish, where precursory intimations of the argument he poses in the “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos” appear and begin taking form—most notably a claim for the use of the letter “x” in the orthography and pronunciation of the word *México*.<sup>48</sup>

Mier’s epistolary colloquy with Muñoz is a work of memory where Mier unfolds his own desire to fashion himself as man of religion, letters, and politics, beginning with the occasion of his expulsion, his arguments regarding the Virgin of Guadalupe. He writes to Muñoz in the name of St. Augustine, citing a passage from the Church Father’s *De Vera Religione* concerned with phantasms, fictions, and truths, which he mistakenly attributes to his favored work from the Augustinian corpus—*De Doctrina Christiana*. The Novohispanic rhetorician repeats the words of the patristic rhetorician, with specters and phantasms never far away, for they are inextricably linked to the sources of human speech, reasoning, and devotion:

Let not our religion consist in phantasms of our own imagining. Any kind of truth is better than any fiction we may choose to produce. [And yet we must not worship the soul, though the soul remains true even when we entertain false imaginations about it].<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, if Mier is to write to Muñoz in the spirit of Augustine’s dictum and be taken seriously, he must thread a very fine needle. Mier must discern whether the ghost of Muñoz he addresses is not merely a figment of his own imagination, but a function of the spiritual passion that allows him to receive Muñoz’s spectral presence as a truth of any kind. If he is indeed responding to Muñoz’s spirit, Mier can proceed with a fidelity that could vouchsafe the truth of his remembered correspondence. But if Muñoz were simply an imagined extension of his rational soul, Muñoz would be a false imagination that would simply mask Mier’s vanity or self-worship. Mindful of the

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<sup>47</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Escritos Inéditos*, 195, cited in Domínguez Michael, *Vida*, 579.

<sup>48</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Cartas Del Doctor Fray Servando Teresa de Mier al Cronista de Indias, Doctor D. Juan Bautista Muñoz, Sobre La Tradiccion de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de México*, 243 p. (Mexico: Imp. de “El Porvenir,” 1875), 22–27, //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006017030.

<sup>49</sup> Translation from Augustine and John H. S Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 279. “Non sit nobis religio in phantasmatis nostris. Melius est enim qualecumque verum, quam omne quidquid pro arbitrio fingi potest; [et tamen animam ipsam, quamvis anima vera sit cum falsa imaginatur, colere non debemus...” For Augustinian sources in Latin see Aurelius santo Augustinus (santo), *Patrologiae cursus completus, seu bibliotheca universalis, integra, uniformis, commoda, ...* (J.P. Migne, 1865), 169.

impression Augustine has made on him, Mier is reckoning with a complex situation: in the archive the wayward cleric speaks with a specter of the Spanish archive's founder. He does this in a way that allows him to operate as an archival apparatus: the codex through which Mier organizes his memories in defense of his cause. To complete the circle, the specter of Muñoz is the *archon* of collecting and organizing documents for the sake of producing historical writings.

Augustine's maxim does not explicitly rule out the possibility that phantasms or specters can emerge from outside the imagination, either as a form of exteriority or a function of the outside. Neither does that maxim rule out that that phantasms may appear as a function of a belief that, if grounded in faith, can be the function of a spiritual exercise. Thus, within the domesticated arrest of the Inquisition's palace-as-archive, Mier speaks to the ghost of the Spanish archive's patriarch whose work directly and indirectly affected Mier the stray codex. In this scene of fashioning, the specter of Muñoz registers as a figure of Mier's desire, appearing as an *a priori* presupposition grounding the psychic space that Mier inhabits. In Mier's colloquy, Muñoz's specter is not mnemonic, which is an aid to directly remember what he previously said in his sermon. Nor is Muñoz's specter anamnestic, for Mier had never met Muñoz. Muñoz's specter is rather hypomnetic, serving as a technical apparatus for rehearsing his account of the Lady of Guadalupe. The kinds of repetition involved in Mier's rehearsal makes future utterances like a 'México' possible, whether those utterances appear in the *Memorias* of that same year, the *Memoria Apologética*, or the "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos." In each of those three works where he repeats his etymology of México; but in the "Carta de despedida" México becomes an utterance saturated with messianic significance and bear a precarious, and possibly destructive, promise. At the very least it was a conception of México that could contest the idea of an *Imperio Mexicano* investing the divine right of rule in the emperor, an idea that was gaining steam with Agustín de Iturbide's ascent in the political arena. Past the immediate political intervention that the *Carta* proposes, it advances the notion that a name can work beyond the capacity of language to signify and create subjective forms ignited by political passions that could stand to redeem a nascent nation before the world.

In using the codex as an image to order and organize the form of his becoming a subject, Mier gives expressive form the mechanisms of desire and enunciation. Lingering in the spaces of the archives (the inquisitorial space and the space of historical inquiry), Mier appears to cultivate his desire and intensify his passions through the acts of thinking and writing. The will to speak and know is that spiritual appetite that allows the *Carta's* propositions to materialize, which entails collecting fragments of thought, discourse, history and setting them into play in fields where discourse becomes more than a simple matter of either representation or signification. Mier's turn to the codex as a model for writing suggests, is a mechanism for arranging the elements of desire and align them with a will to enunciate that can bring those desires to the realm of the sensible. But to further produce an utterance, this ground—what Deleuze and Guattari would call a collective assemblage of enunciation—requires an abstract mechanism that would schematize and direct that desire.<sup>50</sup> Mariana Rosetti's reading of Mier's *Carta* in terms of a

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<sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 42, 82. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that writing in the

will to enunciate gestures in this direction. By citing Susana Rotker's analysis of Mier's discursive posture from the viewpoint of a will to enunciate, Rosetti's analysis recovers the importance and erudition of his writing from a reductive mythical-symbolic analysis of the *Carta*. More decisively, Rosetti's strategy opens a path to considering the contents of the letter in terms of the different ways that signs can be put into use. For Rosetti, like Rotker, the will to enunciate derives from Mier's condition of seemingly endless persecution. But rather than interrogating the functions of such Mier's will to enunciate, Rosetti's analysis recoils toward a formulation of Mier's subjectivity as that of a palimpsest, following Rolena Adorno's account of the colonial subject that diachronically takes on multiple positions.<sup>51</sup> The principal ramification of Rosetti's gesture is that it re-situates Mier's *Carta* in the context of language's connections to formulating national identity, which subjects the content of the *Carta* to an empirical historical analysis that does not identify the rules or mechanisms by which the *Carta* unfolds. Nor does it contemplate that the *Carta's* ragged edges and idiosyncrasies have a function. Therefore, instead of thinking about the *Carta* as partaking in a discourse of political spirituality forming the subjects of enunciation and the statement, *México*, the *Carta* is another literary or signifying artifact, an inscrutable text.

Furthermore, conceiving of Mier's subjectivation in terms of the palimpsest forecloses a re-reading of the letter from the viewpoint of the functions associated with a discursive event: uttering a proper name. This foreclosure risks overlooking the relationships between the archive and the process of becoming, where the archive is immanent to the history of the proper name and the proper name is the linguistic marker associating a self with an identity. Rather than the palimpsest, which Mier does not provide an image of his self upon, it is the codex that he models his soul upon. That codex in turn standardizes the law of the proper name, the file individuates said name in a political and historical field, and the name unsettles those fields through the passions that create a new history. In the case of Mier's *Carta de despedida*, those passions are crystallized in the presence of one letter: *x*.

### *Language and Incorporeal Transformations*

The political spirituality implicit in Mier's *Carta de despedida a los mexicanos* takes the archive as the site where its historical and messianic truth takes form. For the concept of *México* to take form in that alethurgical site, the braying and barking dogs that Mier summons must enter into the archive's space to undertake their apprenticeship in becoming-*mexicano*. The subject form that Mier proposes to best endure the apprenticeship in the concept of *México* is a medium

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form of a minor literature unifies "...enunciation with desire, beyond laws, states, regimes. Yet the enunciation is always historical political, and social. A micropolitics, a politics of desire that questions all situations." When they later state that "the machinic assemblage of desire is also the collective assemblage of enunciation...[there is no machinic assemblage that is not a social assemblage of desire, no social assemblage of desire that is not a collective assemblage of enunciation]", they repeat the first gesture in a register that can help articulate the links between psyche, subject, individuation, discourse, and the multiplicity of social relations.

<sup>51</sup> Mariana Rosetti, "Le Erudición Rebelde y La Lucha Por El Sentido: Fray Servando Teresa de Mier y Su 'Carta de Despedida a Los Mexicanos,'" *Revista Ciberletras. Revista de Crítica Literaria y de Cultura*, no. 23 (July 2010), <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v23.htm>.

in the archive: the codex, a device that can organize desire, thought, and affect in the service of transforming the selves and sensibilities of the *mexicano*. By entering into the regime of discourse that produces the subjects of passion through a mutual resonance between speaker, hearer, and the statement they partake in, what kinds of transformations are in play? With the status of the signifier *México* and its orthography as its principal topic, Mier's "Carta de despedida" wagers on the power of language to effect the kinds of passionate responses from its readers that could allow them to re-mediate the language of power in political discourse. Such a re-articulation of the language of power in political discourse involves transforming the terms along which a concept of nature can be articulated as specifically Mexican. By investing a signifier with specific historical and religious connotations, Mier's argument places language and the nature of Mexico at stake.

In the "Carta de despedida", Mier indirectly touches upon the pragmatic functions of language and language's ontological constitution. Language's first function is to transmit commands or order-words that issue two directives: to compel compliance with a command's lethal verdict or to emit a warning cry to flee impending danger.<sup>52</sup> This interplay of functions immanent to linguistic signs as order-words—subjection to a kind of death sentence and flight from the threat of death—is related to two mechanisms and outcomes. The first mechanism continuously generates linguistic variations, while the other mechanism forms subjects through micrological, incorporeal transformations in speech acts where the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement come into a close and mutually constituting relation.<sup>53</sup> The order-word that Mier indirectly associates with *México* appears near the end of the letter in a call to action: "Mis paisanos dejen de ladrar, e instrúyanse" (My fellow countrymen, cease barking and instruct yourselves).<sup>54</sup> Mier's exhortation is a specific call to action. It is not to enter into combat or even involving oneself in the politicking of the present. It is a call to make oneself available to learn the truth of a *México* that they do not yet know. Self-tutelage under the sign of *México* consists in learning and internalizing the lessons of history to redeem the people of the letter *x* and redeeming the *pueblo mexicano* (the Mexican people) from the Spanish empire of signs. The tutelage that Mier proposes involves mastering a political discourse to litigate political controversies, such that the nation and its citizens emerge out of narratives transmitted from and preserved in the colonial archive. For as Santa Arias remarks in her discussion of Mier's cosmopolitanism, historical discourses have political currency for creoles such as Mier:

If Enlightenment historiography was tied to notions of progress, secularization, utilitarianism, and the search for critical rationality, for Creoles, historical inquiry became an engine for attaining political freedom...Mier's personal history enmeshed within colonial history is not a new world within the old, but about engaging with a world of ideas new to him that enable him to shape a new further with a renewed identity.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 79, 106.

<sup>53</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 109, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 382.

<sup>55</sup> Santa Arias, "De Fray Servando Teresa de Mier a Juan Bautista Muñoz: la disputa guadalupana en vísperas

As the subject of enunciation, Mier enjoins his readers, the subject of the *Carta*'s statement, to a form of tutelage that is at the same time a form of flight and deterritorialization. To effectuate this education of the passions associated with becoming-*mexicano*, Mier directs his readers to the archive as the venue of instruction where the exercises of political spirituality can take place. Mier hastily sketches a map of the archive for his readers, referencing prominent figures whose works populate the Colonial Spanish American archive—Torquemada, Sahagún, Clavijero, Las Casas, Acosta, Cortés. As a finding guide, the *Carta* also suggests other critical items for his readers to examine: Conrad Malte-Brun's ethno-geographical works, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's *Fénix del Occidente*, a manuscript written by a Mexican Jesuit in Manila called the *Historia Verdadera de Quetzal-cóhuatl*, Mariano Veitia's studies of Mesoamerican rites and celebrations, Gregorio García's work on evangelization in the Americas during the Apostolic period of Christian history, and Antonio Calancha's work *Crónica de San Agustín del Perú*.<sup>56</sup> These recommendations put forth a set of common texts from which speaker and readers can enter into a pedagogical space of mutual self-constitution. In the case of Mier, he becomes the codex-subject as the subject of enunciation; in the process of enunciating, he becomes the subject of the statement when he subjects himself to the sign *México* and becomes the spiritual director for his pupils. For the subject of the statement—the readers as *paisanos* or *mexicanos*—*México* becomes the point from which they become *mexicanos*, insofar as the statement affirms the narratives on which a people could define itself as a nation with some degree of autochthony. But this flight into the common space of the archive happens on the condition that the respondent flees into the archive to study. In fleeing to the archive, the subject of the statement recoils into that subject of enunciation when the term *México* is uttered with the cultivated passion of patriotism. When uttered, *México* becomes an affirmation of life that answers the political death sentence augured by *Méjico* as posited by a despotic imperial regime. But if fleeing from the death sentence of *Méjico* involves withdrawing from a use of language that makes the King transcendent center of power,<sup>57</sup> what becomes of the sign *México*? If the face of God withdraws into the immanence of the *x*, the power of *México* for Mier is not merely an ability to relieve Mier of his persecutions. In this merging of the subjects of enunciation and the statement, power is the immanent force coursing through each, with the proper name bearing upon the real, with the name becoming normalized through repeated passional enunciations.<sup>58</sup>

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de la independencia," *Revista iberoamericana*, no. 222 (2008): 211–25, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2665942>.

<sup>56</sup> Mier Noriega y Guerra, "Carta de Despedida," 382–83.

<sup>57</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 130.

<sup>58</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 110. Deleuze and Guattari observe how the powers of language are at stake when an order-word is repeated, which include its power to create variant forms. "For the question was not how to elude the order-word but how to elude the death sentence it envelops, how to develop its power of escape, how to prevent escape from veering into the imaginary or falling into a black hole, how to maintain or draw out the revolutionary potentiality of the order-word. Hofmannsthal adopts the order-word, "Germany, Germany!", or the need to reterritorialize, even in a "melancholy mirror." But beneath this order-word he hears another, as if the old German "figures" were mere constants that were then effaced to uncover a relation with nature

The effects of these normalizations are not merely speculative, for these normalizations are the processes that Mier's acts of rhetorical invention rely upon to generate linguistic variations. For in his hands, *México* becomes a password that signals the emergence of a linguistic variation that had already been unfolding over the course of three centuries in Novohispanic life. Linguistic variations formed through discursive invention become the touchstones on which the history of the Spanish language and the fate of the Spanish language in America become intelligible. As Concepción Company remarked in her inaugural lecture to the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, the second half of the eighteenth century was a critical juncture for the history of the Spanish language in New Spain.<sup>59</sup> With the Spanish Crown's centralizing the administration of Spanish affairs and exert greater Spanish control over the governance of its empire during the second half of the century, creoles were being marginalized in the lands of their birth and their social and political privileges were ever-more constrained. Simultaneously, the indigenous populations of New Spain were in the long process of demographic recovery from the devastation wrought conquest and colonization, with estimates of the indigenous population's decimation from war, pestilence, and famine during sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reaching ninety-percent.<sup>60</sup> The substantial migration of indigenous peoples towards urban spaces spurred by administrative and economic changes and the cultural and ideological effects of the Bourbon reforms on creole populations produced a set of material conditions that changed Novohispanic Spanish. The changes occurred at various levels: in syntax, semantics, and the ontological orientation of language.<sup>61</sup>

The Bourbon Reforms also impacted indigenous communities, with the layer of governing institutions mediating disputes between indigenous and Spanish populations being eliminated by decree, thus dismantling the ethnic and jurisdictional separation of both groups from one another.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the pressures created by the Crown's efforts at spurring economic activity during the *siglo de lo económico* (the economic century) sent growing numbers of indigenous peoples to the cities, and with it a greater social and commercial interchange with that produced a process of reciprocal acculturation and hybridization playing out in everyday life.<sup>63</sup> That hybridization played out in the field of language and linguistic usage and created a new, Mexican, variant of Spanish that incorporated indigenous terms and pronunciations into the Spanish language. The practical value of these changes in the nature of Spanish in New Spain was manifest in the emergence of linguistic norms that helped attenuate social tensions and facilitated social

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and life all the more profound for being variable." (110).

<sup>59</sup> Concepción Company Company, *El siglo XVIII y la identidad lingüística de México: discurso de ingreso a la Academia Mexicana de la Lengua 10 d noviembre de 2005* (México: Universidad Autónoma de México: Academia Mexicana de la Lengua, 2007), 158.

<sup>60</sup> Company, 155–56.

<sup>61</sup> Company, 155–56.

<sup>62</sup> Company, 160–61.

<sup>63</sup> Company, 162–63.



interactions. Company summarizes these developments thusly:

To my understanding, the great influx of the indigenous population into the cities in the last Viceroyal century and the decades immediately preceding motivated or activated two linguistic developments. For one part, the employment of new voices to name reality, and from there a grater adaptation of lexical indigenism in the eighteenth century, such as the co-appearance of lexical hispanisms and indigenisms to name the same referent, as well as the substitution of some others such as *apapachar*, *elote*, *achichinle*, *molcajete*, *tatamar*... [L]ikewise some concepts do not have proper equivalence in the Spanish language, as it is the case with, among others, *itacate* or *comal*. For the other part, the renewed major indigenous presence in the city motivated the use of grammatical codifications and communicative strategies that, were it to be viable in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, created a respectful and successful everyday conviviality that could generate social and laboral effects. Achieving such a goal required the activation of modes of expression...that favored a distanced codification, less direct and less external-referential....<sup>64</sup>

In Company's analysis, the variation of Spanish that gradually and imperceptibly unfolded in eighteenth century New Spain was marked by a semantic and strategic orientation that, unlike the referential and object-oriented character of Peninsular Spanish, unfolded along pragmatic and relational lines, focused less on the interchange of meaning but the formation of relations of subjects, between subjects.<sup>65</sup> Thus, where Peninsular Spanish directed its energies on things with names to be manipulated from a distance, Novohispanic Spanish by contrast focused on the relationships between subjects of vastly different social strata and ethnic origin in order to, if not resolve social differences and tensions, find a common space for negotiating them.

These changes did not simply come to bear upon everyday speech, but in lettered discourses as well, where indigenous expressions and influences marking a linguistic independence and autonomy from Spain and peninsular Spanish populated the pages of creole texts. In short, it is a form of linguistic deployment conducive to enacting the kinds of flights of passion we find in Mier's *Carta*. For insofar as language is at stake in the *Carta*, it is the character of Spanish as local and not from an ocean away, and as Mexican rather than peninsular. Thus, in writing *México* with an *x*, Mier invests himself in the messianic promise of the *x* in *México*, which on the order of language consists of New Spain's flight from an imposing Hispanism that would otherwise mark the social death of the creole and the mestizo. More importantly, Mier's wager holds out for the kind of passion, invention, and creativity that could realize the messianic promise of the *x* by becoming-*mexicano*, and with it, the emergence a form of subjectivation. The challenge that such a change of nature poses for the *ciudadanos* and *paisanos* of the new, messianic *México* is that they cultivate the kind of trust that could disarm what Alexander von Humboldt noted was the mistrust that defined colonial government. As he observed, this

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<sup>64</sup> Company, 155–56

<sup>65</sup> Company, 91.

menacing mistrust brought with it a moral degradation imposed upon the colony's inhabitants and intensified their suffering; in the process it called the ethical bases of colonial rule into question.<sup>66</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Because the linguistic change that Mier documents in the *Carta* happens slowly and imperceptibly, it is easy to overlook how these changes could be effects of repeated practices of political spirituality. Likewise, the ramifications of those changes are easy to underestimate because the changes in the content of expressions and utterances appear as cosmetic changes in the appearance of a term while overlooking the most elementary semiotic elements underlying linguistic theory: that the concepts signified by the word change in much the same way. Thus semioticians, linguists, historians, and philologists such as Mier are left with the unenviable tasks of unearthing those discursive changes, tracking their development, and discerning the changes in the ways and elements that a concept comprehends and make consistent. Should an intellectual be so deeply entwined in the political life of a nation, the mechanisms and contents in interventions such as the *Carta* have the potential to be understood in terms of the social and political struggles unfolding around them.

Found in the folds of Mier's *Carta* are several overlapping claims that, I argue, become more legible in terms of political spirituality and the concept of *México*. In being one of the first attempts at articulating a comprehensive concept in the short space of an epistle, Mier draws on his biography to create a political spirituality consisting of three elements. The first element is a venue for truth-making in the archive; the second is a model for understanding the mechanisms of subjectivation, desire, and enunciation with the codex; the third is a regimen of historical and philological instruction that connects the subject of enunciation—Mier—with the subjects of the statement—the *mexicana/s*.

Codices and archives—both their institutional character as sources of historical truth and political power, and their abilities to mediate the mechanisms of self-fashioning—are crucial for realizing the messianic promises implied in Mier's concept of *México*. Mier casts himself as a model of the self-tutelage, scholarship, and reflection needed cultivate the *mexicano's* spiritual appetites. This mechanism of desire coincides with a collective determination, or a will to enunciate the term *Mexico* in a way that comprehends multiple relationships between space, biography, spirituality, and history. Furthermore, Mier's political spirituality characterizes *mexicanos* as people formed in the archive and educated in the rigorous logic of historical inquiry of the Mesoamerican and Novohispanic past, an education that produces a relentless drive to utter *México*. Mier's "Carta de despedida a los mexicanos" advances the proposition that the codex and the archive are the mechanisms through which the *mexicano* can create a national identity from an original and authoritative history, one that could undergird a people's singularity

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Horst Pietschmann, *Acomodos políticos, mentalidades y vías de cambio: México en el marco de la monarquía hispana*, ed. José Enrique Covarrubias and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, Primera edición, Antologías (Ciudad de México: El Colegio de México, 2016), 283.

in historical space and time. The “Carta de despedida” emerges at an historical threshold between the Mesoamerican world and the European world, colony and nation, old ways of speaking and new ways of relating. By fashioning a *México* with an *x*, Mier articulates a hybrid formulation that incorporates indigenous and creole in a more prominent way. In this manner, the *México* of the *Carta de despedida* attests to the elements that form a sense of becoming-*mexicano*, one that substantially differs from peninsular Spanish, comes to the fore in New Spain.

A passage from *Tardes Americanas* from 1778 fittingly evokes an image of that that Mier may point to as a *México* might look like. In the third book, a sweeping account of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican political history, institutions, theology, and calendrical systems, the text’s indigenous interlocutor remarks upon the masterful statecraft of the Texcocan ruler (tlatoni) Techotlatetzin during his sixty-eight-year reign. The *indio* notes that among Techotlatetzin’s accomplishments was to institute a treasury and its exchequer, the *Hueycalipixqui*, and to create the post of the *Hueyaminiqui*, or the chief hunter, whom the *indio* describes as :the master of the halls (Maestre Salas), the jewel keeper (Guarda joyas), or the custodian of made artifacts (el zelador de los artificios que labrabran.”<sup>67</sup> Yet the *indio* subsumes the chief hunter’s titles under the principal heading of *Archivero mayor*, or head archivist. Part of the archivist’s remit is to assume custody texts written by chroniclers and historians, to scrupulously check and cite sources to create true historical knowledge that dignifies the memory of the past centuries.<sup>68</sup> A figure who archives and inhabits archival spaces, the *hueyaminiqui* can stand as one model for the kind of labor needed to fashion a self from history, or more precisely, of fashioning a future self as Mexican.

Resonant episodes from the archives such as the one just mentioned shed light on several points for developing how political spirituality is at work in Mier’s *Carta de despedida a los mexicanos*. First among them is to consider more fully the ways in which Mier proposes this form of political spirituality could be working on what Bruno Bosteels, following Jacques Rancière, calls an *archipolitical* register that operates along the lines of “a community based on realization of the *arkhê* of community, on its integral sensibilization” where “the philosopher proposes the fully particularized body of a community accomplishing its inner essence or character” and “propounds the truth of a discourse that claims to be seamlessly derived from an ideal cosmic and instead of a polemical universality”. In this archipolitics the philosopher, “seeks to breathe life into particular ways of doing, speaking, and living as molded into bodies of each of the community’s members.”<sup>69</sup> This register is one that the prominent forms of political discourse seem to either

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<sup>67</sup> José Joaquín Granados y Gálvez, *Tardes Americanas, Gobierno Gentil y Católico: Breve y Particular Noticia de Toda La Historia Indiana...: Trabajadas Por Un Indio, y Un Español* (México: En la nueva imprenta Matritense de D. Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, calle de la Palma, 1778), 41, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucm.5325290273>.

<sup>68</sup> Granados y Gálvez, 41.

<sup>69</sup> Besides putting Mier’s Carta into conversation with the kinds of plans that Iturbide was proposing and the political support he was consolidating in 1820 and 1821, it also remains to be seen where precisely political spirituality intervenes in forms of thinking and discourse relating to variations of political thinking. See Bruno Bosteels, “Politics, Infrapolitics, and the Impolitical: Notes on the Thought of Roberto Esposito and Alberto Moreiras,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 10, no. 2 (2010): 205–38, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2010.0027>.

overlook or presuppose, yet advance political projects leading up to and extending past the era of Mexican Independence: the *pronunciamento* that announces fidelity or loyalty to a particular constitutional form and the explicit plans—such as Iturbide’s *Plan de Iguala*.

The second point of development pertains to the sources of Mier’s political spirituality. While it is tempting to turn to the *Spiritual Exercises* and the spiritual procedures of the Jesuits, which a reading of Servando’s *Carta* through Reinaldo Arenas biographical novel *El mundo alucinante* posits, Mier’s training and religious life as a Dominican friar subjected him to a very different form of spirituality that contrasted significantly from that of the Society of Jesus.<sup>70</sup> A very cursory glance at the several aspects of the *Carta* in light of the some major themes of Dominican spirituality—an emphasis on Christ as the focal point of spirituality, the importance of study and contemplation as means of nourishing the soul, and the central importance of preaching to procure the salvation of souls—suggest that Mier’s political spirituality transposes elements of Dominican spirituality as a model for the tasks of becoming-*mexicano*.<sup>71</sup>

A final leitmotif to consider concerns the role that literary forms might play in elaborating and effecting a political spirituality, namely, the role of autobiographical and epistolary discourses as forms of political rhetoric. Mariana Rosetti’s study of Mier, Bustamante, and Lizardi attempts to historicize their autobiographical writings by re-inserting them into the historical and political struggles and polemics of their times.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, Mariana Ozuna Castañeda explores the rhetorical capacities of the epistolary form and the role that letters such as Mier’s epistles in forming an open-ended discursive field, that allows the writer to shift topics and modulate the tone and force of written speech. The result is that the epistles allow the correspondents to form a kind of “mystical body” that engages in the polemic with strangers that may or may not necessarily be friends.<sup>73</sup> Instead, the “mystical body” formed among epistolary interlocutors becomes a microcosmic political community in an imagined public space of which the nation is one kind.

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<sup>70</sup> Eduardo G. González, “A Razón de Santo: Últimos Lances de Fray Servando,” *Revista Iberoamericana* 41, no. 92 (December 4, 1975): 599, <https://doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.1975.3034>.

<sup>71</sup> For a survey of the basic principles of Dominican spirituality see William A. Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality: Principles and Practice* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014). On some basic differences between Jesuit and Dominican forms of religious life, see O. P. Scott Steinkerchner, “Introduction: Dominicans and Jesuits, through the Centuries,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7, no. 3 (April 11, 2020): 357–76, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00703001>. For some context on the early Dominican criticisms and hostility to Jesuit spirituality in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Terence O’Reilly, “The Spiritual Exercises and Illuminism in Spain: Dominican Critics of the Early Society of Jesus,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7, no. 3 (April 11, 2020): 377–402, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00703002>.

<sup>72</sup> Mariana Rosetti, “El ejercicio de la escritura autobiográfica letrada en la emancipación novohispana,” *Revista Telar* ISSN 1668-3633, no. 23 (December 23, 2019): 137–54, <http://revistatar.ct.unt.edu.ar/index.php/revistatar/article/view/450>.

<sup>73</sup> Mariana Ozuna Castañeda, “Corresponderse: Límites y Alcances Del Género Epistolar En México (1810 y 1811),” *INTI, Revista de Literatura Hispánica*, no. 71/72 (2010): 237, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23289044>.

## *Conclusión/Tlayecotzili*

### Hidalgo's Two 'Méxicos' and Mier's Second Prophecy

“...the people pay attention to names.”

—Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, “Profecía Política”

By the time Novohispanic independence was formally consummated on September 28, 1821 with the signing of the *Acta de Independencia del Imperio Mexicano*, the political debate had quickly turned from the issue of procuring political independence to whether Mexico would constitute as a monarchy, a republic with a strong centralized government, or a confederation of states and provinces. What did not seem to be in question for the parties to the agreement, nor for the republican partisans who were plotting against the new empire, was the character of the new nation was Mexican. The relative consensus around the “Mexican-ness” of the independent nation came on the tail end of a tumultuous journey of social, political, and conceptual changes in what the name *México* meant and the kinds of intellectual forms *México* referred to. This dissertation has explored different phases of *México*'s appearance during passage from 1740 to 1823, arguing that mark *México* underwent a transformation from a set of geographical, historical, ethnic, and governmental ideas associated with *México* to a concept through which *México* denoted a field of experience wherein the people inhabiting Mexican territory could emerge as *mexicanas* and *mexicanos*. This dissertation claimed that discourses and practices of political spirituality during the insurgency were among the mechanisms used to generate the subjective intensities and forms needed to affirm *México* as a concept and field of experience.

Two moments from this journey illustrate the claims I advanced in this dissertation. The first example moment, in which *México* appeared on the first end of this journey as a set of disparate ideas and associations, comes from two writings by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla from the dawn of the insurgency in the fall of 1811. In those writings, Hidalgo's usage of *México* and the *mexicano* illuminates the kinds of disjunctions around these terms that had developed during the later parts of the eighteenth century. The co-appearance of these different usages illustrates how the major and minor usages of language about *México* discussed in Chapter 2 linger in a common body of written work. Hidalgo's *Primera Proclama Formal*—a document expounding his rationale for political independence from a Spanish Empire usurped by Napoleon—addresses his fellow *criollos* he calls “beloved religious compatriots, sons of this America,” and exhorts them to take up a sacred cause to expel the despotic and exploitative Europeans. The proclamation singles out certain localities as seats of impiety and irreligiosity in need of governmental reform: Mexico City, Puebla, Valladolid, and Guanajuato. Hidalgo regards his compatriots as belonging to an American

nation, while the term *México* carries a negative connotation in the very same document. Lamenting about how material lusts and foreign French fads have overrun these cities and reversed the simple good taste and religiosity of Novohispanic life, Hidalgo declares:

...lust and French fashion tore the sacred images of God, the Most Holy Mary and their saints away from the walls of their rooms (and they would have done the same in the temples could they have done so), having the iniquitous complacency of putting in their place obscene statues and initiatives of lascivious impurity rather than pious models for the sake of fashionable good taste. Observe the way they dress when they present themselves in the temples of the divine duties; those effeminate men, now primped, now bald and with false breasts, whistling instead of praying, courting prostitutes in the real presence of our God, amid the scandal of the little poor people [*los pobrecitos*] in whom true piety and religion are found.<sup>1</sup>

In the counter-discourse of the *Proclama*, Hidalgo casts a shadow of moral opprobrium over *México*, as he does with the other cities he mentions. The shadow imputes an aloof disposition to the city's powerful Spanish residents: foreign, effeminate, obscene, salacious, and scandalously unjust. It is an ethical charge that does little in the way of separating moral opprobrium from religious and theological judgment, since it coincides with an assessment of the tyrannical *gachupín*, whose actions oppose the earthly and spiritual happiness of the *americanos*.<sup>2</sup>

While the *Proclama* associates Mexico City (or simply *México* to Novohispanics) with a set of undesirable moral qualities, Hidalgo comes just short of naming these inhabitants *mexicanos* or reducing the Kingdom of New Spain to Mexico. Five days after issuing the *Proclama*, Hidalgo sends a letter to the Intendant of Guanajuato concerning the consequences of the insurgency wherein he marshals a historical-political case for a growing national movement. He states the movement's intentions to become independent from Spain and become self-governing against the background of three centuries of exploitation that drained the Mexicans of their wealth and reduced their forms of life to a state of degradation and servitude. A telling passage demonstrates how Hidalgo binds the insurgency's national ambitions to the remediation and recovery of historical rights divinely given to the Mexicans, with Hidalgo writing:

There is no remedy, Lord Intendant; the actual movement is large, and even more so when it concerns **recovering the holy rights conceded by God to the [pre-Columbian] Mexicans** usurped by some cruel, unjust, and bastard *conquistadores*, who were aided by the ignorance of the *naturales* [indigenous Mesoamericans] and accumulated holy and venerable pretexts. They [the Spaniards] went on to usurp their customs and properties, and vilely, as free men, to convert them to the degrading condition of slavery.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla: documentos de su vida, 1750-1813. Vol. 3: 1810*, ed. Felipe I. Echenique March and Alberto Cue García (México, D.F: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), doc. 301, 57.

<sup>2</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 301, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 305, 65.

However, it is the letter's closing where Hidalgo implies that the national project and the historical Mexican people find a communicating medium in his utterances. After Hidalgo notes that independence consists in settling historical accounts by reclaiming, recovering, and defending the rights of the Mexican nation that provide an image of justice, he shifts voice to speak directly to the Intendant by way of conclusion. Before he issues an ultimatum for the Intendant to choose peaceful and rational measures over war and destruction, he recapitulates his previous gesture, writing, "I have accomplished, Sir Intendant, indicating to your excellency my intentions or better said, that of the nation's" (He cumplido, señor intendente, con indicarle a vuestra excelencia mis intenciones o mejor dicho, las de la nación.)<sup>4</sup> In that moment of hesitation, Hidalgo pauses to alter his relation to the case he laid out—from being the speaker of a personal conviction about his prior discourse to becoming a medium of the historical demand for a nation seeking the redemption of a Mexican nation under the yoke of Spanish domination for three centuries. Hidalgo's political appeal for insurgency as a means to reclaim a stolen Mexican sovereignty, despite the suspicion or derision for what Mexico City in the form of *México* represented to him, indicates implicit, yet still inchoate, connection between the project of independence and its character as Mexican. But further inquiry remains to determine for whom these arguments for independence on the basis of recovering a primordial Mexican sovereignty were meant (creole or indigenous) and how effective they were. Such an inquiry needs to interrogate the extent to which political struggles of the insurgency were also contests over who speaks and acts on behalf of the indigenous and whether indigenous communities found Hidalgo's line of argumentation persuasive.

This ambivalence lingering in Hidalgo's disparate usage of *México* and the *mexicano* suggests that the ideational or conceptual status of these terms is has yet to crystalize, Hidalgo's words show the intelligible content signified by the word *México* on the move; speaking retrospectively, it appears as the intelligibility of the term *México* is moving away from the splintered formulations that appeared during regime of Spanish rule and the bloody crucible of rebellion and war.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the fate of *México* over *América* remained unresolved during the war. Moreover, the murky linguistic terrain of religion and politics amid political fights and armed combat exerted pressures on the exercise of spirituality that, upon reflection, did not deal a decisive and lasting conceptualization. even though the middle of the insurgency saw the formal adoption of *México* and the *mexicano* in the constitutional discourses proposed by the insurgency under Morelos in late 1814 and 1815.

At the other end of the journey, in 1823, is Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, seated in the constituent congress as the deputy representing the province of Nuevo Leon. The congress was tasked with debating and drafting a republican constitution for Mexico following fall of the

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<sup>4</sup> Hidalgo y Costilla, doc. 305, 66.

<sup>5</sup> In her essay on names in the insurgency, Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach likewise notes this anomalous use of Mexico or the Mexican in Hidalgo's discourse, where he typically reserves Mexico to refer to the Novohispanic capital. Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, "La Insurgencia de Los Nombres," in *Interpretaciones Sobre La Independencia de México*, ed. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., 1. reimp. Colección Raíces Del Hombre (México, D.F: Nueva Imagen, 1999), 103–122.

Mexican Empire fell in March of 1823, when Agustín I abdicated to the Congress that he had dissolved five months earlier. November 1, 1823 saw the adoption of the *Acta Constitutiva*, which set the general parameters for a constitution and creating a federal republic. On December 13, 1823, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier delivered a speech that would become known as the “Profecía Política” (political prophesy), an oration that was parts political autobiography, disquisition on comparative politics, a history of revolutions, and a plea for the congress to draft a constitution which would provide for a stronger central government. Mier proposed the centralist form against a proposed federalist system on the model of the United States of America, which grants extensive powers to individual states over the affairs of the nation as a whole. Of interest to the topic of this dissertation, however, is the presence of a familiar leitmotif in Mier’s political thinking: importance and value of names and nomenclature in politics. In this case, the question of names was not about the name of *México* but of the name of a state as having sovereignty. Leery of the notion that the nation’s regional states could be called sovereign, Mier emphasized how doing so would come at the expense of the nation’s sovereignty, and thus risk the nation’s integrity as well. Acknowledging attempts by federalist attempts to assuage Mier’s concerns, he states:

“You don’t have to be scared”, they tell me, “it is a question of name.” Other articles [in the constitution] would reduce the sovereignty of the states that it would be a sovereignty in name only. Without going into the depth of the question that is specific to Article 6, and showing that, since sovereignty resides essentially in the nation, it cannot be convenient for each of the provinces that, it is already determined, make up the nation. I agree: ridiculous and comedic is the sovereignty of every country that is not self-sufficient to itself be able to repel all external aggression. But the people pay attention [or adhere] to names, and the idea that ours has the name of sovereignty is of a supreme and absolute power because it has not recognized any other...

Let us not be deluded, Sir: remember your that names are for all of the people, and that France’s with the name of sovereign, ruined it all. They sacked it, they assassinated it, they leveled it to the ground.<sup>6</sup>

The stridency with which Mier argues his position on whether states or the nation should have the name ‘sovereign’ bestowed upon it suggests to me that for Mier, the political magnitude of the issue matches that of writing the name *México* with the letter *x* has for the nation. Further, I contend that without having considered the name and concept of *México*, Mier’s question about the stakes of naming constituent states or the nation sovereign would not make as much sense. And it is not simply because his discourse in the “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos” preceded

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<sup>6</sup> José Servando Teresa de Mier Noriega y Guerra, *Profecía Política del Sabio Dr. D. Servando Teresa de Mier, diputado por Nuevo León, con respecto á La Federación Mejicana, ó sea, discurso que el día 13 de diciembre de 1823 pronunció sobre el Artículo 5 de La Acta Constitutiva*. (México: Impr. por A. Contreras en la Oficina de S. Pérez, 1834), 7-8, //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008732724.



the *Profecía Política* chronologically. Rather, the founding myths that give form to the *ethos* of the people of the Mexican nation—in the case of Mier, the concept of the *mexicano* as a Christian from before a cruel and unjust Spanish usurpation—underlies and grounds subsequent political debates about less elegant, yet vitally practical matters about how and through which apparatuses the people are to govern the nation.

In tracking this journey of the movement of ideas and associations into a secured concept, this dissertation historicizes and theorizes a connection between the practices and discourses of political spirituality, which were put to use during the period of the insurgency, and the emergence of *México* as a concept that would demarcate a territory and a field of experience. Consider for example, the “Carta de despedida a los mexicanos,” which I analyze in the final chapter. In the “Carta,” Mier elaborates on the concept of *México* through a philological reading of the term *México*. His argument, I contend, is intelligible to the degree that the rhetorical strategy that he employs is one he seeks to commune with his readers by intensifying their passions. Such a strategy presumes his own unorthodox arguments, operated in a semiotic regime that used language to produce extralinguistic effects. Through a plausible history of Christianity in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, his readers could recognize something that moves Mier and in turn be themselves moved: an origin story from which to create a concept of *México* focused on building a world not only redeemed by the Christian messiah, but to become the people of an independent nation. In returning to Mier’s “Carta de despedida” in the final chapter, I sought to elaborate the mechanisms Mier could turn to in order to realize the kind of redemption that the “Carta de despedida” intimates. Redeeming an independent *México* by political means turned on an active effort to form *mexicanos* as the popular subject of the nation *México* in the Spanish American archive as the venue for those spiritual exercises to take place. In turn, those exercises would aid in further cultivating patriotic passions through historical education. Such a historical education would take seriously the importance of language and names in the enterprise of giving form to a subject as *mexicano* or *mexicana*, whose life could materialize a concept of *México*.

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