

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Fin de Siècle Mexican Novelists

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Spanish

by

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June 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Este trabajo se lo agradezco a todas las personas que de alguna manera u otra me brindaron su apoyo. Gracias a mi mamá quién a finales del siglo veinte me enseñó la importancia de la palabra y la lectura por medio de la escritura a máquina.

Gracias a todos los maestros en Salinas, California que desde pequeño me ayudaron. In Wabash College, I am forever thankful to Clint Gasaway and Walter Blake for always making it possible for me to stay in school. In the Modern Language Department, I thank Dan Rogers for pushing me and encouraging me to pursue this career, and for exposing me to Juan Rulfo and Luis Buñuel. I thank Gilberto Gomez for listening to me and for challenging me in his rigorous seminars on the modern novel, donde conocí el mundo de Macondo y a don Quijote de la Mancha y a su Sancho Panza. I thank Greg Redding for being a great academic advisor and for forcing me to take an English Literature class despite my initial repercussion. Thanks to you, I discovered an entire new world of literatures.

In the English Department, I am thankful to William Rosenberg for his brilliant discussion courses. I thank Julia Rosenberg for her militant help with my essays. I thank Joy Castro for being an inspiration and exposing me to Latino Literature. I am grateful to Agata Szczeszak-Brewer for that marvelous seminar on political violence. In the Philosophy Department, I thank Cheryl L. Hughes for exposing me to

existentialism, which forever changed my perception and conception of the world, thank you.

In the University California, Riverside I thank Susan Antebi for all of her help and support during the early stages of my academic experience. También le doy muchas gracias a Alessandro Fornazzari por ser un ejemplo para mí y por esas conversaciones tan fructíferas en sus seminarios sobre la estética y política. Siempre le estaré muy agradecido a David Herzberger por haberme ayudado en momentos de transición al principio de mi maestría y doctorado. I thank my academic advisor Raymond L. Williams for always pushing me, for helping and encouraging me. Gracias por estar tan presente a lo largo de esta disertación, corrigiendo y sugiriendo. Gracias a todos los muchos pocos amigos que en su momento estuvieron ahí presentes. En especial, gracias a Ruby Ramírez y Yenisei Montes de Oca porque son como las tantas hermanas que ya tengo. Gracias a Nancy Durán por siempre estar ahí presente, por leer mi trabajo, por sus sugerencias por acompañarme en esta aventura académica y por apoyarme a lo largo de mis humores. A todos, gracias.

PREFACE

Este estudio inició debido a una serie de inquietudes que surgieron en la ciudad de México en el 2010. Por allá me encontraba leyendo, pensando en lo que sería esta investigación. En retrospectiva, el tema o los temas estaban enfrente de mí.

*For Dulce, Shantal, Michelle,
Shakira, Armando, and Marayah.*

I love you all, siempre.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish
University of California, Riverside, June 2014
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I consider how nineteenth and twentieth century fin de siècle Mexican novelists re-imagine the porfiriato. I focus on contemporary Mexican narrative that re-explores writers and themes from the end of the nineteenth-century during Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship—1876 to 1910. In chapter 2, I explore how Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's narrative fictionalize Porfirio Díaz. In chapter 3, I examine how Cristina Rivera Garza's novel appropriates Walter Benjamin's notion of the *konvolute* in order to revindicate ruined objects from the past. In chapter 4, I explore how Amado Nervo, Pedro Ángel Palou, and

Jorge Volpi's texts consider the fear and desire of Apocalypse. I argue that these writers re-imagine the past and emplot history differently, and as a result address México 's present. The historical narratives of these novelists do not attempt to separate the past from the superimpositions of imagination, because to them this task is impossible to achieve. These novelists are aware that history is a series of superimposed imaginations. Thus, they undertake the task as historians and novelists to re-narrate and re-invent the superimposed imaginations of "the past as it came to be invented" in late nineteenth century. Thus, these writers look to the clout of the porfiriato. They attempt to make sense of the problematic aspects brought by modernization, only to find that history like fiction largely depends on who emplots the story.

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Chapter 1

Fin de Siècle México

Introduction

In this study, I consider how nineteenth and twentieth century fin de siècle Mexican novelists re-imagine the Porfiriato. I focus on contemporary Mexican narrative that re-explores writers and themes from the end of the nineteenth-century in México during Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship—1876 to 1910. In chapter 2, I explore how Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's narrative fictionalize Porfirio Díaz. In chapter 3, I examine how Cristina Rivera Garza's novel appropriates Walter Benjamin's notion of the *konvolute* in order to revindicate ruined objects from the past. In chapter 4, I explore how Amado Nervo, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Jorge Volpi's texts consider the fear and desire of Apocalypse. I argue that these writers re-imagine the past and emplot history differently, and as a result address México's present.

I consider nineteenth century fin de siècle beginning with Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship in 1876, to its conclusion in 1910 with the Mexican Revolution. The

twentieth century fin de siècle begins with Salinas de Gortari's presidential election in 1988 and continues into México 's current narco war. In both periods, as Leticia Reina indicates, there were parallel mobilizations and conflicts that engulfed the whole of Mexican Society: "During both eras of crisis, elites faced fundamental confrontations (between the bourgeoisie and the ruling class, among political groups fighting for access to power, even within their political parties)" (113). For her, the end of the twentieth century brought a growing wave of popular participation in elections, ending a long era of political inertia; mobilizations that paralleled the conflicts that preceded the Mexican Revolution.¹ In contrast, for Reina "In the late twentieth century, however, power was no longer an aging Porfirio Díaz and the *científico* gerontocracy, but an old hegemony party (PRI) inserted in, and supported by, an equally sclerotic political structure" (118). Alan Knight states: "The Salinas administration —the 'neo-Porfiriato,' as he terms

¹ Reina, Leticia. "Local Elections and Regime Crisis: The Political Culture of Indigenous Peoples." *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*. By Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. N. (113). Print.

it— by asking (rhetorically): ‘As he basked in the cheers proposing his reelection and in worldwide tributes, did Salinas consider the fate of Diaz?’” (156). Nevertheless, in Knight’s comparison of the two fin de siècles, history is not perceived as a guide to the future, he does emphasize that history from nineteenth century fin de siècle can shed light on the present.²

Despite the historical context, fin de siècle is generally comprised of a common worldview in which history, culture and society is in decline or about to reach an end. In a European context, Jürgen Kleist discusses fin de siècle. He understands fin de siècle as follows:

The term ‘fin de siècle’ is most often used to describe the characteristics of art, literature and society at the turn of the nineteenth century. European culture, it seemed then, had come to an end: Empires were on the brink of collapse, societies were divided into a few wealthy and a great number of poor people, and new technologies and inventions— like

² Knight, Alan. "Mexico's Three Fin De Siècle Crisis." *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*. By Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. N. (172). Print.

cinematography and the automobile— were changing the world-views of all (1).

This comparison can be extended to a Mexican context. Tracy Hill's discussion on fin de siècle can also be useful to understanding the Mexican context. She observes that, "Our fin de siècle too has in recent years exhibited a similar kind of introspection: claims of scientific apocalypse, environmental catastrophe, urban societal disaster, the New Feudalism, the End of History, and so on" (1). She also adds that both fin de siècles share an almost tangible sense of temporality of the reality of the time: "When the end of the century looms, it seems, the very fact that time is living in a particular chronological moment takes on a significance entirely lacking in, say, 1837, or 1964. The very progression of time itself becomes an object of scrutiny in its own right" (1). For Hill, time becomes a fixed point, which stands as a marker of transition between one time, one whole century, and another.³ Hill believes this transition is an in-between moment, which leads to a sense of exhaustion of time that does not end because it is a continuum. Hill explains time as follows:

³ Hill, Tracey. "Introduction: Decadence and Danger." Introduction. *Decadence and Danger: Writing, History and the Fin De Siècle*. Bath, UK: Sulis, 1997. N. (1). Print.

Rather than an erratic business of termini and initiations, it appears now a seamless continuity, a reassuringly constant process. Like a literary text, time is a narrative with a teleological author. We are telling ourselves stories in the guise of history, narrating our time to give it shape and meaning. And, from the vantage-point of the 1990s, we can see that the fin de siècle is one of the more pressing and abiding stories, one that we feel compelled to repeat when the time comes around again (2).

For Hill, the moment we create a version of the present fin de siècle, it becomes tempered by our memory of the last.⁴ Hill affirms: "Our narratives of the nineteenth-century fin de siècle (which is composed, of course, partly of the twentieth century) are inflected by present concerns; we cannot, even if we wanted to, re-capture the experience of the original. So contemporary readings of the 1880s and 1890s are as much readings of the 1990s" (2). Hill adds that writing at fin de siècle is also an issue of negotiating pre-existing conceptions of that historical

⁴ Ibid, (2).

moment at hand.⁵ Hill concludes the following about these re-readings:

As the essays in this book demonstrate, the 1880s-90s and the 1990s are made to reflect back and forth on each other: we cannot help but see the late-nineteenth century through the prism of our own anxieties, and must perforce theorise the contemporary in the light of the past that has formed us. Again, it's a *dialect* process (3).

In México, these same occurrences manifest. For Mexican novelists, through this *dialectic* process of re-imagining and re-writing diverse aspects of the *porfiriato* their own anxieties about the present are visible in their historical narratives.

For Hill, *fin de siècle* is a time of transition, and for Leopoldo Zea it is a question and a point of departure. Zea affirms, "¿Qué es entonces el siglo XX? ¿Puente entre el liberalismo del siglo XIX y el neoliberalismo del próximo siglo XXI?" (14). For him, this transition is linked to an economic shift. Zea believes this transition continues to produce the same unjust mechanism, since it continues to

⁵ Ibid, (2).

oppress and marginalize working class and indigenous people. Zea explains as follows:

Por ello, de no enfrentar los problemas que originaron las luchas sociales y anticoloniales del siglo que termina, de continuar las contradicciones iniciadas en el siglo XIX, volverán a surgir nuevas formas de confrontación y resistencia de los que siguen sufriendo la injusticia dentro del propio pueblo o impuestos por otros pueblos (22).

For Zea, the intelligencia in Latin America believed that to enter modernity meant to erase the only history it had, which was based on three centuries of colonization.⁶ "Renunciar a una identidad impuesta por el coloniaje y apropiarse de la identidad de los pueblos que eran motor del progreso y la civilización de la modernidad. Había que ser como los europeos o los yanquis del sur" (64). In a Mexican context, Díaz's dictatorship attempts to move México into an era of modernization. This process of economic and social development, known as modernity for Zea is an idea in which man not only saw himself as part of

⁶ Zea, Leopoldo. *Fin del siglo XX: ¿centuria perdida?* México, D.F.: Fondo de cultura económica, 1996. (64). Print.

nature, but was able to dominate it and have it at its service.⁷ Thus, during the colony indigenous people were considered as part of nature, and similarly at the end of the nineteenth century indigenous people continued to be viewed as part of the land. On one end, the efforts of modernization in Latin America and México fail because "Pensar de esta manera es continuar con la absurda pretensión de los civilizadores y positivistas latinoamericanos del siglo XIX, que intentaron dejar de ser lo que eran, para poder semejarse a quienes en Europa y en los Estados Unidos habían sido el resorte de la modernidad" (69). In Latin America, this notion of reaching modernity can be equated to assimilating the same economic and social structures that had proven to be successful in Europe and United States. Thus, as Zea indicates, in Latin America, as well as the rest of the world, there has been a ghost roaming around, and that is the ghost of marginalized people. "Marginados que se están haciendo masivamente patentes a lo largo de la tierra, que ponen en crisis no sólo al sistema socialista, sino también al capitalista. Marginados que están poniendo en crisis viejos poderes que daban sentido al orden liberal..." (29). For Zea, the year

⁷ Ibid, (64).

1989 is the birth of a new history because it marks the end of the twentieth century and the end of the millennium.⁸

Initially, writers of the Boom, such as Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Márquez, looked to the past to question the failures of modernity in their respective countries. For Jean Franco, the later narrative from these writers is an anxious narrative. Franco explains:

While, on the one hand, non-canonical genres such as the testimonial and the chronicle testify to the emergence of new social actors— women, subaltern classes, the indigenous — for most writers and intellectual the end of the twentieth century seems to evoke anxiety rather than hope, backward glances towards the past rather than projects for the future. Even the debates surrounding postmodernism again and again seem to develop into discussions of history and the failed, incomplete or authoritarian modernizations of the past. The redemptive and totalizing visions of progress, of national emancipation, which were closely allied to

⁸ Ibid, (56)

certain concepts of originality, authorship and agency, now seem anachronistic (5).

Later, Franco observes in reference to *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* by García Márquez that "the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth are framed by the desolate landscape of failed modernization" (6). For her, the author as originator of text, as a prophet and redeemer of it is closely associated with totalizing and redemptive narratives, and to her these narratives are losing their hold.⁹ In late twentieth century, this interest to narrate the past in a totalizing manner shifts.¹⁰ She believes pastiche narratives became more common. She explains, "Pastiche— non-satiric imitation and juxtaposed citations— is a mode that both foregrounds the precarious and ready-made nature of any structure and refuses originality in favor of commentary on a prior text" (7).

In this study, contemporary Mexican writers, such as Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Cristina Rivera Garza,

⁹ Franco, Jean. "Fin de Siècle in Latin America." *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature* 14.1 (1990): n. (7). Print.

¹⁰ It can be argued otherwise as Mexican writers like Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Fuentes, and Roberto Bolaño continue to write totalizing narratives.

similarly to García Márquez's novel *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*, look to the failures of modernization. In this context, these Mexican writers look to the failures of the porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution. Rather than attempting to write a totalizing and redemptive narrative they create pastiche narratives and prefer to comment on previous texts through satiric appropriations and by juxtaposing citations. As Franco explains, pastiche is more than copying or imitating, since it requires the appropriation of another's style to make it say something different, allowing for what she considers "the productive space of discrepancy".¹¹ Thus, "Although pastiche is yet another indication of the crisis in authorship which marks our 'fin de siglo,' it may, in certain instances, reinforce emergent thought as yet non-hegemonic tendencies in the present" (7). In this study, I consider the historical narratives as "non-satiric imitation" as explained by Franco. Yet, another possible consideration, as Franco understands, it would be what Genette attributes to pastiche and what Linda Hutcheon has considered James

¹¹ Ibid, (7).

Joyce's *Ulysses* a "modern parody".¹² Thus, these Mexican "modern parodies," as Franco explains, come to represent "When 'the author uses 'someone else's discourse for his or her own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has (and which retains) an intention of its own' then 'two semantic intentions appear, two voices'" (96). Thus, for Franco *El hablador* by Mario Vargas Llosa and *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* by Gabriel García Márquez are examples of pastiche narratives that go beyond copy or imitation because they involve the appropriation of another's style in order to make it say something else, and as a result it is a differentiation that emphasizes the space between the two narratives.¹³

Before delving into the three chapters that explore the porfiriato, I reconsider the cultural and historical context from this time period. I explore how nineteenth century writers, such as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Amado Nervo and Federico Gamboa, narrated nineteenth century fin de siècle and how they grappled with Díaz's modernization efforts. I also consider how Porfirio Díaz managed to stay

¹² Franco, Jean. "Fin de Siècle in Latin America." *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature* 14.1 (1990): n. (96). Print.

¹³ Ibid, (105).

in power for more than thirty years as understood in the space of complexity among Pedro Ángel Palou, Álvaro Uribe, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Jorge Volpi's historical narratives.

The Elected Dictator: Porfirio Díaz

In Mexican history, Porfirio Díaz's impact on the country was so totalized that this time period is known as the porfiriato.¹⁴ For Garciadiego, this time period is comprised of three stages. The first stage is Díaz's coming into power and the consolidation of it. The second stage is commonly referred to as a time of "very little politics and too much administration". The third stage is the decadence and fall of his dictatorship.¹⁵

Initially, as Rafael Zayas Enríquez explained in 1907, Díaz was perceived as a great leader, as the people elected him. In Zayas Enríquez's text, Díaz is emploted as a mythical hero and compared to Napoleon and Julius Cesar. He

¹⁴ Garciadiego, Javier. "El Porfiriato (1876-1911)." *Historia de México*. Ed. Gisela Von. Wobeser. México, D.F.: Fondo de cultura económica, 2010. (206).

¹⁵ Garciadiego, Javier. "El Porfiriato (1876-1911)." *Historia de México*. Ed. Gisela Von. Wobeser. México, D.F.: Fondo De Cultura Económica, 2010.

also accuses Díaz of limiting freedom of expression in the country. According to him, Díaz's logic followed Napoleon's: if freedom of expression was allowed power would last three days. Thus, Díaz implemented laws that limited the print press of the time.¹⁶ In another instance, Zayas Enríquez compares Díaz's lack of penmanship and misspelling to Napoleon.¹⁷ Clearly, from the very beginning, Díaz had wanted to be considered the Napoleon or Julius Cesar of México.

In the first stage, the dictator is celebrated for bringing harmony, authority and liberty to México, achieving peace with its logical companion, order.¹⁸ Immediately after his first term ends, Mexican society understands it is fundamental to re-elect Díaz for one more term because it was necessary.¹⁹ As history unfolds, the charm of his presidency fades and disappears due to the growing discontent of the poor who no longer believed nor benefited from Díaz's efforts of modernization. Although

¹⁶ Zayas, Enríquez Rafael. de. *Porfirio Díaz*,. New York: D. Appleton and, 1908. (27). Print.

¹⁷ Ibid, (54).

¹⁸ Ibid, (169).

¹⁹ Ibid, (184).

the Mexican constitution appeared to be a mirror image of the United States constitution, in México it was constantly changed or interpreted differently, always to benefit the wealthy few.²⁰ Thus, it is through these constant changes and interpretations of the constitution that Díaz was able to remain in office for more than thirty years. For Zayas Enríquez, Díaz's government was successful because it managed to change the system from a centrifuge to a centripetal.²¹ According to Zayas Enríquez, Díaz never de-authorized the constitution of 1857, but it became a sacred standard to constantly modify it to his own benefit.²²

In 1906, Zayas Enríquez wrote a letter to Díaz to manifest his concerns with the division between social classes. The first class, the governing class, had all of the power, privileges, benefits, business opportunities, titles, and honors. On the other hand, the governed were short of opportunities, only made to be soldiers, workers, slaves, without hope, without future, the prey of misery

²⁰ Ibid, (201).

²¹ Ibid, (201).

²² Ibid, (218).

and suffering.²³ Clearly, from 1907 forward, Mexican society was disgruntled. In that same letter, Zayas Enríquez explains to Díaz that history shows that when no one cares for the people, people will care for itself; and when people care for itself, it ceased being a river that naturally follows the flow and becomes an overflowing river.²⁴ Zayas Enríquez makes it clear to the dictator that the country is under a period of agitation and it would be a mistake to ignore this. He adds that during those times of agitation new systems could emerge, projects and plans of all types, especially harmful systems.²⁵ Thus, for Zayas Enríquez, Díaz was left with two options: revolution or evolution. He explains to Díaz that people can put revolution in practice and Díaz can achieve evolution.²⁶

In an interview with James Creelman in 1908, Porfirio Díaz affirmed "que no se reelegiría y que permitiría elecciones libres en 1910 " (218). Although Díaz promised to North American readers that México would have free elections, it was all a lie. Another fundamental breaking

²³ Ibid, (230).

²⁴ Ibid, (234).

²⁵ Ibid, (242).

²⁶ Ibid, (279).

point of Díaz's abuse of power was the repression of Cananea and Río Blanco. Garciadiego explains:

Las represiones en Cananea y Río Blanco aumentaron el creciente desprestigio del gobierno, el cual se concentró en el grupo de los 'científicos', no sólo encargados de la política del país sino también responsables de la gubernatura sonorense y del uso de los 'rurales', por lo que se les asoció con la represión de Cananea (221).

The first repression was at a North American mine site in Cananea in the state of Sonora. Garciadiego explains:

Los salarios eran comparativamente buenos, pero se daban las mejores condiciones laborales a los trabajadores estadounidenses, lo que generó un clima de creciente tensión entre mexicanos y norteamericanos. La violencia estalló, como era previsible, por lo que para garantizar las vidas e intereses de estos últimos—directivos, empleados y trabajadores— penetraron al país contingentes militares—*rangers*— del vecino país (220-221).

The biggest outrage among Mexican workers at Cananea was that the Mexican government did not stop this injustice. The second repression took place in Río Blanco in the small industrial town of Orizaba, Veracruz, between December 1906 and January 1907. Garciadiego explains:

En este caso se trataba de una fábrica textil, y los reclamos obreros los motivaban el rechazo a un nuevo reglamento de trabajo redactado por los patrones y la obtención de mayores salarios y mejores condiciones laborales. El gobierno de Díaz incluso reconoció algunas de sus peticiones, pero fue incapaz de forzar a los empresarios a concederlas. Además, intentó obligar a los trabajadores a reiniciar sus labores, lo que provocó el estallido de la violencia, ante lo cual el gobierno reaccionó con una dureza instituida, apelando el ejército y a los temidos 'rurales'; como antes había sucedido en Cananea, fueron varios los trabajadores muertos y mayor el número de encarcelados (221).

Both of these repressions are associated with Díaz's dictatorship. Thus, by 1910 Mexican people were tired of the lies and injustices of the Mexican government. For

Elisa Speckman Guerra, Díaz's reaction to the uprisings in Cananea and Río Blanco were examples of force and repression.²⁷ According to Speckman Guerra, the events at Río Blanco played out as follows:

Por ejemplo, en 1879 el gobernador de Veracruz ordenó fusilar a nueve rebeldes lerdistas, quizá porque exageró la orden del presidente, quien le pidió que castigara a los cabecillas de la sublevación que a la vez fueran oficiales de la armada, aunque hay quienes dicen que existió otro telegrama con una somera instrucción: 'Mátelos en caliente' (198).

Speckman Guerra explains that the uproar of the population took various shapes throughout the country: public manifestations, public buildings were attacked, agrarian and labor rebellions, and pillaging.²⁸

During the last years of the porfiriato, a consequential inefficiency was the distribution of wealth and resources of the country. In large urban spaces, it was where most of

²⁷ Speckman Guerra, Elisa. "El Porfiriato." *Nueva historia mínima de México*. México, D.F.: El colegio de México, 2004. (196). Print.

²⁸ Ibid, (205).

the wealth remained. This economic disparity was due in part to the fact that governors and the elite desired state capitals to reflect prosperity and progress. The goal was to create a capital that imitated the "civilized" cities in United States, France, and Britain. As Enrique Krauze explains, "During Díaz's long year of power, Paris had once again captured México 's cultural imagination, and relations between the two countries amounted to little less than a love affair, at least on the Mexican side. Well-to-do Mexicans dreamed of Paris, traveled to Paris, built their homes in the styles of Paris" (5). Speckman Guerra explains that the government made cities beautiful and comfortable by gentrifying ample avenues and gardens similar to the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris.²⁹ Thus, Avenida Paseo de la Reforma in México City largely resembled this avenue in Paris. Simultaneously, Speckman Guerra affirms these cities were not prepared to receive large quantities of migrants, and, consequently, crime and

²⁹ Ibid, (217).

prostitution grew.³⁰ México also underwent great industrialization, and farmers migrated to the city.³¹

Under these unforeseen circumstances, Díaz's dictatorship utilized methods of repression through government institutions to continue its prosperous path to modernization. According to Speckman Guerra, governors sent penal and sanitary codes, police regulations, and reformed prisons.³² In the streets, there was an effort to improve urban hygiene, streets were cleaned, there were garbage cars, and outdoor markets and cemeteries were forced out of urban areas.³³ For Speckman Guerra, one of the biggest social and cultural changes of the porfiriato was:

Así, el Porfiriato fue una etapa de construcción de obras públicas, de fundación de instituciones y de reglamentación. El Estado reguló múltiples aspectos de la vida del individuo, desde sus compromisos con las instituciones y la sociedad,

³⁰Ibid, (217).

³¹Garciadiego, Javier. "El Porfiriato (1876-1911)." *Historia de México*. Ed. Gisela Von. Wobeser. México, D.F.: Fondo de cultura económica, 2010. (217). Print.

³²Speckman Guerra, Elisa. "El Porfiriato." *Nueva historia mínima de México*. México, D.F.: El colegio de México, 2004. (217). Print.

³³ Ibid, (217).

hasta sus relaciones conyugales y familiares, sus hábitos de higiene y sus diversiones (217).

The types institutions in France, Britain and United States impacted the types of institutions in México.

During this period, the rich became richer and were able to consume imported luxurious goods— indoors plumbing, electric lights, automobiles, and French mansions— to reflect their traditional status and their modernity.³⁴ For Buffington and French, modernity promised security, but in practice it turned out to be one of the most ambivalent historical moments, as it lead to a social revolution.³⁵ México attempted to appear modern at an international level because it had re-created mirroring spaces similar to those of European cities, ignoring and marginalizing those who did not fit the imaginary of an ordered, peaceful, and progressive México.

During México 's process of modernization, "los científicos" guided Porfirio Díaz. For Garciadiego, initially these "científicos" were part of the urban middle

³⁴ Buffington, Robert M., and William Emilio French. "The Culture of Modernity." Ed. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley. *The Oxford History of Mexico*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. (400). Print.

³⁵ Ibid, (402).

classes, but as Díaz became more powerful they too became more powerful and became part of the oligarchy. They held extensive rural lands and had great political power.³⁶ Garciadiego adds that at a social cultural level "los científicos" strengthened and helped develop public education. These "científicos" modeled their worldviews after France. The young and growing education system was based on Comptian positivism.

For Paul Vanderwood, the phrases of the day during this time period were "the greater good for the majority" and "survival of the fittest". In México, to be modern meant being like the United States, France, and Britain.³⁷ Buffington and French affirm that during the porfiriato the goal was to replace the traditional society based on loyalty and forms of knowledge for one that was modern and based on universal and abstract notions of time and space.³⁸ Buffington and French believed "los científicos" argument

³⁶ Garciadiego, Javier. "El Porfiriato (1876-1911)." *Historia de México*. Ed. Gisela Von. Wobeser. México, D.F.: Fondo de cultura económica, 2010. (215). Print.

³⁷ Buffington, Robert M., and William Emilio French. "The Culture of Modernity." Ed. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley. *The Oxford History of Mexico*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. (395). Print.

³⁸ *Ibid*, (401).

was very logical, nationalist but cosmopolitan, Darwinian enough to appear "scientific", made perfectly for the population conscious of modernity. This group of "científicos" believed political stability needed to be the first step to achieve a social revolution in México .³⁹

In addition, Buffington and French affirm that society was viewed as an organism. For them, the elite believed society was a living organism that grew, developed or weakened, all depending on those who were within it and how they reacted to the external elements; the success of this organism, equated to progress, which was largely associated with the nation and its people in racial terms.⁴⁰ In all organisms, evolution and progress were not always the outcome, as degeneration was another possibility. Buffington and French believe indulgence and vice were the principal elements of degeneration as they are the opposite of progress, which was frequently associated with racial terms.⁴¹ During this time, the trinity of vice was prostitution, consumption of alcohol, and gambling.

³⁹ Ibid, (399).

⁴⁰ Ibid, (416).

⁴¹ Ibid, (423-424).

Buffington and French affirm that legislature was approved to limit the hours of operation of business establishments that served alcohol; meanwhile in other parts of México City there were areas designated as "tolerance zones" which were left aside for brothels.⁴²

For Buffington and French the "the ideal city" was formed during the porfiriato and Avenida Paseo de la Reforma was converted into the passage of power, the road in which official México paraded through and where the national epic of progress took place.⁴³ They add that this "the ideal city" was also the stage for the most spectacular process of invented traditions, the celebrations of 1910: one hundred years after Independence.⁴⁴ For Buffington and French, this celebration for Díaz was the perfect opportunity to be immortalized in history. It was an effort to place him in the pantheon of national heroes; Díaz celebrates the day of his saint on the same day of Mexican independence, redefining tradition

⁴² Ibid, (423).

⁴³ Ibid, (425).

⁴⁴ Ibid, (426).

in order to associate himself even more with the foundational myths of the nation.⁴⁵

During this celebration, Díaz not only attempted to use Avenida Paseo de la Reforma as the stage for his immortalization into history, but also established national institutions and landmarks. For example, the most prominent "científicos" Justo Sierra, the director of the Education system in México, in 1910 founded Universidad Nacional de México (UNAM). During this same year, Díaz also founded the first modern insane asylum, La Castañeda. Enrique Krauze explains that Mexican citizens "could attend ceremonies for new hospitals, an asylum, hospices, a worker's park, and a penitentiary, all equipped with the most up-to-date facilities" (Krauze 3). Despite these modern institutions, the majority of Mexican citizens no longer wanted Díaz to continue to govern or control the country. As Vasconcelos explains, Díaz, along with his group of "científicos," was no longer generally perceived as a positive force of economic progress for México. Vasconcelos firmly believed that "los científicos" were a business and not a group of citizens attempting to support the people. Rather, it was a group of citizens who profited

⁴⁵ Ibid, (416).

from the country. Thus, in 1910 Mexican people were tired of this ongoing re-election of Díaz, and said no to the re-election. Shortly after the Mexican Revolution, led by Francisco I. Madero, overtook México City, Díaz fled the country to exile in Paris.

Nineteenth Century Fin de Siècle Literature

The literary context of the porfiriato was based largely on French naturalism, symbolism, and decadentism. During the end of the nineteenth century, Mexican writers took from these French models to reflect upon modernity and the future of the country. Most writers from this time period, such as Amado Nervo, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Federico Gamboa, and José López Portillo y Rojas, are part of naturalist-realist trends, as well as *modernismo*. Speckman Guerra explains that there was a current of national and nationalist culture, which came to represent the unique aspects of the country, which helped to create a sense of identity.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Speckman Guerra, Elisa. "El Porfiriato." *Nueva historia mínima de México*. México, D.F.: El colegio de México, 2004. (223). Print.

In *modernista* literature this was very explicit, as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Salvador Díaz Mirón, Amado Nervo, José Juan Tablada y Efrén Rebolledo took from French symbolism.⁴⁷ The most prominent *modernista*, of course, was Rubén Darío and the precursors to this movement were José Martí, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Julián del Casal y José Asunción Silva. For Ivan Schulman, Rubén Darío self-promotes as the first *modernista*, among other reasons, all of the other writers pass away. For Schulman, the first true precursors were Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Montalvo, Ricardo Palma, Rafael Pombo, Eugenio María Hostos y Antonio Pérez Bonalde because in their work there is "una inconformidad ideológica y una transformación que a partir de 1875 cobrará coherencia y conciencia."⁴⁸ For Schulman, the first true *modernistas* were José Martí y Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera emerging in 1875.⁴⁹ He explains that Gutiérrez Nájera's work has "Esta variante afrancesada [que] contribuyó a renovar, a vigorizar el estilo literario, tanto en la prosa como en el verso" (19). For

⁴⁷ Ibid, (223).

⁴⁸ Schulman, Iván A. *Nuevos asedios al modernismo*. Madrid: Taurus, 1987. (13). Print.

⁴⁹ Ibid, (19).

Schulman, this is due in part to his inconformity with bourgeois society. Paradoxically, Gutiérrez Nájera was critical of a Mexican government that modeled itself after French positivism while simultaneously; he assimilated the lexicon and French literary techniques of French writers

Schulman states that Gutiérrez Nájera's writing was very revolutionary because he utilized French vocabulary, and placed his texts in Parisian spaces.⁵⁰ For Schulman, Gutiérrez Nájera's work contains a "tardío romanticismo, el naturalismo, el parnasismo, el simbolismo, el impresionismo y el expresionismo, limitándose a la etapa de florecimiento, y sin considerar las escuelas y los movimientos que surgían como continuación de o reacción en contra de este florecimiento en consecuencia de las evoluciones socioculturales de la modernidad americana " (22). Schulman insists that the first generation of *modernistas* experimented and extended the dimensions of expression of literary language and the writers took their own route. Consequently, there is no one specific or accurate definition of *modernismo*.⁵¹ Schulman affirms that *modernistas* were marginalized in the realm of economics, as

⁵⁰ Ibid, (19).

⁵¹ Ibid, (25).

their work did not circulate as much as realist-naturalist narrative. As a result, *modernista* writers "se replegaron en sí mismos cada vez más, buscando aclarar sus propias inclinaciones y esperando encontrar la solaz que el mundo trastornado en trance evolutivo les negaba" (31). Schulman adds, "En su forma primitiva esta tendencia individualista se inicia en la época positivista, al separarse el individuo de la sociedad jerarquizada y sentir en consecuencia de tal acto un aislamiento perturbador poblado en momentos dolorosos de visiones apocalípticas" (32).

Vasconcelos was critical of most of the literature from this period with the exception of a few *modernistas*. He states, "En cultura general también decae México durante el siglo diecinueve " (417). He explains this phenomenon as follows, "El pensamiento se atrofia en las dictaduras. Gracias apenas a los poetas Gutiérrez Nájera, Othón, Nervo, Díaz Mirón y Urbina, México se salva de la mediocridad que en los demás ramos es la regla de la época" (417). Vasconcelos concludes, "Tal es el resultado de construir sobre despojo, sobre el atropello. Ni los despojados ni los despojadores se benefician y todo queda como impregnado de un corrosivo que anula los más bien intencionados esfuerzos" (418). Vasconcelos does not consider the work of

realist-naturalist writers such as Emilio Rabasa, Rafael Delgado, José López Portillo y Rojas, Carlos Peña González, Mariano Azuela, and Heriberto Frías.

Overall, the *modernistas* addressed the paradoxes of Mexican society. Their works explored the impacts of a nation undergoing economic and industrial progress as part of their modernization efforts. For *modernista* writers, the positivist worldview oftentimes clashed with the mystical and abstract aspects of existence that their works explored. Raymond L. Williams states that for the new middle classes to be modern meant to assume the ideas of positivism and pragmatism. He adds that for *modernista* writers this meant to reject these bourgeois ideas and embrace the new aesthetics from Europe and certain romantic ideals.⁵² For these Mexican writers, the challenge became to attempt to discern this constant question of how to react, perceive, understand, explain, and narrate modernity. Gutiérrez Nájera thought México City was as cosmopolitan as Paris, although he never left the country. Meanwhile, Amado Nervo believed that modernity was a mere romantic illusion. Federico Gamboa, after questioning the

⁵² Williams, Raymond L. *The Twentieth-century Spanish American Novel*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. (10). Print.

contradictions of Mexican modernity in his naturalist-realist narratives, turned to Catholicism for salvation.

According to Williams and others, *modernistas* took from romanticism, as one of their ideals was to long for the unattainable.⁵³ For him, the intentions of *modernistas* have been misinterpreted because they have been commonly considered writers who flee from their political and social context in order to create "art for arts sake." For him, *modernistas* created a new discourse that revealed hidden realities and explored problems related to the empirical reality of Latin America.⁵⁴ These writers turned to French literary models of Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Emilie Zola, and Joris Karl-Huysmans.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid, (20).

⁵⁴ Ibid, (4).

⁵⁵ La novela *Madame Bovary* de Gustave Flaubert ha tenido un gran impacto en la narrativa Hispanoamericana. La poesía simbolista de Charles Baudelaire enfocada en la idea de la muerte, belleza y el Spleen tuvo un gran impacto en los escritores modernistas, el texto con más resonancia fue *Las flores del mal*. El escritor naturalista Emilie Zola cambió el enfoque de la narrativa que intentaba dar una minuciosa representación de la realidad de manera panorámica al enfocarse en los aspectos naturales, ambientales y degradantes de los personajes más bajos de la sociedad. El joven discípulo de Emilie Zola, Joris Karl-Huysmans, al llegar a una visión distinta de la función de la novela a la de su mentor decidió escribir la primera

For John S. Brushwood, these Mexican writers looked to these French writers for ideas about how to be modern, and to show to the world they too could write like the French. For Brushwood, this style of narrative was more like the French mansions in México , only built to show to the world they exist. For Brushwood, *modernistas* were often accused of not being political. Brushwood explains that they were, indeed, very political and national.⁵⁶ For Aníbal González *modernistas* were more "realistic" than realist-naturalist writers because they were much more critical of the government. For example, Gutiérrez Nájera's chronicles presented, "una preocupación por la cuestión de la decadencia, escribió numerosas páginas de abierta crítica a las condiciones sociales de México bajo el régimen de

novela decadentista, *A rebours* en la cual el enfoque no es panorámico, al contrario el narrador se enfoca en Des Esseintes el personaje decadente por excelencia que intenta encontrar el placer a través del arte y música y lo artificioso de la realidad; otro aspecto imperativo es que la narrativa presta atención al proceso psicológico del personaje y en los aspectos internos de la condición humana, evadiendo los espacios abiertos y un sin fin de personajes dualistas de la sociedad como en las novelas de Zola.

⁵⁶ Brushwood, John Stubbs. *México in Its Novel; a Nation's Search for Identity*. Austin: University of Texas, 1966. (142-143). Print.

Porfirio Díaz."⁵⁷ Specifically, Nervo's prose presented symbolist influences due the descriptive backgrounds that came to the forefront as much as the actual plot.⁵⁸ Nervo's texts have been associated with *A Rebours* by Joris Karl-Huysmans a French decadent novel. For Brushwood, Nervo's texts were different than other Mexican narratives because they were philosophical and explored new, strange and un-experimented spaces.⁵⁹

For Ivan A. Schulman, *modernista* narrative is part of a "fenómeno sociocultural multifacético."⁶⁰ For Schulman, they were part of a rupture, novelty, and rebellious and strange movement. He adds that this movement emerged during a strange time in Latin America. He explains as follows:

Empezaron a manifestarse, con las características sincréticas, a partir de los despojos de la Conquista y el subsiguiente proceso de

⁵⁷ González, Aníbal. *La crónica modernista hispanoamericana*. Madrid: J. Porrúa Turanzas, 1983. (110).Print.

⁵⁸ Brushwood, John Stubbs. *México in Its Novel; a Nation's Search for Identity*. Austin: University of Texas, 1966. (148). Print.

⁵⁹ Ibid, (148).

⁶⁰ Schulman, Iván A. *Nuevos Asedios Al Modernismo*. Madrid: Taurus, 1987. (11). Print.

transculturación. El sincretismo de la Colonia siguió floreciendo en el período nacional del siglo XIX, cuando aparece la literatura hispanoamericana verdaderamente moderna. En ella se aunó lo decadente con lo bárbaro, <<una pluralidad de tiempos históricos, lo más antiguo y lo más nuevo, lo más cercano y lo más distante, una totalidad de presencias que la conciencia puede asir en un momento único>>⁶¹.

Thus, for Schulman this literary style mixes the old with new elements. He concludes that this was "un gran movimiento de entusiasmo y libertad hacia la belleza."

For Cathy L. Jrade, like Williams, *modernistas* were similar to romantic writers because they questioned the hegemonic economic and scientific life during a modern context. Thus, *modernistas* in a Latin-American context protested against the technologies, materialism, and the ideological impact that positivism had on their art.⁶² For her, these writers used language as a powerful political

⁶¹ Ibid, (12).

⁶²Jrade, Cathy Login. *Modernismo, Modernity, and the Development of Spanish American Literature*. Austin: University of Texas, 1998. (4).Print.

tool that could help shape culture and nation. Specifically, she affirms that these writers saw language as a tool that was going to allow them to create a literary movement that would remove Latin America from its postcolonial isolation and anachronistic nature to be placed in a modern present.⁶³ Paradoxically, in their present these *modernista* writers attempted to decolonize or get rid of their colonial past by re-appropriating French Culture and not Spanish culture. Thus, for Jrade, these writers fixed their gaze to the rest of Europe in order to define their present, and by doing so, their future.⁶⁴

For example, Jrade looks to Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera's political essays, "La academia mexicana" y "El arte y el materialismo" to address this tension. The second political essay explores this desire to change language. Gutiérrez Nájera states:

Guiados por un principio altamente espiritual y noble, animados de un deseo patriótico, social y literario, puesta la mira en elevados fines, alzamos nuestra humilde y débil voz en defensa de la poesía sentimental, tantas veces hollada,

⁶³ Ibid, (4).

⁶⁴ Ibid, (14).

tantas veces combatida, pero triunfante siempre de las desconsoladoras teorías del realismo, y del asqueroso y repugnante positivismo (170).

His vision of realism and positivism shows this clear separation between *modernismo* and realist literature. These *modernista* writers were associated with exploring sensory experiences that were closely aligned with sentimentalism. For Gutiérrez Nájera, realism was prostitution of art. He states, "Y esta prostitución del arte, esta deificación de la materia es la que nosotros combatimos y seguiremos combatiendo en los artículos siguientes" (164). For Gutiérrez Nájera, realist writers were tied to positivism, he affirms, "arte esclavizado; ese es el arte obligado a mirar siempre a la tierra; esa es la materialización del arte, y la deificación de la materia. Y esto es lo que combatimos y combatiremos siempre"(170). This tension between *modernista* and realist writers was also prevalent in Amado Nervo's work. For Jade, Nervo's work also followed the same perspective as Gutiérrez Nájera. Nervo explains:

No sé lo que los demás entenderán por modernismo. Malicio que ni en América ni en España nos hemos puesto aún de acuerdo sobre la significación de

tan socorrida palabreja; pero por lo que a mí respecto, creo que ni hay ni ha habido nunca más que dos tendencias literarias: la de <<ver hacia fuera>> y la de <<ver hacia dentro>>. Los que ven hacia afuera son los más. Los que ven hacia dentro son los menos (99).

For Neruo, it is clear that his own definition of *modernismo* is only one, as there could be many. For Neruo, *modernismo* means those who "look within" and those who "look out" are the realist and positivist writers. For Neruo, creating a new language meant the following:

Las viejas combinaciones gramaticales, los viejos arreglos fonéticos, habían perdido, además, su virtud primitiva. Eran un <<sésamo, ábrete>> que ya no abría nada. Su poder de expresión estaba agotado. La humanidad pensaba y hablaba con locuciones rituales, con frases hechas, que le distribuían en cada generación de académicos. Hemos creado nuevas combinaciones, nuevos regímenes; hemos constituido de una manera inusitada, a fin de expresar las infinitas cosas inusitadas que percibíamos (101).

According to Nervo, this "open sesame" opened, but nothing new emerged. Thus, he searched for language from which new rituals and new phrases could emerge. For Nervo, creating a new language was very important because "para decir las nuevas cosas que vemos y sentimos no teníamos vocablos; los hemos buscado en todos los diccionarios, los hemos tomado, cuando los había, y cuando no, los hemos creado" (101). For Jrade, Nervo as well as Gutiérrez Nájera both created a language that gave shape and reflected Latin American identity.⁶⁵

On the other hand, José López Portillo y Rojas represented the realist writer who followed the positivistic beliefs of the time. According to Guardiola, López Portillo y Rojas received a positivist education and his family benefited from Porfirio Díaz's economic progress. Guardiola affirms the following about López Portillo y Rojas:

López Portillo y Rojas critica la imitación de las letras europeas en México, poniendo como ejemplo de mayor actualidad el decadentismo, que considera "absurdo" en México y sólo comprensible

⁶⁵ Ibid, (30-31).

en 'las viejas naciones de civilización cumplida, donde los resortes de la sensibilidad, gastados por el uso y el abuso, necesitan procedimientos sutiles y exquisitos para funcionar.' El novelista aprecia sobre todo la tradición española en el lenguaje y el estilo: Cervantes, Pereda, Valera, Galdós, Pardo Bazán... (54).

For López Portillo y Rojas, it was absurd to write like the French because México was still a young nation, and it was not in decline like France. Thus, for him it was impossible to use decadentism to explore the process of a progressing nation that had not reached its decline like old Europe.⁶⁶

Guardiola affirms the following:

Una evidente conexión con el romanticismo, y también con el modernismo, es la *preocupación formal* de los escritores realistas: López Portillo y Rojas o, especialmente, Delgado y Gamboa tienen una innegable voluntad estilística en su prosa excede con mucho la mera referencialidad esperable de los presupuestos de la novela realista (53).

⁶⁶López Portillo Y Rojas, José. "Prologo del autor." Introducción. Ed. Antonio Castro Leal. *La parcela*. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1961. (6). Print.

Even though *modernista* writers looked to France and realist-naturalist writers looked to Spain to narrate the changing nation of México during the porfiriato, both groups appropriated narrative traditions from European countries as part of their work to make sense of their present.

In México, Gamboa, the most prominent writer from this period, brings together *modernista* and realist-naturalist elements in his narrative. Although, he was not considered one of the *modernista* writers, his narrative exhibits some of their techniques. He took from French naturalism in order to explore the human condition during the porfiriato in the form of thesis novel. In these novels, the reader learned about the possible horrors of urban or rural life by presenting caricature characters. A good example was Gamboa's now classic novel *Santa*, which was an appropriation of Emilie Zola's *Naná*. For Brushwood, Gamboa's work could not only be associated with naturalism because his selection of adjectives demonstrated his knowledge of symbolism.⁶⁷ Thus, Gamboa's work can be

⁶⁷ Brushwood, John Stubbs. *México in Its Novel; a Nation's Search for Identity*. Austin: University of Texas, 1966. (150) Print.

associated with *modernista* writers like Nervo and Gutierrez Najera who also took from French symbolism.

In this comparative project, I explore how contemporary Mexican writers from the "Crack Generation," such as Pedro Ángel Palou, Ignacio Padilla, and Jorge Volpi, as well as Álvaro Uribe and Cristina Rivera Garza, at the end of the twentieth century, look to the end of the nineteenth century as a way to re-imagine the various pasts of the porfiriato through historical narratives or modern parodies. In doing so, these writers not only re-read the nineteenth century fin de siècle, but explore México's twentieth century fin de siècle. Pedro Ángel Palou, Álvaro Uribe, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Jorge Volpi's fiction depict nineteenth-century fin de siècle writers, such as Federico Gamboa, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, and Amado Nervo as well as historical figure Porfirio Díaz and marginalized characters such as the fictional Matilda Burgos. These writers illuminate the tensions of an ever-changing past in México at the end of the twentieth-century, as well as their pressing concerns of the present. In their novels, the intertextuality presents different re-readings of the porfiriato and possible critiques of modern México. The

relationships and interconnectedness of these works reveal the various textures of both fin de siècles.

More specifically, in Chapter 2 "Two Fictionalizations of Porfirio Díaz in Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's Novels: *Pobre patria mía* and *Expediente del atentado*", I explore how Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's dialogic narratives address the same historical period— Porfirio Díaz's thirty-four year dictatorship in México. Palou and Uribe's novels accentuate and focus on two different moments from Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. In 2010, Palou published *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz*, which seamlessly appropriates Porfirio Díaz's tone and thought process from *Memorias* (1830-1915). Álvaro Uribe wrote *Expediente del atentado* in 2007, centers around Arnulfo Arroyo's attempt to murder Díaz on September 16, 1897. In this novel, the narrator re-appropriates a celebrated journal entry from Federico Gamboa's *Mi diario* in which this episode is presented. In these Mexican novels, I explore the tensions between History and narrative following Hayden White's theory on metahistory and Seymour Menton's concepts of the New Historical Novel. The narrative structure of the two novels, *Expediente del atentado* and *Pobre patria mía* exemplify and demonstrate

some of the synoptic concepts that White explains in *Metahistory*. Finally, I examine how Palou and Uribe base their novels on the same historical period, but construct very distinct narratives. Ultimately, both texts address the unresolved social and cultural complexities that México inherited from Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship.

In Chapter 3, "Prostitution and Modernity in Texts by Cristina Rivera Garza, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Federico Gamboa", I examine the historiography and literary intertextuality of two nineteenth-century novels— *Por donde se sube al cielo* (1884) by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and *Santa* (1903) by Federico Gamboa, which are modeled after Émile Zola's *Nana* (1880). These two writers first narrate the cautionary-tale of the young girl who is corrupted by the city and eventually destroyed after becoming a prostitute. Their works explore how the Mexican government and society attempted to control the moral and physical hygiene of the body of the prostitute. In 1999, Cristina Rivera Garza published *Nadie me verá llorar*, a novel that re-imagines this time period and re-reads Gutiérrez Nájera and Federico Gamboa's texts. In her novel, I question how Rivera Garza re-appropriates history and rewrites literary

genres, following Walter Benjamin's notion of the *konvolute*.

In Chapter 3, "Fin de Siècle Apocalyptic Novelists: Amado Nervo, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Jorge Volpi," I explore how, over the years, writers of the "Crack Generation" in México have turned to Apocalypse as a driving force in selected works of fiction to explore the fear and desire of the "End of the World".⁶⁸ From this generation of writers Palou in 1995 is the first to write an apocalyptic novel, *Memoria de los días*.⁶⁹ After Palou, in 2000 Jorge Volpi published *El juego del apocalipsis: un viaje a Patmos*. Both of these novels take place in 1999, right before the polemic "End of the World" of the new millennium. Amado Nervo in 1906 published *Almas que pasan* a collection of short stories. Within this collection there is an apocalyptic short story, "La última guerra", which exemplifies the fear of humanity's extinction and a desire of the world to end. Nervo's work not only draws upon similar fears and desires that writers from the "Crack

⁶⁸ Ignacio Padilla in *The Industry of the End of the World* makes it clear that society's approximation to an apocalypse or "End of the World" is based on a fear and desire.

⁶⁹ This novel is one of the fundamental narratives of the "Crack Generation".

Generation" fictionalize in their apocalyptic texts, but a character in Palou's novel is named Amado Nervo. In Palou's apocalyptic novel *Memoria de los días*, Nervo is represented as a fictional character. In Volpi's novel, *El juego del apocalipsis* a Mexican couple mysteriously wins a trip to the Island of Patmos to celebrate the new millennium. The main parallels within "*La última guerra*", *Memoria de los días*, *El juego del apocalipsis* is that all of characters in these novels (im)patiently wonder or wait for the end of the world. Thus, all of these three texts focus on various imaginary scenarios of how the end of time or the extinction of humanity will unfold.

The writers in these three chapters all turn to fin de siècle history. These writers are aware of history's malleability and emplot the past differently. In this study, I speak of history following Enrique Krauze's proposal: the weight of the past has sometimes been more present than the present itself.⁷⁰ Krauze affirms what Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Jorge Volpi seem to be exploiting in their historical narratives: that the past seems to be the only foreseeable

⁷⁰ Krauze, Enrique. *Mexico, Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997. (xiii). Print.

future. Krauze understands the past in México in the following terms:

In certain areas of Mexican life, the past has survived as a legacy of stability and cohesion; at other levels it exists in the form of unresolved, partially repressed conflicts, always ready to burst through the surface of the present. And in México, as in all countries with ancient cultures, our view of the past that was actually experienced is influenced by the past as it came to be invented. One of the duties of the historian is to separate the past as it was from all the superimpositions of imagination (xiii).

Although Krauze's notion of the past coincides with the historical narratives of the novelists from this study, one thing does not coincide. The historical narratives of these novelists do not attempt to separate the past from the superimpositions of imagination, because for them this task is impossible to achieve. These novelists are aware that history is a series of superimposed imaginations. Thus, they undertake the task as historians and novelists to re-narrate and re-invent the superimposed imaginations of "the past as it came to be invented" in late nineteenth century.

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Chapter 2

Two Fictionalizations of Porfirio Díaz in Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's Novels: *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* by and *Expediente del atentado*

Introduction

In the past two decades Mexican writers have re-examined history through the re-appropriation of *fin de siècle* texts in historical narratives. In this chapter, I explore how Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's dialogic narratives address the same historical period— Porfirio Díaz's thirty-four year dictatorship in México. Palou and Uribe's novels accentuate and focus on two different moments from Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. A writer of México 's "Crack Generation", Palou published *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* in 2010, which seamlessly appropriates Porfirio Díaz's tone and thought process from *Memorias (1830-1915)*. Álvaro Uribe wrote *Expediente del atentado* in 2007, which centers around Arnulfo Arroyo's attempt to murder Díaz on September 16, 1897. In this novel, the narrator reappropriates a celebrated journal entry from Federico Gamboa's *Mi diario*, which presents this episode. Consequently, Palou and Uribe's novels illustrate two very different fictionalized versions of Porfirio Díaz.

Palou's *Pobre patria mía* emphasizes Díaz's downfall and urges readers to re-imagine the dictator beyond the role of "the villain" in history. Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* focuses on the peak of popularity of Díaz when the Mexican elite believed and admired him, as he was still an inconspicuous albeit omniscient power in México . Finally, I examine how Palou and Uribe base their novels on the same historical period, but construct very distinct narratives. Ultimately, both texts address the unresolved social and cultural complexities that México inherited from Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship.

Before Palou and Uribe's historical novels there is a long tradition of Mexican historical narratives. The early examples of historical narratives in Latin America, according to Seymour Menton, date back to the early nineteenth century. For Menton, the first historic novel in México is Justo Sierra O'Reilly's *La hija del judío* (1848), which is considered a romantic historical novel.⁷¹ Menton

⁷¹ Sara Poot-Herrera states that in this romantic historical novel history and fiction are joined together through the characters, actions, times, and narrative spaces. In addition, for her Sierra O'Reilly demonstrates a capacity to transform and recreate literature based upon his research in archives and old documents, as well as his personal experience (764). This novel years later Pedro

adds that in the 1860s realistic narratives replaced romantic historical narratives.⁷² Menton affirms that at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries another wave of authors of historical novels emerged. This type of narrative placed the plot and characters in historical settings, which expressed the concerns and need to "finding alternatives to *costumbrista* realism, positivistic naturalism, bourgeois materialism, and in the case of México, to revolutionary turbulence" (Menton 19).

Similarly, Raymond Souza explains that writers from the *fin de siècle*, such as Federico Gamboa, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, José López Portillo y Rojas, Amado Nervo, and Emilio Rabasa, were concerned with developing a society that followed the models of industrial nations, then with recuperating their indigenous roots. For Souza, this

Angel Palou and Alvaro Uribe, as well as other writers in this study, demonstrate the same technique to build and conceptualize their historical narratives, as they to transform and recreate history in their narrative, after researching old archives and documents. See "*La hija del judío, entre la inquisición y la imprenta*"

⁷² Seymour Menton in *Latin America's New Historical Novel* establishes the first instances of historical narrative dating back to the nineteenth century before he affirms the six characteristics of the New Historical novel. Menton indicates the shift from romantic historical novel to realistic novels, primarily in Chilean Alberto Blest Gana (Menton 18).

indifference to the pre-Hispanic past begins to change after the Mexican Revolution of 1910.⁷³ Souza affirms that writers, who wanted to be modern, such as those in the Industrial West, were only a few toward the end of Díaz's dictatorial regime. The most significant aspect of Souza's work, as Menton explains and questions is the following: "Raymond Souza, in *La historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* (1988), shares Cowart's broader view and emphasizes the philosophical and stylistic differences between history and fiction without distinguishing the historical novel as a genre" (Menton 16). Subsequently, after the Mexican Revolution historical narrative primarily appeared in *criollista* fiction, where the dominant trend was: "to search for national identity once again [and this] became a major preoccupation, but with emphasis on contemporary problems: the struggle between urban and civilization and the barbarism of the hinterland, socioeconomic exploitation, and racism" (Menton

⁷³ Raymond Souza states in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna*: "En aquella época, México estaba más preocupado por desarrollar una sociedad según los modelos de las naciones industriales del mundo, que por la recuperación de sus raíces indígenas. Tal indiferencia respecto al pasado prehispánico empezó a cambiar después de la revolución de 1910" (Souza 22).

19). For Menton, the first "New Historical Novel" appears in 1949 with Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* and after this date historical narrative shifts away from the romantic historical novel and the *criollismo* novels that had been written before. Ultimately, for Raymond Souza the definitive period that marks a change between the classical historical novels of the nineteenth century and New Historical Novels takes place in 1970 due to the following narratives; *Yo el supremo* by Augusto Roa Bastos in 1974, *Terra nostra* by Carlos Fuentes in 1975, and *El arpa y la sombra* by Alejo Carpentier in 1979. Thus, Souza and Menton agree that the New Historical Novel begins after 1949.

Souza's work explores how this change takes place by focusing on the stylistic differences and similarities between history and fiction in historical narrative from 1961 to 1984 in Latin America. Hayden White's concepts of metahistory are fundamental in Souza's work; he explores the relationship between history and narrative in Latin American historical novels. Souza states that: "White sostiene que pueden existir interrelaciones en un texto entre el estilo, la trama, la visión del mundo y la ideología, y que estas interrelaciones se manifiestan en los niveles lingüístico, estético, epistemológico y ético "

(Souza 25). Furthermore, White believes that there are four types of styles or tropes that can form part of a narrative, which are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony.⁷⁴ In addition, he believes that in history as well as in narrative there are four common forms to emplot a text and those are romance, tragedy, comedy, or satire. These four elements are fundamental, since White establishes that history, like fiction, depends on a narrative structure in order to present the story or history to the reader, meaning that the process of writing history or fiction is similar, since both forms of writing are presented as a romance, tragedy, comedy, or satire.⁷⁵ In addition, White affirms that traditionally it was believed that historians

⁷⁴ Raymond Souza indicates in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* "White utiliza los tropos de metáfora, metonimia y sinécdoque, así como la ironía para sus categorizaciones de estilo" (Souza 26).

⁷⁵ Hayden White states in *Metahistory* that "It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by 'finding,' 'identifying,' or 'uncovering' the 'stories' that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between 'history' and 'fiction' resides in the fact that the historian 'finds' his stories, whereas the fiction writer 'invents' his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which 'invention' also plays a part in the historian's operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs" (White 7).

only relied on facts and writers on invention to tell a story, but for White historians begin to invent the moment they make sense of the discovered facts.⁷⁶

Moreover, White makes it clear that in addition to the four tropes and emplotments, there are four forms of arguments within a text, which are formist, mechanist, organicist, or contextualist. Souza understands these four terms in the following manner: "Formismo tiende a identificar agentes a sucesos en el campo histórico y luego procede a tratar sobre la similaridad de unos con otros " (27). Souza then states the following about the mechanist: "Mecanismo se refiere a las leyes que gobiernan la historia y utiliza las relaciones de causa y efecto como explicaciones cruciales del devenir histórico" (28). According to Souza, White associates the mechanist with metonymy since both are based on contact and continuity.⁷⁷ Souza makes it clear that organicist: "está caracterizado por su interés en las relaciones entre las partes y el todo y por su tendencia a ver la historia como

⁷⁶ Ibid (7).

⁷⁷Raymond Souza states in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna*: "White asocia el mecanismo con la metonimia porque ambas se basan en el contacto y la continuidad" (Souza 28).

una unidad orgánica " (28). This argument is strongly connected to synecdoche since both emphasize the notion of the part and the whole.⁷⁸ Lastly for Souza: "El contextualismo trata de colocar los sucesos dentro del contexto en el cual ocurren, y trazar los hilos de influencia que irradian hacia o desde el acontecimiento" (28). Souza points out that White associates irony with contextualism since both intend to subvert any certainty.⁷⁹

The connection between the different forms of arguments, emplotments, and tropes vary from text to text, as each narrative structure can present a series of different combinations of White's synoptic structure. The fundamental aspect of all of this for Souza is that prior to White's theory, history and narrative had constantly been considered separate entities, since history was considered a subject based on facts and information, and

⁷⁸ Raymond Souza makes it clear in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* that: "White vincula organicismo y sinécdoque porque ambos se relacionan con la parte y el todo" (Souza 28).

⁷⁹ Raymond Souza makes it clear in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* that: "White asocia la ironía con el contextualismo, porque ambos tienden a disolver o socavar el sentido de certidumbre" (Souza 29).

fiction was based on the writer's creative imagination.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Souza adds that "White afirma que los historiadores utilizan estrategias estéticas al construir sus interpretaciones del pasado, y considera que la historia y las narrativas están separadas solo en teoría " (Souza 30). For Souza, this translates into a possible way to explain or understand historical narrative since it is clear that one cannot be without the other, following White's synoptic table, evidently the direct link between history and narrative.⁸¹

Souza's observations on historical narrative from 1961 to 1984 are fundamental to understanding recent historical narrative in México from 1990 to 2010, which looks back to the thirty-four years Porfirio Díaz remained in power. Souza believed that the historical narratives between 1961 and 1984 presented many scopes that contemporary writers

⁸⁰ Raymond Souza states in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna*: "La historia y la narrativa son frecuentemente consideradas como entidades separadas, estando la historia basada en datos e información, y la narrativa en la imaginación creadora" (Souza 30).

⁸¹ Raymond Souza makes it clear in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* that: "Por lo que concierne a la novela histórica, es evidente que una no pueda existir sin la otra, siguiendo la guía de White, creo que la imaginación tropológica es uno de los elementos que las vinculan" (Souza 30).

utilized, since their points of view were optimistic or pessimistic, since they denied or affirmed their heritage. Overall, history for them was considered a burden, which needed to be revealed, dominated or denied.⁸² In their historical narratives, Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe seem to affirm the existence of Porfirio Díaz, while at the same time denying and ignoring the explanations of this time period that had been conceived after the Mexican Revolution. In addition, Palou's novel appears to have the narrative structure of a tragedy as it is expressed through a metonymical trope and it is presented in a mechanist argument. The emplotment of Palou's novel is a satire since it presents many of the tropes associated with irony, and the argument is contextualist. The most significant aspect of the narrative structure is that for White narratives that follow the structure of a tragedy and satire seem to admit that the world they represent is dysfunctional. In addition, both forms of emplotment –tragedy and satire–

⁸² Raymond Souza makes it clear in *Historia en la novela hispanoamericana moderna* that: "Son muchas las vertientes que utilizan los escritores contemporáneos; sus perspectivas son optimistas o pesimistas, ya que niegan o afirman sus herencias, pero en todo caso la historia es considerada como una carga que debe ser revelada, dominada o negada" (Souza 25).

understand history as something that has come to its end, but also admit that out of that something new might emerge since both stress the view of the eternal return.⁸³

On the other hand, Seymour Menton makes it clear that although there are multiple explanations and approaches to understanding the historical novel, as Souza indicates, for him, the primary question is: "what is historical narrative?" and for him the answer is clear. Menton explains:

Since the principal purpose of this book is to demonstrate the predominance since 1979 of the New Historical Novel rather than the telluric, psychological, magic realist, or nonfictional novel, Enrique Anderson Imbert's (1951) clear, straightforward definition is the most appropriate one: 'We call 'historical novels' those whose action occurs in a period previous to the author's' (3) (Menton 16).

According to Menton, anything that occurs and becomes narrative before an author is born can be considered a historical novel. Ironically, Menton's response to the question "what is a historical novel?" appears to be

⁸³See Hayden White's *Metahistory* page 11.

practical. Nevertheless, the question then becomes: are historical events during a writer's life not considered in a historical narrative?

The answer to this question is not necessary to understand *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* by Pedro Ángel Palou and *Expediente del atentado* by Álvaro Uribe. These two novels are based on events that occurred prior to the writer's lifetime. Palou and Uribe's novel can be understood as examples of texts that present most of the six characteristics that Seymour Menton considers to be crucial elements of the New Historical Novel. The six traits are as follows: 1) "the subordination of a mimetic recreation of a given historical period to the illustration of three philosophical ideals, popularized by Borges and applicable to all periods of the past, present, and future"; The impossible nature of reaching one truth or reality, history as a cyclical entity, and as unpredictable (Menton 22);⁸⁴ 2) "The conscious distortion of history through omissions, exaggerations, and anachronisms" (Menton 23); 3) Protagonists are based on famous historical characters, which differs from the first historical

⁸⁴Seymour Menton in *Latin America's New Historical Novel* page 22.

narratives of the nineteenth century; 4) "*Metafiction*, or the narrator's referring to the creative process of his own text" (Menton 23); 5) The presence of intertextuality, making the text appear as a mosaic, and replacing the notion of intersubjectivity; 6) "The Bakhtinian concepts of the dialogic, the carnivalesque, parody, and heteroglossia. First in keeping with the Borgesian idea that reality and historical truth are unknowable, several of the New Historical Novels follow Bakhtin's interpretation of Dostoyevsky's novels as being dialogic— that is, as containing two or more often conflicting presentations of events, characters, and world views" (Menton 24). In the past two decades —1990–2010— Mexican writers have looked to history as a point of departure and a space of conflict or reflection on the past. Two vivid examples of this are Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe whose historical narratives nostalgically look back to the thirty-four year porfiriato.

These two novels incorporate the stylistic concerns that Souza explores between narrative and history as Hayden White first presented them. According to Menton the New Historical Novel was: "Probably the single most important factor in stimulating the publication of so many historical

novels in the past fifteen years or so has been the awareness since the late 1970s of the approaching Quincentennial of the discovery of America" (Menton 27). Moreover, in the late 1970s the need to explore and narrate the colonial past was necessary among writers, and in 2010 México celebrated the heroes and victories from two moments in history Mexican Independence of 1810 and Mexican Revolution of 1910. Consequently, in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century writers subverted, denied or explored the histories that had been associated with the Mexican Independence and Revolution.

The impact of this historical phenomenon is present in Mexican literature and this case through two different fictionalizations of Porfirio Díaz. In many ways this reflects the tendency of young writers who re-explore the past through New Historical Narrative. The most fascinating aspect of Palou and Uribe prior to creating their novels that both had previously delved and completed research texts that dealt with the time period Porfirio Díaz was in power. Palou revisits *Memorias* by Porfirio Díaz and Uribe explores Gamboa's work in *Recordatorio de Federico*. Although Palou and Uribe address the same historical time

period in their research both accentuate and focus on two different moments of the past.

Furthermore, Palou published, *La culpa de México: la invención de un país entre dos guerras* (2009).⁸⁵ In this book, the writer explored two mayor wars in México –the Battle of Puebla in May 5, 1862 against the French and The Battle of Chapultepec on September 13, 1847 against the United States. Palou’s historical research attempts to pinpoint where or how México began to create false victories from ruins of past defeated battles. Palou is concerned with the notion of México ’s denial of its long history of defeat. This concern is prevalent in his novel *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* since it explores the failures of the Mexican Revolution all from the perspective of the dictator himself. In doing so, this novels offers a reflection of the dictatorial regime as led by Díaz to contemporary readers all from the perspective of Porfirio Díaz himself, right before the Mexican Revolution

⁸⁵ Pedro Angel Palou has a historical trilogy on the following three Mexican historical figures *Zapata*, *Morelos* and *Cuauhtémoc*. Interestingly, each text is narrated very differently than *Pobre patria mía* since in all of those three novels it is not the main character telling the story, instead it is a series of characters as well as the main character who narrate the story.

made its way into the city led by Francisco I. Madero. On the other hand, Álvaro Uribe writes a literary biography about Federico Gamboa, *Recordatorio de Federico Gamboa* (2009), which is a revised and reedited version of a previous work with the same title published ten years before in 1999. Clearly, Uribe's focal point in his novel is the peak of popularity of Porfirio Díaz when people believed, admired, and respected him because it suggests that the Mexican people supported him. Uribe seems to present an enigmatic novel that makes all of the overlapping texts and voices visible; while Palou appears to create a seamless narrative that hides the appropriated texts. Palou and Uribe utilize historical moments from Mexican History and controversial dictator Porfirio Díaz as the point of departure for their historical narrative. Palou and Uribe's style of fiction places the plot during a historical date and it utilizes historical figures as the main characters in order to address the complexity of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship in México.

Pedro Ángel Palou's Redemption of Porfirio Díaz in *Pobre patria mía*

The novel *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* (2010) by Pedro Ángel Palou is an example of narrative that weaves history and fiction together. For Palou history is not a fixed or immovable analyzable box that is present beforehand. Rather, it is a space of struggle, strife and contradictions, a place of fight and combat.⁸⁶ Thus, Palou reconfigured Díaz's final thoughts before the general exiled to Paris. In this novel, it is clear that Palou does not attempt to propagate a negative image of Díaz nor defend or justify his actions. Palou's main endeavor is to re-explore the contradictions of Díaz's characterization in Mexican history. Palou's main objective in *Pobre patria mía* is to humanize this dictator to new readers of Mexican narrative.

In a series of interviews with readers of *Pobre patria mía*, Palou reveals his intent. One reader named "Luz Maria" asked Palou a very simple and telling question: Why did you choose to write a historical novel about Porfirio Díaz?

⁸⁶ Pedro Ángel Palou affirms the following in *La culpa México*: "Craso error: el pasado no es un tiempo inamovible, analizable en bloque, como si existiera de antemano; es un espacio de pugnas y contradicciones, un lugar de combate y lucha" (Palou 9).

Palou responded: "Luz María, creo que necesitamos reconciliarnos con las figuras que nos vendieron como enemigos o villanos. El caso de Díaz es sintomático, cuando podamos verlo como humano podremos apreciar lo mejor que tuvo sin que esto implique perdonarle sus errores, pero entonces regresarán a nuestra historia iiccuarenta años perdidos!!!" (Palou 1). In this statement, Palou highlights the pressing need to remember and explore this Mexican past, in order to re-understand Porfirio Díaz in a new context where the past is no longer defined or understood as a battle between "good" and "evil" as the *Ateneo de la Juventud* had first presented it.⁸⁷

Furthermore, during this same interview another reader named "Teresa" asked Palou why General Porfirio Díaz was

⁸⁷ The "*Ateneo de la juventud*" can be understood as Jose Antonio Rosado and Angelica Tornero explain in *Diccionario de la literatura mexicana: siglo XX*. They define it as a group of scholars and intellectuals who emerged toward the end of Porfirio Díaz's defeat in 1909. One of their main goals was to reconsider the previous form of thought in the humanities. During the Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial regime was the notions of determinism strongly related to positivism which to them promoted racism. The new wave of intellectuals in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution as led by Jose Vasconcelos sought out for the Mexican education system to reconsider and re-imagine Mexican culture and identity, which promoted freedom of expression and of thought, and some of these intellectuals were as already mentioned José Vasconcelos, in addition Alfonso Reyes, and Pedro Henríquez Ureña (38).

still "satanized" when presidents after him have been much worse. Palou answered: "Gracias, Teresa. Como dije antes, nos va a costar mucho trabajo. Son muchos años de denostamiento público. Díaz necesita regresar como militar, como político, como héroe, como persona de carne y hueso antes de que nos reconciliemos con su memoria, algo fundamental para hacer un país sin costuras" (Palou). Palou's *Pobre patria mía* intends to explore those forty years, which México has overlooked or cataloged as a "bad time". In addition, it appears that Palou wants to demonstrate to readers that Díaz is more than just the "villain" in history.

Furthermore, in another interview with Ana Mónica Rodríguez, Palou states that "La historiografía...no le ha dado a Porfirio Díaz el sitio que le corresponde; era ultranacionalista " (Rodríguez). Thus, Palou makes an effort to make room for proper contextualization of Díaz within history. In this same interview Palou laments the fact that in México Porfirio Díaz is stigmatized and according to Palou it is necessary to make a serious revision of this character.⁸⁸ Palou intends to emplot Díaz

⁸⁸ Ana Mónica Rodríguez in *Pobre patria mía coloca a Porfirio Díaz 'en su justo lugar', alejado de estigmas*

differently in history. For example, the last phrase of his response to "Theresa": "algo fundamental para hacer un país sin costuras" (Palou). The irony within this statement is that readers are urged to believe that it is necessary to "make" a seamless country.

This image of "sowing seamlessly" is prevalent in Palou's novel *Pobre patria mía*. Within the novel the act of sowing with needle and thread to bind something together represents history on one end represents and narrative on the other. For Palou this metaphor is intended to not highlight the marks and separation between narrative and history but rather disappear the "seam".

These statements are found in the final pages of Palou's novel *Pobre patria mía* in "Tabula Gratulatoria". In this section, Palou reveals to readers the origin of this metaphor of "needle and thread". The framework behind his novel comes from *Memorias* written by dictator Porfirio Díaz and surprisingly Henry James's ideas about the novel and history. Palou makes this very clear in the following passage:

states that: "El autor lamentó que exista una gran 'estigmatización' de Díaz y, en el país, señaló, se debe 'hacer una revisión seria' de este personaje" (Rodríguez 2).

Yo he intentado aquí hacer visible lo invisible partiendo de los pequeños hechos que sabemos acerca del exilio de Porfirio Díaz. Pero he seguido también a James en la estructura y el tono, esa catapulta de toda novela— que me fue dada, como una revelación gracias a la relectura de las *Memorias* del propio general—. ‘La historia y la novela, la idea y la forma, son como aguja y el hilo. Jamás he sabido que un gremio de sastres recomendase el empleo del hilo sin aguja, o de aguja sin hilo’ (Palou 183).

This indicates that Palou attempts to provide a new conception of this past —Díaz’s exile to Paris— in a seamless way, so that history and Díaz’s memory are perceived as one piece and not a patch quilt in this novel. On the surface the novel does not appear as a series of juxtapositions or a *konvolutt* of various texts. Instead it appears as one text, as one garment with no visible folds. In addition, Palou chooses to make the invisible visible, and his method becomes merging seamlessly history and narrative together. Palou’s main and only focus in the narrative is Porfirio Díaz. From the beginning the novel presents the general as a very thoughtful and reflective

man who after being considered the most powerful leader in México is forced to escape and exile to Paris as a defeated man. In that state, fictional Díaz begins the journey of remembering; the tumultuous Mexican past, the barbaric present –Mexican Revolution–, and his more than thirty four productive years.

The very first pages of *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* make it very clear that the narrative voice is in first person and that it is a self-reflection. From the beginning the reader is not aware of who is speaking, but can infer that it is Porfirio Díaz. For example: ““Soy un fantasma de piedra, una roca invisible, aunque maciza. Estoy hecho de cantera. De la tierra que forma los montes de Oaxaca. Soy pedernal labrado de vientos, lentamente. Soy polvo y vengo polvo” (13). The association of general Díaz with the land prevails in this short passage, specifically Oaxaca, the birthplace of the general. In addition, from the very beginning of the novel his voice and tone are not that of a tyrant or war hero, instead it is a stream of consciousness that insists upon the voice’s connection to the land.

Thus, Palou’s novel begins with fictional Díaz’s self-reflection instead of battle or during Díaz’s escape from

México to Paris. Instead the narrator presents Díaz right before he passes away, and this fictitious Díaz begins a long process of introspection. Díaz's begins with the following: "No tengo miedo. Nunca lo tuve. Tengo dolor. Un dolor en el pecho, que es una mezcla de rabia y de impotencia" (19). Again, rather than emphasizing the brave or tyrannical man that controlled México for over thirty years, the general presents himself as a pained man that feared. For Díaz these emotions stem from his efforts to modernize México, efforts that all seem to be in vain since the people no longer wanted him in power and quickly forgot him after the Mexican Revolution. The narrator-protagonist affirms: "Es el pasado, lo sé. Esto que viene ahora se llama presente. El futuro, el único que me aguarda es la muerte. Y yo no sé cómo vivir ya " (24). Díaz's approximation to time makes it clear that he understands that his time in power was in the past, the efforts of the Revolution are the present, and death is the only thing left for him.

The dictators' reminisce revels his disapproval with the nation during the Mexican Revolution. Unfortunately for Díaz, the Mexican Revolution put an end to his success and efforts of modernization. He states: "México se ha

despeñado en un abismo, según me llegan las noticias. Ha regresado a la barbarie" (36). In addition to his dissatisfaction with the Mexican Revolution, this fictitious Díaz explains to the Mexican reader, the political instability in México before him and makes it clear that he brought progress to México . Thus, Diaz explains México 's past before 1876: "Y tuvimos a los gringos y a los francés, y a Maximiliano y a su *Mamá Carlota*, y a sus jardines Borda y sus fiestas interminables. Juárez intentó poner orden, pero le ganó la soberbia. Así que de los cien años sólo fueron útiles treinta. Tres décadas de prosperidad " (36). Through this first person narrative the reader discovers a general that presents himself as an intellectual and a pseudo-historian.

In addition, Diaz after presenting his vision of México 's unstable past prior to his control of the nation through this self-reflective narrative, Díaz continues to criticize the efforts of the Mexican revolutionaries. He affirms: "Lejos de las traiciones y las sensibles armas con las que en México se están matando en la búsqueda de una imposible igualdad. Ellos usan la igualdad cual si fuera sinónimo de la democracia" (49). Díaz seems to believe that equality does not exist because it can never be achieved.

On the other hand, it appears that for Díaz the notion of equality is not a synonym of democracy like it is to revolutionaries. The efforts during the Mexican Revolution for Díaz do not represent a time of change or prosperity, since to him it is a barbaric time in México that nears its own apocalypses.⁸⁹ Furthermore, later on in the novel Díaz claims the following about the Mexican revolution:

Las revueltas y los saqueos están dejando al país en ruinas. No sólo se está desquebrajando socialmente, sino que económicamente se está quedando sin salidas. Los revolucionarios están parando cosechas. Han saqueado haciendas y dejado familias sin sustento. Parece que ahora la mitad de México también está en contra de Madero, y la otra está angustiada por saber hacia dónde va (Palou 98).

Once again, Díaz begins to intellectually criticize the Mexican Revolution by indicating the pragmatic impact the revolution has on the nation. For example, all harvest is brought to a halt. Furthermore, Díaz takes notice of the

⁸⁹ Pedro Ángel Palou states the following in *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz*: "Yo me lamento no haber hecho más por detener el apocalipsis que lo cerca" (Palou 50).

division between the revolutionaries and the people, since in this previous statement made by fictional Díaz the Mexican people are not in support of Madero.

This fictional Díaz juxtaposes the stopped progress brought by the Mexican Revolution with the programs he created with the help of Justo Sierra. Díaz remembers this "científico" in a tone of endearment: "Recordar a Justo Sierra es recordar al traductor de mis pensamientos. Al pintor de mis ideas. A mis ochenta y dos años pudo ser la noticia que me parara el corazón" (77). Justo Sierra is not just the painter and translator to Díaz's thoughts because during this dictatorship Sierra is also the man who reforms the entire education system in México . Justo's efforts were far from the ecclesiastical stories that Benito Juárez wanted to promote as education.⁹⁰ History indicates that one of the final accomplishments during Díaz's dictatorship was Justo Sierra's inauguration of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México on September 22, 1910; one of the largest universities in Latin America.

⁹⁰ Pedro Ángel Palou states the following in *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz*: "Justo, y nadie más, se encargó de organizar toda una reforma educativa, lejos de las historias eclesiásticas. Tal como la quería el señor Juárez: liberal" (Palou 78).

Furthermore, according to Díaz, Justo Sierra during "Fiesta del Centenario" in 1910 is part of the time when they had the opportunity to shape the national and cultural identity of México. Díaz explains Sierra's role and their efforts:

La fiesta del Centenario era la oportunidad de crearle una fuerte identidad histórica y cultural a la joven nación mexicana. Por primera vez involucraríamos a todos los niveles, a todos los mexicanos, a todos los rincones de la ciudad y del país. Un México que se veía en su mejor momento no podía reparar en gastos, y no lo hicimos. Justo Sierra, el secretario de Educación, había convertido su investigación en un justo acto de revalorización de nuestro pasado y nuestro presente: había que estar orgullosos de los aztecas, de Cuauhtemoc, de Hernán Cortés, de la época virreinal, de la guerra iniciada por Hidalgo para librarnos de trecientos años de colonialismo y fortalecida por Morelos y Guerrero, y finalizada por Iturbide, del periodo del señor Juárez, de nuestras batallas de Puebla, del derrocamiento de los imperialistas. Todos

esos episodios nos habían formado y ahora era tiempo de mostrarnos al mundo como ciudadanos renovados y modernos (Palou 87).

In this passage, Díaz the intellectual and historian is not presented as a brutal tyrant who was only after power, since he conceptualizes the logic behind the festivities of 1910. Simultaneously, Díaz presents his knowledge of México 's history. Furthermore, Díaz elucidates that these efforts to create a national and cultural identity through the commemoration of Mexican Independence were intended to reach all of the Mexican, and that it was not a celebration meant to showcase to the world México 's long and prosperous triumphant Modernization.

The fictional Díaz in Palou's novel does recognize his attempts to build and shape México 's national identity, and also recognizes that he allowed foreign countries to exploit México. Díaz affirms: "Yo dejé a los ingleses enriquecerse con México, he de aceptarlo, pero nunca los dejé hacerse con mi país. Pobre México, pobre Patria mía" (94). Although Díaz admits the British profited from México, he makes it clear that they did not keep México. Another problematic and enigmatic aspect of Mexican identity that Diaz explores is the Colonial past; violent

union of two cultures, the Indigenous and Spanish. Díaz considers this cultural tension the biggest issues during his time in power. According to him his failure was his inability to recognize and integrate the indigenous aspects into Mexican identity. The narrator-protagonist confesses:

No me di cuenta de que los indígenas se aferraron a su pasado, a sus bosques en lugar de trenes y a sus sembradíos en lugar de minas y haciendas. Los chamanes juraron vengarse de mí y no dejarme descansar jamás por los muertos suscitados por mis tropas. Todo el país tenía la orden de mantenerse en paz. No quería yo más riesgos ni noticias al extranjero de ingobernabilidad. (Palou 149).

Fictional Díaz states that one of the biggest tensions in México was solving the tension between the indigenous population and the *mestizos*. Simultaneously, Díaz recognizes the violent path of destruction his troops left behind in indigenous areas.⁹¹ Later in the novel, Díaz

⁹¹ *Tomóchic* (1893) by Heriberto Frías captures the exploitation and mistreatment that the indigenous people in Chihuahua received from the Mexican government after their uprising. The polemical writer Frías resigns from being a soldier after this experience, and decides to tell the gruesome and brutal reality of this battle in the form of

admits the following: "Tuve que darle entrada a la modernidad y para eso fue necesario sacrificar algunas tradiciones " (150). For Díaz modernity meant having to sacrifice an aspect of society, and during his dictatorship this meant sacrificing the indigenous traditions, since he wanted foreign countries to imagine México as a place where government was in place. For Díaz building the economy and infrastructure of the nation meant having to sacrifice one thing, democracy, since this was only a word. He states: "¡Democracia!, es sólo una palabra. Con palabras no se construyen civilizaciones. Lo siento. Se edifican con sangre" (169). Although Diaz is an exile in Paris, after the Mexican Revolution he firmly believed that the attempts of the Mexican Revolutionaries would not succeed, since according to this statement civilizations are not built on words they are built on blood. The Mexican Revolution for Díaz was little more than a lose beast that would end with México, and consequently end with all of the efforts and sacrifices Díaz had orchestrated during his dictatorship.

serial novel. During its time this novel was so controversial that it was an anonymous publication, but once the Mexican government discovered who the author was Frías was sent to jail for his novel.

⁹² See Jorge Volpi's article: "El fin de la narrativa latinoamericana" (41).

Once Díaz is defeated he appears to firmly believe that if he had stayed in México he could have defeated the Mexican Revolutionaries. He makes this very clear in a tone of defeat:

He de repetirlo una y otra vez: me pude haber quedado. Uno o dos años de guerra me hubiesen bastado para aplastar la revolución. Ahora estoy aquí, solo y olvidado. Con la compañía de mis recuerdos, con cientos de cartas que siguen llegando como un monumento cotidiano a la nostalgia, esa maldita que no deja vivir en paz (Palou 125).

General Díaz decides to leave México instead of fighting against the efforts of the Mexican Revolution and perhaps that is why he is quickly forgotten in México and simply considered the villain. Once the novel concludes Díaz is left only with his nostalgic memories.

The narrator-protagonist Díaz decides to remind the reader yet again that he is the forgotten one, stating: "Yo, el olvidado, no he podido olvidar. Aquí sigo, deambulando, atado a la memoria, como un lastre que no me deja ir, escapar del todo. Soy prisionero de mis recuerdos" (177). Díaz affirms that, although people have forgotten

him, he has not been able to forget and continues to wander, almost as a soul who has not found its true resting place. The narrator in Pedro Ángel Palou's novel makes an attempt to rescue the lost or forgotten memory of Porfirio Díaz. Palou, the historian, emphasizes in his historical analysis why Díaz was able to stay in power for such a long period of time and, finally, why after the celebrations of 1910 Díaz is forced out of power. As Palou explained in *La culpa de México: la invención de un país entre dos guerras*:

La gente, anhelante de tranquilidad, dejó que Díaz comenzara a tomar medidas fuertes y estratégicas en materia de economía, cometiendo errores como los de sobreestimar la riqueza natural del país y subestimar el número y la calidad de sus habitantes. Otro error se refiere a un optimismo iluso acerca de la inmigración extranjera y el apoyo al despilfarro monstruoso de las tierras baldías para acelerar el poblamiento del país, creando así una agricultura mezquina y rutinaria (Palou 122).

In this statement, Palou provides the faults and most common criticism made of Díaz. Although this observation enters into Palou's historical analysis it is very

noticeable that this form of criticism is not present in *Pobre patria mía*, since the narrator is Porfirio Díaz himself. Thus, the reader is invited to consider that the man speaking in the novel is a man begging for mercy, begging to be reconsidered into history, not as a "villain", but as one of the fathers who brought modernity to México.

The prevailing aspect in Palou's novel is Díaz's need to be re-vindicated back into history, since history remembers him as a tyrant and not as a nostalgic old man that fled from México. In addition, Palou adds in an interview with Ana Monica Rodriguez the following:

Se muestra en la novela que para el viejo general no existe realidad más ingrata: levantó una nación que parecía animal incivilizado; le llevó calma, orden, el ferrocarril, el petróleo, la modernidad, pero México le dio la espalda y lamenta que su cuerpo ya no sea el mismo de antes para dar batalla (Rodríguez).

Although in this interview Palou establishes the possible main concerns Díaz might have faced during his final years, the writer also points the dictator's mistakes. Palou states in the interview: "Este personaje complejo y

controversial, prosiguió Palou, sin duda cometió errores. Uno de ellos fue haber tratado al pueblo como ignorante, como gente no lista para la democracia, lo cual generó gran rechazo hacia él" (Rodríguez). It is precisely this sentiment that prevails in the novel, since in more than one occasion the narrator-protagonist Díaz makes it clear that México was an ignorant uncivilized beast before he took power and after the revolution it headed into that direction once again.

Additionally, the reader is invited to consider that Díaz's biggest mistakes are not mentioned in Palou's novel. For example, during the more than thirty years in power Díaz ordered for disobedient Mexicans to be executed and as a result workers in the strike of Cananea in 1906 and workers of Rio Blanco in 1907 were killed by Mexican soldiers. These aspects are briefly remembered and mentioned in Díaz's reflection, since the fictional Diaz only seems to recall the infrastructure, order, and peace that he forced upon México.

Álvaro Uribe's Dossier: Federico Gamboa and Porfirio Díaz

The work Álvaro Uribe wrote as a literary biographer in *Recordatorio de Federico Gamboa* (2010) is present in his dialogic novel *Expediente del atentado*, since the narrator appears to be a Mexican man with the initials F.G. (Federico Gamboa). In this literary biography Uribe elucidates his knowledge of the time period controlled by Porfirio Díaz and he does this by focusing on Federico Gamboa. According to Arturo García Hernández, Álvaro Uribe found the seed of his novel *Expediente del atentado* in Federico Gamboa's *Mi diario* (1892-1939) because he fell in love with the story and was of great interest. In addition, García Hernández states that Uribe found that "all of the ends were lose" in this historical episode. García Hernández adds that Uribe prefers a narrator who is given "lose ends", in order to tie them together.⁹² As Federico Gamboa's literary biographer, Uribe purposely, leaves two crucial ends untied at the end of this text; perhaps for all future readers of *Expediente del atentado*.

⁹² Arturo García Hernández in *Reconstruye Álvaro Uribe de manera literaria ataque contra Porfirio Díaz* states: "Ahí es donde Álvaro Uribe vio la semilla de la novela: 'Me enamoré de la historia, consideré que el hecho en sí tenía interés narrativo y vi que todos los cabos estaban sueltos. ¿Qué más quiere un narrador que tener los cabos sueltos para atarlos?'" (García Hernández 1).

The first of these ambiguities was that Gamboa's *Mi diario* was a highly regarded text for Porfirio Díaz. According to Uribe, for Porfirio Díaz this text was a form of *voice-over* that the general heard as identical to his own consciousness, supposedly like an absolute spirit that governs the world with the power of its probable existence, like a demiurge whose action is executed from afar and only a few times does it make an appearance.⁹³ This notion governs the direction of the narrative in *Expediente del atentado*: all of the characters seem to follow orders from an unknown presence that is "up above." Furthermore, the dictator in Uribe wrote *Expediente del atentado* is not a character that carries out any dialogue or action; he is an omniscient presence, embodying the always-present authoritative figure of power much like Porfirio Díaz in México.

The second ambiguity that Uribe leaves behind in his literary biography that his novel *Expediente del atentado* originates from Federico Gamboa's journal entry and

⁹³ Álvaro Uribe in *Recordatorio de Federico Gamboa* affirms: "Porfirio Díaz volverá empero al *Diario* de Gamboa: como una *voice-over* que el escucha identifica con la de su propia conciencia, como un espíritu absoluto que ordena el mundo con el solo poder de su existencia presumible, como un demiurgo cuya acción se ejerce a distancia y muy pocas veces condesciende a aparecer" (Uribe 33).

intertwines with his words. In this novel, the reader knows that the narrator-protagonist's initials are "F.G.", but within the text there is no suggestion that it could be Federico Gamboa. Uribe does suggest this connection to the reader in his literary biography:

Para terminar: F.G., El protagonista y vacilante narrador de mi novela *Expediente del atentado* (2007), es en buena medida un personaje ficticio. No es menos cierto que sus iniciales corresponden a las del nombre y apellido de Federico Gamboa, por lo que el lector tiene todo el derecho de identificarlo con este escritor desigual e indispensable del que no se ha dicho la última palabra (Uribe 154).

In this passage, Uribe encourages the reader to consider the narrator-protagonist "F.G." as possibly being Federico Gamboa, and in doing so Uribe begins to blur the lines among the "facts" that he presents in his literary biography.

Once in the realm of fiction, Uribe exercises the freedom to create and imagine different interpretations of Arnulfo Arroyo's attempt to murder Porfirio Díaz. According to Arturo García Hernández, in order for Uribe to "resolve

the ambiguity of this past event –attempt to murder Porfirio Díaz – Uribe relied on fiction, and seeing as Uribe was inspired by Gamboa's journal entry he chose the point of view of this writer to link together these loose ends of the case; thus Uribe, deliberately named the narrator-protagonist F.G.⁹⁴

Moreover, María Casasús argues that Uribe's main interests in *Expediente del atentado* are the sequence of events that take place after an attempt to murder a national leader. According to María Casasús, Uribe is concerned with the metaphysical aspect of attempts to murder a national leader because to him they all seem to repeat the same outline. For Uribe, there is always an "attacker" who appears to be insane or suicidal that is left on the margins of its community. The second aspect is that the "attacker" violently disappears, and in the end the people who are part of his disappearance, disappear as

⁹⁴ Arturo García Hernández in *Reconstruye Álvaro Uribe de manera literaria ataque contra Porfirio Díaz* argues that: "Para unirlos, Uribe recurrió a la ficción e, inspirado en Gamboa, eligió como punto de vista el de un escritor que se dispone a hilvanar el caso: 'Le puse deliberadamente las iniciales FG en la novela, porque tiene características que sí son de Gamboa '" (García Hernández 1).

well, and the file of the attempt to murder also disappears.⁹⁵

Although Uribe is revisiting this episode and taking the creative freedom to re-write it he does have a limit. In an interview with María Casasús, an Argentinean scholar that asked Uribe why it is that other Mexican writers from this time period do not have a conversation with F.G. She then named as examples Amado Nervo, Justo Sierra, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, and Joaquín Casasús. Uribe responded:

Federico Gamboa in his *Diario* does present accounts of talks with other writers. But with none does he comment the attempt against Porfirio Díaz. To include a comment of that nature, made up or real, equates to committing a novelistic

⁹⁵ Mario Casasús in *Álvaro Uribe recrea su novela atentado contra Porfirio Díaz* affirms the following: "De los atentados en general me interesa el hecho casi metafísico de que todos parecen repetir un mismo esquema: primero hay un 'atentante' que es medio loco o medio suicida y está por la fuerza de las cosas al margen de su comunidad, luego el 'atentante' desaparece más o menos violentamente, y al final desaparecen también la o las personas que lo desaparecieron y el expediente mismo de la desaparición" (Casasús 3).

crime of excess in detail and would be an incoherent and arbitrary act (Uribe).⁹⁶

Although Uribe appears to evade narrative that is plagued with excesses, the three pages from Gamboa's diary become the foundation of his narrative, which exceeds three hundred pages. In other words, Uribe does excessively re-create and re-imagine this episode, although he chooses not to include other writers from this time period. The question then becomes, what aspects are re-considered, re-imagined or left the same in Uribe wrote *Expediente del atentado* of this attempt to murder Porfirio Díaz?

Perhaps the most significant similarity between both texts is the parallel between F.G. and Federico Gamboa. The link between the Mexican writer, Federico Gamboa and F.G. goes beyond the explicit connection of their initials, since both men worked for Porfirio Díaz, both worked on an ongoing diary, and both were old classmates to Arnulfo Arroyo and Eduardo Velázquez. In his diary, Gamboa explains

⁹⁶ Mario Casasús in *Álvaro Uribe recrea su novela atentado contra Porfirio Díaz* establishes the following: "Federico Gamboa en su Diario sí da cuenta de sus pláticas con otros escritores. Pero con ninguno de ellos comentó el atentado contra Porfirio Díaz. Incluir un comentario de esa índole, inventado o real, habría equivalido a cometer un crimen novelístico de prolijidad, incoherencia y arbitrariedad" (Casasús 2).

his own personal connection to the two men, Velázquez and Arroyo. The *fin de siècle* writer states: "Arnulfo Arroyo, autor del atentado contra el presidente, y Eduardo Velázquez, autor del atentado contra Arroyo, si es que la opinión que de tal lo acusa no se engaña, fueron condiscípulos míos y fueron condiscípulos entre sí " (Gamboa 32). A striking parallel between the two diaries is that Arroyo's attempt to murder the dictator is followed by Velázquez's murder of Arroyo, and concludes with Velázquez's suicide. All of these sudden deaths in Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* urge the reader to begin to speculate since at the beginning it is unclear who the murder is.

On the other hand, the reader who is aware of Uribe's literary biography, *Expediente del atentado*, and Gamboa's journal entries will know that there are multiple interpretations to this historical episode –attempt to murder Díaz. The first time reader of Uribe's novel will eventually become aware of the other texts are surrounding this novel. Read under these various contexts, *Expediente del atentado* acquires different interpretations, since there are other plots, actions, and characters outside the novel.

If the reader is aware of the previous texts, then during their reading they might seek answers and explanations not from within the text, but outside of the text. Furthermore, many of the possible answers within this novel are questionable since they are contradicted within the text, due in part to the structure of *Expediente del atentado*. The multiple narrators and texts within the texts leads the reader into a series of questions that are never answered or, if answered, are soon contradicted, ultimately causing this novel to appear chaotic.

Expediente del atentado is composed of three parts: (1) "Carpeta I: Arnulfo Arroyo" consisting of nine section; (2) "Carpeta II: Eduardo Velázquez" composed of sixteen sections; and (3) "Carpeta III: Villavicencio y los demás" consisting of thirteen sections.⁹⁷ The three main sections of the novel present a sense of order and cohesion; each section is titled Folder 1, 2 or 3.

Uribe uses F.G. as the main narrator, as Gambetta Chuck has pointed out.⁹⁸ In addition, the various texts in

⁹⁷ Gambetta Chuck makes this affirmation in *Novela y atentado: El expediente del atentado (2007)*, de Álvaro Uribe (Chuck 89).

⁹⁸ Gambetta Chuck states this in *Novela y atentado: El expediente del atentado (2007)*, de Álvaro Uribe (Chuck 89).

the novel appear in a particular order, just not in "linear" order, and the task of the reader is to make sense of all of the information presented. Deprived of information due to the lack of documents or restrictions set by those documents that are available, the reader confronts the "gaps" or "holes" in the text. Thus, once the reader concludes his or her reading of *Expediente del atentado* he or she might follow the clues to read Uribe's literary biography and Gamboa's journal entry in *Mi diario*.

In addition, the different points of view and times in the text make it possible for the narrator-character F.G. to present multiple perspectives of the attempt to murder Porfirio Díaz, since he is compiling documents in his dossier that make their way into the narrative. The narrator-character F.G. gathers letters, journal entries, testimonies, rumors, gossip, dialogues, and even photographs from that day. The constant movement in the novel and change of action make it appear suspenseful and chaotic. For Adolfo Castañón, this novel revolves around the efforts of a writer, F.G, who attempts to put together the puzzle of national life; he adds that this story has the virtue of appearing to be a *thriller*, but it also carries appears to be a historical exposition. For

Castañon, this is a possible explanation of the form of the novel, since the events that occur and change are presented in various genres. For Castañon, this novel goes from judicial declarations to confessions *in extremis*, including diary, to newspaper cutouts, to epistolary love.⁹⁹ Consequently, according to Castañon, the reader forms part of the thrill of configuring a series of documents and events. In addition, in this novel the characters and narrator-character F.G. are never exposed to all of the information, and at certain moments the reader is unaware of all of the information. The manner in which the various documents are placed juxtaposed neither confirms nor denies the facts, since the novel lacks the presence of an omniscient narrator commonly found in much nineteenth century *fin de siècle* narrative.

⁹⁹ Adolfo Castañon in *Expediente del atentado, de Álvaro Uribe* states that: "La novela de Álvaro Uribe gira alrededor de los esfuerzos de un escritor F.G. (¿Federico Gamboa?) por armar ese rompecabezas de la vida nacional. El relato tiene las virtudes del *thriller*, pero lleva también el compás moroso de la exposición histórica. Quizás a eso contribuya la forma en que se suceden y alternan los diversos géneros que conjuga la novela, que van desde las declaraciones judiciales hasta la confesión *in extremis*, pasando por el diario, los recortes periodísticos, el epistolario amoroso. El tren de la novela avanza con discreta pero arrulladora precisión dejando al lector al vilo en cada página y orillándolo al filo del asombro" (Castañon 2).

Thus, the reader begins to speculate. The reader wonders, why did Arnulfo Arroyo attempt to murder the most powerful man in México? Who is Arnulfo Arroyo? Once, these questions appear to have been answered, the suspense shifts, and the reader is now puzzled once again, after Arnulfo Arroyo's death. At this point, the reader is attempting, yet again to put together the pieces of the night Arroyo is taken to jail and then stabbed to death by a group of men. The reader quickly discovers that Eduardo Velázquez, another powerful man, along with six other men, stabbed Arroyo to death. After this, yet again, the reader is asking himself who is Eduardo Velázquez? And why would Velázquez murder Arnulfo Arroyo? Even more puzzling, why does Velázquez commit suicide?

Later on, the reader discovers Velázquez is part of the group of men who murder Arroyo. According to the statement the narrator-character F.G gathers from Velázquez, he joined the men to murder Arroyo to defend the great Nation of México and the rights Díaz's had fostered and instilled. At this juncture in the plot the reader appears to have resolved the crime, but once again the focus shifts, since Velázquez, once in jail, commits suicide. Long before the narrator-character F.G. writes

about this incident, Federico Gamboa wrote the following in *Mi Diario*:

A las diez y media de la mañana, con rapidez de rayo, se ha esparcido por toda la ciudad la noticia sombría del suicidio de Eduardo Velázquez. Dicen los bien informados que se mató dentro de la habitación ocupada, con carácter de incomunicado, en la cárcel de Belén (Gamboa 34).

In Uribe's novel these same words reappear under the section, "Del *Diario* de F.G. 25 de septiembre", an explicit example of appropriation, since the words of Federico Gamboa are represented to new readers through "copy and paste". The fictitious version of Gamboa's *Mi diario*, states:

Desde las diez y media de la mañana de ayer, con rapidez de rayo, comenzó a esparcirse por toda la ciudad la noticia sombría del suicidio de Eduardo Velázquez. Dicen que se mató dentro de la habitación que ocupaba, con carácter de incomunicado, en la Cárcel de Belén" (Uribe 223).

Although both Gamboa and the narrator-character F.G. present the sudden death of Velázquez the main difference

is that F.G.'s dossier includes two texts that appear to come from Velázquez once he is in jail.

The first text seems to be Velázquez's "suicide note" and the second text is his thought process before committing suicide. In Velázquez's "suicide note" the tone that permeates is of a strong and brave man, since his words ardently defend and justify his actions. The note that Velázquez leaves behind states the following:

Sostengo, convencido como estoy de ello en mi fuero interno, que he prestado un servicio invaluable a mi país, procurando mostrar que un atentado con el Jefe de la Nación lo castigará rápida y terriblemente el pueblo, pues no se necesitó sino la más ligera insinuación para armar el brazo de la muchedumbre, que descargó sobre el culpable de la mayúscula ofensa un golpe fatal (Uribe 178).

Ironically, in the second text, which appears to be Velázquez's inner thoughts immediately before he commits suicide carries a different attitude. The tone that prevails in this section is that of a pained and hurt man, addressing himself in past tense, and in comparison to his first note the verb tense fluctuate from present, future,

and present perfect. This second text reveals the following: "Quisiste demostrarle a él y México que nadie puede atentar impunemente contra el Jefe del Estado. No actuaste por interés egoísta, según te repites ahora" (Uribe 198). Once again, Velázquez makes it clear why he chose to be part of the murder of Arroyo. Interestingly, in this same text, Velázquez makes a reference to his suicide note, stating the following: "Preferiste redactar, hace unos minutos, una nota despasionada. Unas cuantas frases impersonales para dejar constancia de que asumes la plena responsabilidad por tus actos" (Uribe 199). This reference to his first note emphasizes the multiple points of view within the text as well as a significant difference in Uribe's re-writing and re-imagining of this historical episode.

At the end of this suspenseful journey, the reader, learns that all of the suspects in Arroyo's murder cannot be sentenced, since they did not take part of any crime because all they did the night of Arroyo's murder was follow orders. Although Arroyo is stabbed to death, the jury decides that he to cannot be tried for attempt to murder because like all of the other Mexican men on that 16 of September all they did was follow orders. The most

enigmatic aspect of the text is that all of the characters are not found guilty because they had just been following orders. Thus, no one is held accountable for his or her criminal actions and all of the men have impunity. Near the end of the novel a character named Álvaro reveals that he had been given the order to stop Arnulfo Arroyo from murdering the dictator, which demonstrates that an unknown presence from "the top" was aware of Arroyo's actions the day of the attempt. Once the novel concludes the reader is left with the eerie sensation that in Uribe's re-imagining of this attempt everything had been mapped and planned out by one man; which appears to be Porfirio Díaz.

Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* demonstrates the impact and power Porfirio Díaz had as a dictator while he dominated and controlled México. Díaz's power is much more apparent in this novel in comparison to his literary biography because here the characters are a mere piece in a game of chess that are moved around by one man who is never directly present in their life. In the novel, the reader is aware of the existence of Díaz's omniscient power because at the end the reader discovers that all of the characters had been following orders. Following this mode of speculation, what could have been the possible reason for

Díaz to plan an attempt against himself on one of the most celebrated days in México?

The muddled answer lies in Federico Gamboa's *Mi diario* and Álvaro Uribe's *Expediente del atentado*. Both *fin de siècle* writers utilize the only statement Porfirio Díaz made moments after Arnulfo Arroyo's attempt to murder him. The famous line from the Mexican dictator states: "¡A este hombre, sólo la ley puede tocarlo!" This statement made by the dictator would lead any person to believe that Díaz was a fair and just man who believed in the principals of law since only the law was the only thing able to "touch" Arroyo. For the thousands of Mexicans who witnessed this leader that did not encourage force as a form of punishment against the man who attempted to murder him, but rather use law as the vehicle to decide Arroyo's fate was an incredible accomplishment. Gamboa's diary not only presents this moment, but also highlights Díaz's triumph and popularity. In addition Gamboa's version of this episode provides a description of Díaz's reaction. Gamboa first makes it clear to the reader how the officers protecting Diaz reacted to Arroyo's attack:

En seguida, los oficiales del estado mayor sujetaron al agresor, y cuando alguno de ellos

trataba de desnudar la espada para ultimar sin duda al delincuente, tuvo el general Díaz un altísimo rasgo de valor personal y de conciencia de su puesto: impidió el inmediato y merecido castigo con ademán sobrio y estas palabras memorables, que mucho lo honran: ‘-i A este hombre, sólo la ley puede tocarlo! (Gamboa 30).

Álvaro Uribe’s narrator-character F.G. retells this same scene to Mexican readers for the first time in the twenty first century. Clearly, the narrator-character F.G. articulates the episode in the same manner that Gamboa first presented it to the Mexican public. This comparison demonstrates Uribe’s another explicit act of “copy and paste” of Gamboa’s writing:

Todo sucedió instantáneamente. Arroyo, inadvertido, rompió la valla de soldados a la entrada de la Alameda y con rapidez incontrastable se echó encima del Señor General Porfirio Díaz, a quien golpeó en la nuca con los puños. En seguida, varios oficiales del Estado Mayor sujetaron al agresor, y cuando alguno de ellos desnudó la espada y otro amartilló el revólver, para ultimar sin duda al delincuente,

el Jefe de la Nación tuvo un altísimo rasgo de valor personal y de conciencia de su puesto: impidió el inmediato y merecido castigo de su ofensor con un ademán sobrio y estas palabras memorables, que mucho lo honran: -¡A este hombre sólo la ley puede tocarlo! (Uribe 38).

According to Gamboa, after the attempt to murder Díaz, México City "respira miedo por lo que pudo haber sucedido" (Gamboa 31) and continued to support the dictator, since after the incident Díaz was hailed as a martyr and hero. At that particular moment for the Mexican people, according to Gamboa, the concern was not that Díaz was still alive and in power, but rather what would have happened to México if the "president" had been assassinated. After the attempt Gamboa writes the following in *Mi Diario*:

Al regresar el presidente al Palacio, se empeñó en que no lo acompañara nadie en el coche en que montó, y cuando este coche desembocaba en las calles de San Francisco, por espontáneo movimiento el público aclamó al caudillo y de todos los balcones de las casas del trayecto, una lluvia de flores, que arrojaban manos femeninas y

blancas, bañó el carruaje y alfombró al adoquinado (Gamboa 30).

Clearly, Gamboa's writing appears to depict a man who is deeply loved and cared for by the people, since a shower of flowers poured over the horse carriage that carried him around the city. In this representation, Díaz is portrayed as a hero, although years later this will change since he will be forced to leave México.

The two accounts of this same episode presented by Gamboa and the narrator-character F.G. emphasize how the Mexican dictator's men made an effort to possibly use violence and force to punish Arroyo for his actions. Simultaneously, both highlight that Díaz assumed the role of a "just" leader of México in the presence of the people by stopping the men from acting violently. A striking subtle difference of both descriptions of the account is that Gamboa considered Díaz a General, and Uribe decided to honor Díaz with the title of Chief of the Nation.

Furthermore, the narrator-character F.G. in Uribe's novel elaborates and expands this incident much more, since in Gamboa's writing this episode quickly fades into the background. The narrator-character F.G. throughout the novel presents a series of journal entries following

Gamboa's writing, but one of the main differences is that in the character-narrator's entries a series of questions are presented. The questions made by the narrator-character F.G perhaps would have never been made by Federico Gamboa since he was too closely affiliated with Porfirio Diaz. The narrator-character F.G, states:

¡Cuánto no habría dado yo por asomarme a los interiores psicológicos del general Porfirio Díaz en los momentos que siguieron al atentado! ¿A costa de qué esfuerzo habrá dominado la indignación y la ira que seguramente le provocó el hecho? ¿Qué pensaría en el acto? ¿Qué habrá pensado después? ¿Qué estará pensando ahora que su presunto ejecutor ha sido ejecutado? Su espíritu guerrero antaño, del que nunca ha de poder despojarse por más que hoy dormite en las profundidades de su individuo; su espíritu de ayer, valeroso y militarizado, hecho a toda clase de peligros, que se ha enfrentado con la muerte más de una vez, ¿qué sentirá con la brutal agresión? (Uribe 123).

In this passage, the narrator-character F.G. speculates what the dictator's thought process was when the attempt

occurred, as well as his thoughts after Arroyo's death. Moreover, this narrator-character makes a reference that evokes Díaz's past as a soldier before he was elected as the president of México, and in doing so he addresses the near-death experiences Díaz's must have faced in battles, and wonders if the attempt comes close to any of those from the past. In this passage, it is engaging to observe how the narrator juxtaposes two very different incarnations of Díaz; first, the young brave soldier who fought for México and then the "civilized" president who stopped his men from killing or hurting the man who tried to murder him. The paradoxical aspect of this is that Arroyo is murdered the same night he is in jail. Thus, the words Díaz states become questionable because Arroyo, once out of the public space is murdered.

The reader also learns that the narrator-character F.G. is not just speculating what Porfirio Díaz's thought process was before the attempt or after Arroyo's death. In his diary, the narrator-character F.G. ponders and questions the possible motives behind Arnulfo Arroyo's attempt. He states the following:

¿Habr  actuado solo?  Lo mov a entonces su demencia  tica, su frustraci n por quedarse al

margen de los beneficios que dispensa el gobierno? ¿O tuvo acaso cómplices en su infamia? Y si así fue, ¿quién o quiénes lo auxiliaron? Quiénes, incluso, lo utilizaron para fines tan siniestros que apenas si me permito imaginarlos? Y ya entrando al territorio de la pura especulación, ¿por qué murió? ¿Lo mató una turba vengativa e indignada, como sugiere la prensa? ¿O es posible que detrás de todo esto haya, Dios no lo quiera, una conjuración (Uribe 124).

The character-narrator's "thought process" for the first time poses questions that the real Federico Gamboa would never have asked due to his association with Porfirio Diaz.

In Uribe's novel, the narrator-character begins to question why Arroyo did it, and wonders if he did it because he was not benefiting from the porfiriato as were Gamboa and Velázquez. The progression of this brief, "thought process" F.G. allows himself to enter a space of mere "speculation", and here he wonders why Arroyo died. He asks himself if the enraged crowd murdered him as the media suggests or if it was a conspiracy. The transgression of this statement is that Uribe first presents a novel in which the narrator-character F.G. is presented as an

extension of the porfiriato, since his literary biography suggests that Gamboa's journal is a *voice-over* of Díaz's consciousness. Through the appropriation of Gamboa's text, in the form of "copy and paste" Uribe re-explores the past of this episode in Mexican history. He does this only to subvert it the moment he begins to question it through the narrator-character F.G. In the novel, the narrator-character F.G. speculates that Arroyo's death could have been a conspiracy.

Ironically, the fifteen voices throughout the text muddle the possibility of one absolute answer, since every voice offers a different perspective. Thus, it may seem that in fact it was all a conspiracy since pages later in the novel, Velázquez, before committing suicide, leaves these words behind as part of his suicide note:

Protesto enérgicamente contra la sospecha de que la acción oficial de altos y para mí muy armados funcionarios del Gobierno haya tenido la menor injerencia en mi decisión. Creí hacer bien al organizar un estallido de indignación popular, dando así un escarmiento inolvidable para poner al abrigo de todo atentado la vida del Señor Presidente de la República (Uribe 178).

This statement left behind by Velázquez makes it clear that his decision to have Arroyo killed does not come from a higher government official. Moreover, this statement in conjunction to the previous one –inclusion of the narrator-character F.G. speculative thoughts– demonstrates that rather than presenting a novel that “ties all the loose ends” Uribe intends to provide and propose more enigmas and questions, since the distinct voices when placed along one another, appear to be in a constant state of contradiction. In part Uribe achieves this through the appropriation of Gamboa’s texts.

Uribe’s act of appropriation and re-writing Gamboa’s text does not end with the questioning of F.G. If the reader follows the thread of the diary written by narrator-character F.G. alludes to the same novel the reader holds. The narrator-character F.G. states the following about *Expediente del atentado*, which he considers to be a dossier:

Procedo a abrir desde luego, y en el más estricto secreto, un expediente extraoficial con las noticias, rumores, comentarios, conjeturas, divagaciones y hasta fantasías que deriven del atentado. Quién quita y tenga yo entre manos el

asunto de una novela-*reportaje*, de una ficción basada en hechos comprobables, al estilo de mi admirado maestro Zola. Ya la crítica me ha tachado de ser, como él, un *pornógrafo*. ¿Seré capaz de convertirme ahora, también a su imagen y semejanza, en un acusador (Uribe 124).

In this passage, the narrator-character F.G. is not only making a reference to the texts the reader holds, but he is also explaining its content, and perhaps providing a possible name or title for this type of narrative, since it seems to depart from historical narrative because he is calling it a *novela-reportaje*. Again, the narrator-character F.G. is making a transgression on Federico Gamboa's text. Here the narrator-character F.G. makes it clear that this new fiction is part of a style that is meant to question and accuse. This is something that Gamboa would have never done in *Mi diario* due to this close affiliation to the porfiriato.

Uribe's re-appropriation of Federico Gamboa's text also makes it clear that after the incident with Arnulfo Arroyo and the series of deaths that precede it, he shifts away from the plot to discuss the recent narrative F.G. had been working. The text in Gamboa's diary is the short

collection of narratives, *Del natural* (1888), which strongly resembles the narrative of the French naturalist Emilie Zola. For Álvaro Uribe the significance of that work is that they are "stories that deliberately straddle the limits of historical chronicle in keeping with the empirical tradition of naturalism, and that probably mark the beginning of modern Mexican narrative" (Uribe xv). According to Uribe, Gamboa is one of the first writers to present narrative during the first stages of modern narrative.

Uribe knows that Gamboa had an affinity for Zola's work and in *Expediente del atentado* the narrator-character F.G. imitates Zola's narrative style. Following the form of Gamboa's diary, the narrator-character F.G. is not only compiling information about the attempt, but he is also discussing his own narrative. Gamboa's journal, immediately after the episode of the attempt to murder Díaz, moves onto his narrative plans. Uribe's novel follows that format, since the narrator-character F.G. begins to discuss his next work of fiction.

In Uribe's re-examination the narrator-character F.G. attempts to propel his writing to a place that Gamboa never dared to during his time. In the novel, the narrator-

character F.G. who appears to be Gamboa himself, makes it clear that after being considered shocking because of the "pornographic" nature of his novel *Santa* wonders if he too like Zola will become an a "accuser". Meaning that F.G. at the end of his compilation of documents and facts considers that behind Arroyo's death there seems to be a conspiracy. Near the end of the novel the narrator-character arrives to the following realization:

El expediente que abrí hace ya cerca de un mes, para consignar las noticias y especulaciones relativas al atentado contra el Jefe de la Nación, se abulta día tras día. Apenas anoche, al releer los documentos que he reunido y pergeñado en estas cuatro semanas, me pareció vislumbrar los contornos de un relato, mitad novela y mitad pesquisa periodística y aun policial, acaso no indigno de mis maestros naturalistas... Yo quisiera retratar un crimen más o menos fallido y más o menos imaginario; no, Dios me libre, denunciar con mi pluma una impensable conspiración. ¿a dónde iría yo a parar si acusara a los de arriba? (Uribe 251).

Furthermore, the narrator-character F.G in Uribe's novel transgresses the actions of the real Gamboa, in this fictional México. The most perplexing aspect of F.G.s thought process is that the possible texts he is compiling transform from possibly a *novela-reportaje* to a hybrid novel. Thus, this text is half novel and half journalistic investigation, yet still *policial*, and still in the vain of the French Naturalists writers. Here once again, although the novel is completely centered on one historical episode it is presented in the form of a modern narrative to expresses the past.

Ultimately, following the logic of the novel the narrative structure emerges from the narrator-character F.G.'s investigation, since he appears to have found documents or gathered testimonies that incriminate or point in the direction of higher government officials involved in the death of Arroyo. The narrator-character F.G knowing this fears what can happen to him if he does not continue to write in favor of the men in power, and consequently this leads to him choosing not to make publish the dossier.

Paradoxically, in this context the reader of this novel is aware of these speculations since F.G.'s dossier is same text the reader holds. The narrator-character F.G.

concludes the novel with the following line: "Hoy tomé las tres carpetas de que consta el expediente del atentado y las sepulté para siempre en un baúl de doble cerrojo al que nadie tiene acceso más que yo" (Uribe 323). Meaning that these documents full of possible answers and speculations of a conspiracy are locked away, and paradoxically appear to be what the reader holds in his hands.

Rather than providing definitive answers, *Expediente del atentado* demonstrates to new readers that many questions still remain. This novel presents the omnipresent power that loomed over México during this time, since the entire attempt to murder Díaz appears to have been plotted by someone else beside Arnulfo Arroyo. Uribe's interest is to revisit this particular episode in México right before the two hundred year celebration after the Mexican Independence. Uribe's decision to absorb Federico Gamboa's journal entries into his own narrative, while using historical characters as part of the plot makes the novel appear to be chaotic. Therefore, in doing all this Uribe consciously blurs the lines between narrative and history, as this novel seems to incorporate and base its plot on history.

Conclusion

In *Pobre patria mía* and *Expediente del atentado* Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe have created historical narratives that center around the same historical time and both present Porfirio Díaz as a fictionalized character, and both focus on different episodes from Díaz's dictatorship. The narrative structure of both novels is completely different, since Uribe's text is composed of an array of voices and texts. Palou's *Pobre patria mía* is comprised of only one voice, Porfirio Díaz. These two writers have re-contextualized history by incorporating it into their fiction, and in doing so they question the historical past of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial regime.

Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's novel exhibit Seymour Menton's six characteristics of his conceptualization of the New Historical Narrative. Pedro Ángel Palou's *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* contains three of the six characteristics of the New Historical Novel. Palou's novel contains intertextuality, a famous historical figure as the main character, as well as some moments of exaggeration. In Álvaro Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* one finds five of the six characteristics: metafiction, intertextuality, conscious distortion of

history, famous historical figures, and it emphasizes the impossibility of ascertaining a truth in history.

In addition, both novels from present Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic, which for Menton it is, one of the six characteristics. Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe's novels are in dialogue with previous texts. Uribe's novel is not only in contact with Federico Gamboa's diary, but he is also aware of his own biographical research previously written on Gamboa. The structure of the text informs the reader that newspaper clippings, letters, rumors, and numerous voices contribute to the heteroglossia present in the text. On the other hand, Palou's novel *Pobre patria mía* only presents the voice of one man. Palou's novel seems to be in direct communication with Diaz's *Memorias*, although he attempts to be much more subtle of this appropriation as the narrative attempts to mimic the voice and thought process found in dictator's text.

The narrative structure of the two novels, *Expediente del atentado* and *Pobre patria mía* exemplify and demonstrate some of the synoptic concepts that White explains in *Metahistory*. Álvaro Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* follows the emplotment of a satire that is expressed with a satirical trope and a contextualist argument. On the other

hand, Pedro Ángel Palou's *Pobre patria mía* follows, the emplotment of a tragedy through a metonymical trope and with a mechanistic argument. Both texts conclude that the story they narrate centers around the idea of the eternal return. Additionally, Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe incorporate the historical facts from their research. Their ability to re-create a past by displacing the previous space and presenting it in a new context opens up a space to new ways to understand the thirty-four years of the *porfiriato*.

Moreover, Palou and Uribe's historical efforts are emphasized in Jorge Volpi's satirical and polemical critical essay, "El fin de la narrativa latinoamericana" (2004). In this text, Volpi reflects the common symptom or anxiety of the writers of this generation: Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe demonstrate a need to destroy narrative in order to re-create new forms of it and as a result new articulations of the past.

Interestingly enough, the efforts and concerns of these writers strongly resemble the apprehensions of nineteenth century *fin de siècle* writers in México. One important question and concern in his chapter is what does it mean to be a Latin-American writer or a Mexican writer?

For Jorge Volpi and his contemporaries an important question becomes: "Pues, ¿qué significa a fin de cuentas ser latinoamericano a principios del siglo XXI? Y, ¿qué significa ser un escritor latinoamericano a principios del siglo XXI?" (Volpi 41). Although in this polemical and satirical article Volpi appears to provide a definite answer, suggesting that Latin-American identity cannot be easily defined due to the different forms of communication, and this supposedly facilitates Mexicans coming into contact with other cultures and vice-verse.¹⁰⁰ For him, this constant movement is also reflected in narrative since it too cannot be easily defined. Furthermore, Volpi argues that narrative in the twenty-first century departs from what was written before, although Palou and Uribe's work suggest the opposite. He states:

La nostalgia resulta pueril: la preservación se realiza en los museos y en los criaderos de especies en extinción, no en las calles ni, por supuesto, en la cultura viva. Poco a poco la idea de ser un escritor mexicano, argentino, ecuatoriano o salvadoreño se convertirá en un mero dato anecdótico en la solapa de los libros.

Pero no hay por que llorar por las épocas pasadas: en la historia de la literatura siempre ha ocurrido lo mismo. Quizás la nacionalidad de un autor revele claves sobre su obra, pero ello no indica o al menos no tiene porque indicar que ese escritor está fatalmente condenado a hablar de su entorno, de los problemas y referentes de su localidad, o incluso de si mismo. La ficción literaria no conoce fronteras: si ello puede ser visto como un triunfo de la globalización y del mercado es porque no comprende en absoluto la naturaleza de la literatura (Volpi 41).

Jorge Volpi attempts to ensure new readers that the Latin-American writer of the twenty-first century will not be limited to his/her country of origin, since technology has now made information from other cultures much more accessible.

Nevertheless, Volpi's statement is questionable since year's later Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe published novels that address specifically México 's past. Inevitably, these novels remind the reader where these writers are from since the subject matter centers around specific historical moments or people from México. For

Volpi, it appears that fiction that addresses the concerns of the nation or explores a national identity is unable to present new forms of language and narrative. Volpi refuses to recognize that it is possible for Latin-American writers to write about national concerns while exploring new forms of expression through language.

Perhaps the most assertive aspect of Volpi's article in conjunction to Palou and Uribe's historical novels is the last line. He states:

La gran tarea de los escritores de America Latina de la primera mitad del siglo XXI consiste justamente en completar éste necesario y vital asesinato. Porque la literatura latinoamericana solo continuara' existiendo como una tradición literaria viva y poderosa si cada escritor latinoamericano se empeña en destruirla y reconstruirla día tras día (Volpi 42).

Palou and Uribe go beyond this need to destroy and reconstruct Latin-American literature, since in this process they destroy and reconstruct one of the most enigmatic times the *porfiriato*. Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe both destroy one aspect of the *porfiriato* in their historical narratives. Thus, the task for these

Mexican writers in the twenty-first century is to undertake, confront, or explore an episode from México 's past by absorbing it into their narrative and to revindicate it in the present with new meaning. In this case, dictator Porfirio Díaz becomes the target in Palou and Uribe's re-exploration and in this process both novelists re-present this controversial man in two distinct ways. Palou attempts to humanize Díaz, asking the reader to re-vindicate him back into history as more than just the evil tyrant that brought poverty to México. Uribe's text presents Díaz as a powerful omniscient presence. With these re-creations and re-appropriations of historical texts, new spaces emerge from previous historical articulations.

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Chapter 3

Prostitution and Modernity in Cristina Rivera Garza, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Federico Gamboa's Texts

Introduction

The period known as the porfiriato (1876–1910) in México is generally understood as a turbulent moment in history. The porfiriato marks the 34-year dictatorship of General José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz, who is also credited with México's long process of modernization. In México City, Porfirio Díaz established many basic socio-economic mechanisms under the slogan: "Order, Peace and Progress," which consequently pushed the poor out of the city and into its peripheries. Díaz modeled his regime after that of fin de siècle France, in an attempt to rid México of the Spanish monarchical form of government, and the under classes who contributed to this development were largely ignored in the process.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the representation of *fin de siècle* Mexican history and society in narrative fiction. I examine the historiography and literary intertextuality of *Por donde se sube al cielo*

(1884) by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, as well as *Santa* (1903) by Federico Gamboa, and how they intersect with the recent novel, *Nadie me verá llorar* (1999) by Cristina Rivera Garza. In doing so, I will question how Rivera Garza appropriates history and rewrites French *fin de siècle* literary genres.

In *Nadie me verá llorar* the protagonist, Matilda Burgos, represents the "unworthy" citizen, while the history of the *porfiriato* and the Mexican Revolution are (dis)placed within the margins of the plot. Critics such as Brian L. Price have shown that Rivera Garza writes against the grain of the contemporary Mexican historical novel, focusing on feminine rather than masculine spaces.¹⁰¹ I intend to show that, like the current Mexican government and other novelists such as Pedro Ángel Palou and Álvaro Uribe, Cristina Rivera Garza is also turning the past into a malleable material and fictionalizing her desired imagined community. Rivera Garza re-examines history not from the perspective of official government history or canonical writers of the *porfiriato*, but from the point of

¹⁰¹ Price, Brian L. "Cristina Rivera Garza en las orillas de la historia." *Cristina Rivera Garza: Ningún crítico cuenta esto--*. Ed. Oswaldo Estrada. México, D.F.: Ediciones Eon, 2010. 111-33. Print.

view of the people who remained on the fringes of society, the citizens who suffered under the modernization regime of Porfirio Díaz.

The Good Citizen of the *Porfiriato*: Two texts by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera

The words of the Mexican *modernista* Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera are part of the title of Cristina Rivera Garza's doctoral dissertation, "The Masters of the Streets: Bodies, Power, and Modernity in México, 1867-1930."¹⁰² Rivera Garza appropriates Gutiérrez Nájera's words by utilizing them as the epigraph for this doctoral dissertation: "They deprive us of our freedom, they intercept us in the streets, they examine us...we are all slaves of the masters of the streets" (#). In this chronicle, Gutiérrez Nájera compares people to empty lots in the city because the government had no jurisdiction over them. Many of these people were impoverished indigenous groups or *mestizos* who had been displaced by modernity, walking around the city in their

¹⁰² The term *modernista* in Latin America refers to the literary movement from 1888 to 1910. Ruben Dario exemplifies the technique and intentions of this group; renovate language. Amado Nervo and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera belong to the first wave of *modernistas*.

enaguas (underwear), begging the rich for money. Gutiérrez Nájera himself embodied the good citizen of the *porfiriato*, who as a son of the upper class and admirer of French culture, felt threatened by the underclasses who roamed the city.

In both her doctoral dissertation and later in her novel, Rivera Garza demonstrates the rich become the true masters of the streets through the power of their policies and institutions over the bodies of the poor, including prostitutes and the insane.¹⁰³ However, Gutiérrez Nájera saw himself as someone who cared for marginalized people. He did this in the Mexican newspaper *El noticioso* through his

¹⁰³ Cristina Rivera Garza's doctoral dissertation, "The Masters of the Streets: Bodies, Power, and Modernity in México, 1867-1930" focuses the policies and institutions the Mexican government created to address the bodies of the insane, poor, and prostitutes. She traces the history of prisons, hospitals, and insane asylum in Mexico. Furthermore, her research explores. How insanity is understood and treated in Mexico, how prostitution was justified in Mexico; how prostitutes were (mis)treated by the Sanitary Agency, and how prostitutes and patients articulated their existence. Rivera Garza incorporates images of the patients from the insane asylum *La Castañeda*, and explains the mistreatment, pain, and suffering they had to endure at a time when Mexico was attempting to be modern. The significance of this historical research is that it is the foundation of her later novel *Nadie me verá llorar* since Matilda the main character is a patient in *Hospital Morelos* and *La Castañeda* and imbedded within the fabric of the narrative is the history of the marginalized, pained bodies of Mexicans at the end of the nineteenth century.

serial novel *Por donde se sube al cielo* and his chronicle, "Los hijos de esas señoras." He condemned prostitutes because, like the poor, they were also masters of the streets. Gutiérrez Nájera represents the patriarchal tradition of writers that Rivera Garza questions in her novel. While both Gutiérrez Nájera and Rivera Garza wrote about the enigmatic figure of the prostitute, they do so in very different ways.

In *Por donde se sube al cielo*, Gutiérrez Nájera embodies the figure of the prostitute and her children. During the *porfiriato* it was widely believed that such characters could disturb peace, order, and morality. Nevertheless, Gutiérrez Nájera's chronicle "Los hijos de esas señoras" and novel *Por donde se sube al cielo* attempted to provide a solution and reintegration of these individuals left on the fringes of society.¹⁰⁴ The attempt to redeem them was evident in his novel. For example, Verónica Edith González Cantú points out that the love story of the prostitute actress Magda and the good man from the country Raul is the perfect excuse for the writer to uncover the

¹⁰⁴ Gutiérrez Nájera makes it clear in his chronicle "Los hijos de esas señoras" that he has a solution for the problems of prostitution and orphans in Mexico City.

reality of these children.¹⁰⁵ In this novel, the narrator demonstrates the danger of not integrating abandoned children back into society. Magda, a prostitute from Paris, is comparable to the abandoned children of the city. She represents the abandoned girl from the city that as a result of the surrounding environment enters prostitution.

The omniscient narrator in *Por donde se sube el cielo* presents the story of Magda who, from a very young age loses her mother due to illness, and her alcoholic father deserts the family. As a young girl she is in a convent, but abandons it to become an actress and a prostitute. The story unfolds in Paris and in the countryside. Magda escapes with her lover Carlos Provot to a hotel in the countryside near the ocean, and it is here where she meets the love of her life, Raul. Clearly, the narrator demonstrates how Magda and Raul will never be together, since his mother does not approve of her urban and modern ways; and Magda's lover, Carlos, punishes her for loving Raul. Consequently, Magda –heartbroken– leaves the

¹⁰⁵ González Cantú, Verónica Edith. "Gutiérrez Nájera Propone Un Camino Al Cielo." *Coordinación De Difusión Cultural UNAM, Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México, Centro Cultural Universitario*. Difusión Cultural UNAM, 22 Feb. 2011. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.cultura.unam.mx/?tp=articulo>>.

countryside and, once in Paris, the guilt of being a prostitute who will never be able to love overcomes her. Magda despises all of the material objects she was able to acquire as a prostitute, since for her the expensive furniture and jewelry are a reminder of her profession. Finally, the narrator suggests that Magda could have avoided this circumstance if she had remained in the convent, where she would have learned how to use the gold thimble that she still owns.

In Chapter Five, "Monólogo de Magda," the narrator enters the thoughts of the protagonist, Magda, only to discover that she fears to be disregarded and not loved by Raul, who does not know she is a prostitute. "Magda lloraba mordiendo sus enormes trenzas rubias, desgarrando con las inquietas manos el pañuelo. ¿Qué iba a hacer? En ese instante su alma podía ser comparada al niño huérfano que la madre suicida abandonó en la plaza única."¹⁰⁶ Here the link between the novel and chronicle directed to the

¹⁰⁶ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Magda cried biting her enormous blonde braids, as her impatient hands tore up the handkerchief. What was she going to do? In that instant her soul could be compared to the orphan child that the suicidal mother abandoned at the plaza" (Gutiérrez Nájera 75).

Governor of the District is evident.¹⁰⁷ The concern for social and moral issues is present in Gutiérrez Nájera's work, contrary to the standard cliché about *modernista* writers. E. Anderson Imbert clarifies: "La pasión formalista los llevó al esteticismo, y éste es el aspecto que más han estudiado los críticos; pero, con la misma voluntad de formas nuevas, los jóvenes hispanoamericanos pusieron el acento en la naturaleza y la sociedad americanas." (399) Furthermore, Belem Clark de Lara states that Gutiérrez Nájera did not evade his reality because he searched for a union between ethics and aesthetics by combining good and beauty, and turning it into a truth.¹⁰⁸ Gutiérrez Nájera questions what the role of the government should be in the life of innocent citizens who are not protected by their parents, and this concern becomes his truth, which leads him to become the voice of the children who do not have a voice in society.

¹⁰⁷ *Por donde se sube al cielo* and "Los hijos de esas señoras" were both published for the same readership since both were printed the same year (1882) and in the same newspaper, *El noticioso*.

¹⁰⁸ De Lara, Belem Clark. "Ascensión en la visión del mundo de Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera." *CentroVirtual Cervantes*: 46-56. Print.

The issue at hand is first presented in the chronicle and is later represented in the form of narrative through the character of Magda. In the moralizing chronicle "Los hijos de esas señoras" Gutiérrez Nájera despairingly condemns the behavior of the prostitute, affirming that they are women who should not procreate. Simultaneously, he demands that the state be responsible for the education of all orphans and children of prostitutes, claiming it is the responsibility of the government. Clearly, Gutiérrez Nájera sees himself as a good citizen whose responsibility is to exercise his rights over women. He demands the following: "Pero —una vez nacidos— esos pequeños seres inofensivos é indefensos que nada han hecho para nacer ni han cometido crimen de ninguna clase para ser penados con una sentencia de vida, caen bajo la acción de la sociedad que tiene el deber estricto de protegerlos y ampararlos."¹⁰⁹ He makes this request to the government so these children are recognized as citizens, and so they can be reintegrated into society through education. Gutiérrez Nájera firmly believed that if

¹⁰⁹ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "But —once born— those small harmless and defenseless beings who have done nothing to be born nor have they committed a crime whatsoever to be convicted to a life sentence, they fall under the jurisdiction of society that has the strict duty to shelter and protect them" (Gutiérrez Nájera 39).

the government did not educate the children, then this would lead to their "degeneration". He rationalized and explained this logic by blaming the mothers of these children for the immorality in their life, for it is the mothers who supposedly decided to live in that state, but their children did not. Following Gutiérrez Nájera's logic, the children could not be blamed because according to him they were raised among evil. In his chronicle "Los hijos de esas señoras" Gutiérrez Nájera suggests and explains this opinion through the following hypothetical situation in which he speaks as a young girl who has done wrong:

Así crecí, como las yerbas crecen en el campo, tomando su perfume ó veneno del terreno en que enredan sus raíces. No me inculcaron el amor saludable del trabajo: no sabía hacer nada; no tenía voluntad ni pensamiento. ¿Todo por qué? ¿Cuál era mi delito? ¿A quién pude ofender tan despiadadamente para que mereciera tal castigo? A nadie, ciertamente. Pues bien: ¿por qué exigís en mi sentimientos morales? ¿Por qué me condenáis? Lanzad á un hombre desde lo alto de una torre y mandadle en seguida que no caiga. Poned un grande ejército dentro de las murallas de una ciudad que

está apestada por el cólera, prohibidle que se contagie y fusilad á los que no obedezcan.— Si la acusada hablara de este modo, no sé si yo podría, en consecuencia, condenarla.¹¹⁰

In this fragment this young female narrator speaks of and for others who were on the margins of Mexican society. He used the ideas of Positivism to defend orphans and children of prostitutes, and since these youths were a product of an inherited condition, they could not be blamed because they were a mere product of their environment and, according to the formula, if they remain in it they would be corrupted and destroyed by it. Gutiérrez Nájeras' solution lies in the government's hands whose responsibility it is to remove these children from their wretched condition, and to avoid

¹¹⁰ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "This is how I was born, like the weeds that grow in the country, taking the perfume or poison from the land in which their roots tangle. A healthy love for work was not instilled in me: I did not know how to do anything; I did not have will nor thought. Why? What was my crime? Who could have I mercilessly offended to deserve such punishment? No one, certainly. Well then: Why do you expect moral emotions? Why do you condemn me? Throw a man from the highest point of a tower and immediately after order him not to fall. Place a large army within the walls of an infected city with cholera, prohibit him to be infected, and shoot all those who do not obey. —If the accused spoke in this manner, then I do not know if I could, consequently, condemn her" (Gutiérrez Nájera 42).

their degeneration, which in return would help develop the nation and its citizens.

Similarly, Gutiérrez Nájera showcases the same concerns in other parts of *Por donde se sube al cielo*. In this novel, the reader witnesses the decadence of a young and beautiful Parisian named Magda. The protagonist desires to be a decent and honorable woman, but to accomplish this she must marry Raul. Unfortunately for her, the narrator makes it clear that she never learned how to love, pray or be moral, and due to these circumstances she will never be able to attain love. The narrator elaborates: "Magda, pues, vivía indefensa. Las inclinaciones heredadas y las costumbres contraídas la empujaban al abismo."¹¹¹ She was not religious because her parents were never around. Her father was an alcoholic who left, and her mother died at a young age, leaving her in the city of México to grow up on her own.

It is in the country and not in the city of Paris where Magda finds love. She leaves the city with Carlos Provot, one of her many lovers. In the country Monsieur

¹¹¹ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Magda, well, lived defenselessly. The hereditary inclinations and the customs she contracted pushed her into the abyss" (Gutiérrez Nájera 23).

Durand, the owner of the hotel, believes Carlos Provot is Magda's uncle, since he is much older than her. It is within this space –next to the sea– where she falls in love with Raul, who is described as a good and decent man from the province. Soon after, they begin a courtship. The secret relationship between Raul and Magda does not last very long since his mother, who viewed her as an example of the corrupted city women, disapproves. Magda, in fact, represents the polar opposite of the mothers' ideal women for him: Magda smokes, drinks and wears copious make up. This behavior is not appropriate for a decent woman, according to Raul's mother.

Another reason the romance does not last is that Carlos Provot's jealousy and fury stops Magda from seeing Raul. He becomes very enraged and violent because to him Magda is neither an equal nor a respectable woman, but is rather an object that belongs to him:

Hoy, aún eres mía, me perteneces como una cosa que he comprado. Puedo escupirte, pisotearte, arañar ese cutis y estrujar los encajes de tu bata. ¿Quieres ser libre? ¡Págame! Si yo te debo, ¡toma! Provot, al decir esto hundía una mano en

los cabellos de Magda, enmarañándolos, mientras,
con la otra, le apedreaba la cara con monedas.¹¹²

Within this misogynistic logic of the text, Magda is treated accordingly, since indecent women lack moral values. Thus, Provot believes he has the authority to treat her as a piece of merchandise and as an object, which he can abuse and mistreat, since it was permissible to beat, and even stone, prostitutes with coins. The narrator never exhibited any sympathy toward Magda; on the contrary, she was always judged. Her (mis)treatment was rationalized as part of the worldview in which women who are not decent deserved to be harmed.

After being abused by Carlos Provot, Magda faces the rejection of Raul's family and her own, since she feels unworthy. The narrator indicates: "Magda estaba en más triste condición que el niño huérfano a quien todos

¹¹² I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Today, you are still mine; you belong to me like a thing that I have purchased. I can spit on you, step on you, scratch your skin, and crumble the lace of your robe. You want to be free? Pay me! If I owe you, here! Provot by saying this sunk one hand in Magda's hair, tangling it, while, with the other, stoning her with coins" (Gutiérrez Nájera 60).

abandonan."¹¹³ Later the narrator develops this simile further: "Magda era el niño abandonado: pero en la cuna, los pálidos vampiros le mordían la nuca, chupando su roja sangre; los genios malos le clavaban sus patas de alfiler en las pupilas..."¹¹⁴ It is at this point when Magda embodies the young girl in the chronicle who without protection from the government will only grow up to be destroyed by the hostile and corrupt environment that surrounds her.

Paradoxically, it is in this same space where she will suffer the condemnation of society; the narrator uses anthropomorphism. For example: "Y el reloj tenía razón. Era un acusador, era un testigo. Aquellos muebles habían sido comprados a precio de la honra."¹¹⁵ At this time her guilt goes beyond her own internalization of the social codes of morality during the *porfiriato*, since the objects

¹¹³ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Magda was in a much sadder condition than the orphan child who is abandoned by everyone" (Gutiérrez Nájera 97).

¹¹⁴ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Magda was the abandoned child: but in the crib, the pale vampires bit her nape, sucking her red blood; the evil genies stabbed their pins and needles in her pupils" (Gutiérrez Nájera 98).

¹¹⁵ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "And the clock was right. It was an accuser, it was a witness. Those pieces of furniture have been purchased at the cost of her honor" (Gutiérrez Nájera 129).

surrounding her have become an extension of that same apparatus that continues to judge and condemn her for having sold her honor.

Gutiérrez Nájera utilizes the same literary device of anthropomorphism to present the abysmal state of Magda when the narrator describes her jewelry box. Under all of the jewelry there is one precious object that provides the solution to her undomesticated behavior:

Y Magda abría los cofres de sus joyas, ya no para contarlas como antes ni para verse en la plata bruñida de la tapa, sino para sentir en la conciencia las mordeduras del remordimiento. Los diamantes despedían rayos de sus pupilas indignadas y los rubíes semejabán gotas de sangre. El collar de perlas, enredado en su garganta, se iba cerrando como una sogá, y los hermosos brazaletes de oro, salpicados de brillantes, le apretaban las muñecas a manera de esposas. Sólo una joya honrada había dentro del cofre, y era un pequeño dedal de oro. Ese dedal de oro era un recuerdo del colegio. Estaba aún

limpio e intacto: como que Magda no había vuelto a usarlo.¹¹⁶

The solution to her urban and modern ways would have been the tiny gold thimble, a device she would have learned how to use in school if she would have stayed. If Magda would have become "clean and intact" like the golden thimble, then she would have learned how to be an educated woman, who during the *porfiriato* meant knowing how to cook, clean, take care of the children and husband while having good faith.

What is presented as a solution for women can be seen as another form of imprisonment and domination because it entails being a submissive housewife. According to the logic of the *porfiriato*, if women were not honorable, then they would fall into the other side of the dichotomy. They

¹¹⁶ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "And Magda opened the jewelry box, not to count them like before neither to see herself on the polished silver top, but rather to feel the bites of remorse on her consciousness. The diamonds emitted rays from the outraged pupils, and the rubies resembled drops of blood. The pearl necklace, wrapped around her throat like a rope closing in, and the beautiful gold bracelets, splashed with diamonds, tightened her wrists like handcuffs. There was only honorable piece of jewelry in the box, and it was a small gold thimble. That thimble of gold was a memory of convent school. It was still clean and intact: as if Magda had never used it again" (Gutiérrez Nájera 130).

would be considered prostitutes or the type of women who merit no honor or respect, and function only as the object of desire for men of the porfiriato.

Ironically, the novel was misunderstood by the readers of the time. Verónica Edith González Cantú affirms that it was not received well since the themes and descriptions of the narrative did not reflect the Mexican reality of the porfiriato.¹¹⁷ Without a doubt if one displaces the novel into México City and not in Paris and the French names of the characters are changed to Spanish names, then it could very well be a novel about a Mexican prostitute/actress living in México City who visits the countryside. Without a doubt Gutiérrez Nájera was a *flâneur* who roamed *Avenida Paseo de la Reforma* and avidly attended plays in the city like his theater chronicles indicate. His novel and chronicle are a demonstration of his own exploration of México City and of his art, where questions of ethics, in conjunction with the processes of modernization, emerged.

¹¹⁷ González Cantú, Verónica Edith. "Gutiérrez Nájera propone un camino al cielo." *Coordinación de difusión cultural UNAM, Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México, Centro Cultural Universitario*. Difusión Cultural UNAM, 22 Feb. 2011. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.cultura.unam.mx/?tp=articulo>>.

Walter Benjamin believed that the multitude was the veil in which the *flâneur* found the phantasmagoric (a sequence of real dreams or imagined images) and it is he who was willing to decipher these images. For Benjamin, the definition of a *flâneur* is that of a stroller, someone who wanders the city, and for Benjamin he does it without any direction or course under the veil of anonymity, always in search of a truth. The *flâneur* is the man of the multitude not in the multitude and his attire is that of a bohemian. The uncertainty of his economic level and his political function contribute to his role as an observer who records the reality around him. Belem Clark de Lara considers Gutiérrez Nájera an example of the *flâneur* since with his innovative language, in a city that has not reached its modernity, the chronicler, the *flâneur*, the vagabond who imagines it and dreams it, narrates it; but since reality was different from his illusion, he becomes the best critic, and the man who searched to redeem his society.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ I have translated from Spanish to English in my text. The original is as follows: "Con novedoso lenguaje, en una ciudad que se sobreentiende no ha logrado ser moderna, el cronista, el *flâneur*, el vagabundo que lo imagina y la sueña, la narrará; pero como la realidad era diferente a su ilusión, se convirtió también en el crítico por excelencia, en el hombre que buscaría redimir a su sociedad" (Belem Clark de Lara 53).

Gutiérrez Nájera the painter of the porfiriato for Belem Clark is a man who dreamed of a multiple utopia where he imagined a Mexican society where redemption for women existed, socioeconomic progress continued, a humane materialistic society thrived, and created his own literature.¹¹⁹ It is precisely at this juncture when Gutiérrez Nájera becomes perplexed due to the enigmatic contradictions of his society and in doing so he sheds light upon the phantasmagoric aspect of the porfiriato city through the figures of the prostitute and orphans. Miguel Ángel Avilés Galán states that Gutiérrez Nájera's work: "es una muestra de la materialización de estas tensiones entre la sociedad, el arte, la modernización y el proyecto estético najeriano, que en conjunto constituyen al Modernismo."¹²⁰ It is through these prevailing tensions that

¹¹⁹ Pacheco, José Emilio. "Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera: El Sueño De Una Noche Porfiriana | Letras Libres." *Letras Libres - Cultura, Literatura, Poesía, Ensayo, Política, Crítica*. Editorial Vuelta, Feb. 2000. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.letraslibres.com/revista/convivio/manuel-gutierrez-najera-el-sueno-de-una-noche-porfiriana>>.

¹²⁰ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "It is an example of the materiality of the tensions within society, art, modernization, and the esthetical *najeriano* project, that as whole constitute *Modernismo*" (Belem Clark de Lara 291).

the work of the *modernista* writer creates complex and rich novels that were misunderstood during his time.

During this time period Gutiérrez Nájera represented the *modernista* writers who were in search of new ways of creating language, which would lead to new realities; to him this meant using the French model. But there were also realist-naturalist writers who wanted to capture the everyday realities of the Mexican people in the country using the Spanish model, which came from Emilia Pardo Bazán and Benito Pérez Galdós. In the chronicle "El arte y el materialismo," written by Gutiérrez Nájera, he criticizes the function and method of the realist-naturalist literature. He believes it is a form of prostitution of art, and a deifying of the work, which is precisely what he is combating and will continue to combat.¹²¹ Paradoxically, Gutiérrez Nájera's serial novel *Por donde se sube al cielo* complicates such view of realist-naturalist literature, since he mixed *modernista* elements and realist elements in this novel. Gutiérrez Nájera in "El arte el materialismo" affirms that realist-naturalist writers like Federico

¹²¹ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Y esta prostitución del arte, esta deificación de la materia es lo que nosotros combatimos y seguiremos combatiendo en los artículos siguientes" (Gutiérrez Nájera 164).

Gamboa, Jose Portillo y Rojas, Emilio Rabasa, and Rafael Delgado were prostituting their fiction because their writing succumbed to the demands of the market, leaving very little space for creation.¹²²

Paradoxically, Gutiérrez Nájera writes *Por donde se sube al cielo* in the Mexican newspaper *El noticioso*, contradicting his previous accusations against realist-naturalist writers. Gutiérrez Nájera, like naturalist-realist writers, for the first and only time wrote and sold his art to a newspaper. Consequently Gutiérrez Nájera published his work as a precarious object, converting it into a commodity that served the purpose of creating a phantasmagoric sensation in the readers who quickly consumed it and forgot it.

The concept of phantasmagoria that Walter Benjamin reappropriates from Karl Marx elucidates the tensions

¹²² Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera's chronicle "El arte y el materialismo" responds to realist-naturalist writers like José López Portillo y Rojas, Emilio Rabasa, and Rafael Delgado who criticized Mexican *modernistas* for assimilating French Symbolism and Parnassian because it emerged from the decadence and downfall of French society. Naturalist-writers attempted to assimilate the Spanish form of fiction that Benito Pérez Galdós and Emilia Pardo Bazán created since it aligned with the young nation of Mexico that was still growing and developing in the countryside. Thus, Gutiérrez Nájera strongly reacts against realist-naturalist writers accusing them of prostituting their fiction by succumbing to the demands of the market.

Gutiérrez Nájera faced during México's process of modernization. Accordingly, Walter Benjamin affirmed: "Our investigation proposes to show how, as a consequence of this reifying representation of civilization, the new forms of behavior and the new economically and technologically based creations that we owe to the nineteenth century enter the universe of a phantasmagoria." (Benjamin 14) The latter statement of how phantasmagoria emerged in the nineteenth century also explains how this phenomenon poured onto the observations written down by *flâneurs* and in the context of the porfiriato in México. Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera functioned as the prime example of this.

Gutiérrez Nájera's ability to bring together the concerns and tensions of his time period and create art led him to become one of the first Mexican autonomous writers of the porfiriato. The literature he created is the result of the limitations and restrictions set by the newspaper. José Emilio Pacheco, states that the poet Gutiérrez Nájera, through the newspaper, entered the market— a hostile environment where he was accused of prostituting his work by creating for money something that does not have a

price.¹²³ Gutiérrez Nájera exhibited a fixation and concern for the figure of the prostitute since like her he felt he sold his intimacies in order to prevail and maintain his position within the public spheres of society.¹²⁴ This contradictory clash is what the writer encountered during the nineteenth century, which is why he wrote only one novel that conformed to the popular literary style, realist-naturalist novels, all with the intention of spreading his work amongst readers. During the porfiriato, Gutiérrez Nájera attempted to write novels for the masses that presented the tensions of modernity, but his inability to separate *modernista* poetry from naturalist novels led to the misunderstanding of the novel during its time. It is important to know and understand Gutiérrez Nájera's significance within the nineteenth century in order to fully understand Rivera Garza's parody and criticism of this writer and his time period.

¹²³ Pacheco, José Emilio. "Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera: El Sueño De Una Noche Porfiriana | Letras Libres." *Letras Libres - Cultura, Literatura, Poesía, Ensayo, Política, Crítica*. Editorial Vuelta, Feb. 2000. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.letraslibres.com/revista/convivio/manuel-gutierrez-najera-el-sueno-de-una-noche-porfiriana>>.

¹²⁴ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "La feminización del arte najeriano funciona como tesis y antítesis" (Avilés Galán 289).

The Prodigal Son of the Porfiriato: Federico Gamboa and Santa (1903)

The novelist Federico Gamboa like his contemporary Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera captured the society of the porfiriato by telling the story of a prostitute. Raymond Leslie Williams has pointed out that writers like Federico Gamboa were seduced by the exuberance of women, using them as a way to narrate the contradictions of the artistic experience in modernity; Gutiérrez Nájera could be included in this list of writers.¹²⁵ Federico Gamboa created the same archetype of an exuberant woman, with the protagonist of his novel *Santa*, published in 1903.

Furthermore, John Charles Chasteen has indicated that Gamboa fulfilled his mission by becoming a historian of the people without history, and telling the composite stories of people whose lives were never recorded individually as biographies.¹²⁶ Gamboa's is able to not only craft the story of a young girl named Santa, and simultaneously speak to a

¹²⁵ Williams, Raymond L. *The Twentieth-century Spanish American Novel*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003.17.

¹²⁶ Gamboa, Federico, and John Charles Chasteen. *Santa: A Novel of Mexico City*. Introduction. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010. Print.

large audience of Mexicans and other readers whose history is represented in novels for the first time.

The popularity of *Santa* in 1903 was so immense that, as Christopher Conway states, it was México's first modern bestseller, selling over fifty thousand copies in the first three decades.¹²⁷ The appeal of the novel it had on the reader since, according to Conway was because it captured "the paradoxical myth of the tragic prostitute with a heart of gold [it] became emblematic of something profound in the Mexican national imaginary" (Conway 418). For Conway, the novel is not limited to the cautionary tale of the country girl who goes into the city, but it is also indicative of modernity, since it also embodied México City and the Positivist ethos of late porfiriato in México.¹²⁸ Paradoxically, as Conway demonstrates, Gamboa's novel presents another protagonist to the reader: México City, a loud and dirty space that is constantly in motion, a place of alienation and degradation that throbs on the page.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Conway, Christopher. "Prostitution and Desire in Porfirian Mexico: Federico Gamboa's *Santa* 1903." Rev. of *Santa: A Novel of Mexico City*. *Contra Corriente* 2011: 416-22. Print.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 419.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 419.

Although the novel may appear to be a direct criticism of the time, Federico Gamboa was a profound supporter of the Díaz government. Consequently, the positivistic veil set over México City misguided the reader, since it reflected the projects of the porfiriato, economic progress and improvement of the infrastructure in México. This veil, as L. Williams indicates, is the set of values in *Santa* and it is also those of the porfiriato since the regime of "Peace and Order" had become increasingly illegitimate, and, in fact, had less and less to do with either peace or order.¹³⁰ Thus, the vision Gamboa offers is pessimistic.

The pessimistic representation of Mexican reality during the porfiriato stems from the failures of modernity, and also from Gamboa's French naturalist style of writing, which was designed to present a degenerate space through a quasi-scientific style of narrative. John Charles Chasteen translates *Santa* in 2010 from Spanish to English, and to him literary naturalists intended to create a quasi-documentary of historical sources from detailed recreations of diverse social environments, to craft the

¹³⁰ Williams, Raymond L. *The Twentieth-century Spanish American Novel*. Austin: University of Texas, 2003. 26.

settings for the stories they wanted to tell.¹³¹ For Gamboa the inspiration of *Santa* is not limited to a desire in recreating the brutal reality of city life in México. It stems from his only visit to France, where he met Emilie Zola, and where he was linked for a time to a prostitute of the Moulin Rouge, whom he used as something of a nonliterary model for Santa.¹³² It is through this experience that Gamboa portrays socially marginal characters, which for Chasteen is another goal of naturalist writers. In the portrayal of socially marginal characters, the animal instincts are exposed by corrosive poverty, pathology, and exploitation.¹³³ He adds that naturalists were also interested in showing how social environments determined their characters behavior, and how a nice girl from the country like Santa is corrupted by the city. Naturalists' writers through their characters and plots wanted to demonstrate that sex—the most animal of instincts— was a mainspring of human behavior.¹³⁴ The biggest companion and

¹³¹ Gamboa, Federico, and John Charles Chasteen. *Santa: A Novel of Mexico City*. Introduction. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010. X.

¹³² Ibid. x.

¹³³ Ibid. x.

¹³⁴ Ibid. x.

drive to this human behavior was the other vice of the urban city: alcohol. "The will to resist lies paralyzed, the brain is shutting down, no sort of judgment remains, and the result, as in all invasions run amok, is savagery: rape, murder, degradation, the extermination of the weak " (Gamboa 165).

Federico Gamboa's novel represents the porfiriato with the linguistic style, tropes, and narrative structures similar to the Naturalist writer Emilie Zola. The French writer in 1880 published *Nana*, which tells the story of a young woman who becomes a prostitute in an urban space. Federico Gamboa, the "Zola of México " (as nicknamed by José Emilio Pacheco), created novels that were a re-appropriation of the naturalist style of writing, capturing the bourgeois society and supporting the notions of morality of the porfiriato. Undeniably there is a strong connection between Emilie Zola and Federico Gamboa as Pacheco indicates, but, although the narrative styles are similar for Pacheco, the protagonists are not. He states: "Contra lo que suele afirmarse, no es *Santa* una adaptación mexicana de *Naná*. La protagonista de *Les Rougon-Macquart* es una *femme fatale* que destruye a los hombres, en tanto *Santa*

es destruida por ellos.”¹³⁵ The clearest distinction to him is that Santa is presented as a victim, and not as a victimizer. Pacheco fails to indicate or explain why Santa and Nana die at the end due to a sickness, which seems to be venereal disease, and consequently both prostitutes are expelled from society since they cannot be reintegrated into it.

Pacheco points out other differences between Zola and Gamboa. For Pacheco, “La única ventaja de Gamboa sobre su maestro es el conocimiento íntimo de la vida nocturna porfiriana. Su etapa ‘bohemia’ termina con el ingreso a la diplomacia y sus ‘aventuras’ concluyen en 1897.”¹³⁶ For Pacheco, Gamboa wrote about the life in the brothel after experiencing it in Paris. The extensive descriptions of the nightlife of the porfiriato in his novel can be seen as Gamboa’s own adventures. Furthermore, Gamboa’s life was

¹³⁵ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: “Against what is usually affirmed, *Santa* is not a Mexican adaptation of *Nana*. The protagonist of *Les Rougon-Macquart* is a *femme fatale* who destroys men, meanwhile *Santa* is destroyed by them” (Pacheco XX).

¹³⁶ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: “The only advantage Gamboa has over his teacher is the intimate knowledge of the Porfirian night life. His ‘bohemian’ stage ends when he enters diplomacy and his ‘adventures’ conclude in 1897” (Pacheco XXIII).

similar to *Santa* since both were governed by enigmas. According to Pacheco:

Pero son sus contradicciones y no sus coherencias las que hacen de *Santa* un libro fascinante: una novela lujuriosa para propagar la castidad o una novela casta para celebrar la lujuria, la crítica antiporfiriana de un porfiriano o la crítica de un enemigo del régimen, la peor de nuestras novelas literarias o la mejor de nuestras novelas sub-literarias.¹³⁷

According to Pacheco the novel, as well as Federico Gamboa, can be understood from diverse points of view: as an object of criticism or as reinforcement of the porfiriato. Moreover, he points out that before becoming the prodigal son and before writing *Santa*, Gamboa frequently attended brothels and it was soon after that when he transformed into a good and honorable man. Pacheco adds that the process of Gamboa's redemption follows a religious

¹³⁷ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "But it is the contradiction and not the coherences that make *Santa* a fascinating book: a lustful novel that propagates chastity or a chaste novel that celebrates lust, the antiporfirian criticism of a Porfirian man or the criticism of an enemy of the regime, the worst of our literary novels or the best of our sub-literary novels" (Pacheco XXIV).

Weltanschauung since "En la tradición católica el santo no nace: se hace. Y parte del hacerse es conocer y disfrutar la vida del pecado. Gamboa se santifica al escribir *Santa*: se limpia de todo mal."¹³⁸ He achieves this cleansing by revealing the dark underworld of the nightlife in México to those good and decent citizens who were unfamiliar with the space where immorality, perdition, and lust reined. Pacheco elaborates:

Hay que reconocerle al autor de *Santa*, porfiriano eminente y autor que trabajaba en medio de la atmósfera de respetabilidad victoriana con que quiso apuntalar su legitimación el porfiriato, el intento de devolver a la luz pública temas velados por la generalizada hipocresía y darle a la sexualidad en la literatura la misma importancia que tiene en lo cotidiano.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "In the Catholic tradition a saint is not born: he becomes one. And part of becoming one is enjoying and knowing the life of sin. Gamboa sanctifies himself by writing *Santa*: he cleanses himself from evil" (Pacheco XXIII).

¹³⁹ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "We must recognize that the author of *Santa*, eminent *Porfiriato* and author who worked amidst the atmosphere of Victorian respectability with what he wanted to underpin his legitimacy in the Porfiriato, the attempt

From the beginning the novel is surrounded by scandal and controversy due to the strong sexual content since for some readers it was considered pornographic. Contrary to this reading, as Pacheco points out: "Santa es un *cautionary tale*: como *Caperucita Roja* previene a las muchachas contra la seducción y a las jóvenes contra la prostitución."¹⁴⁰ Following the later statement the text functions as a moralizing mechanism and promoter of the mindset of the porfiriato, since it taught high society, especially women, the lifestyle of those "other women" from the lower sectors of society. "Santa se dirige pues a las mujeres para presentarles un personaje con quien se puedan identificar a distancia y con la impunidad del espectador: miren de lo que se salvaron, esto hubiera podido pasarles en caso de nacer pobres y dejarse seducir."¹⁴¹ In this manner the moral

to return to public light the veiled subjects by the general hypocrisy and in literature give sexuality the same importance that it is in the everyday" (Pacheco XIX).

¹⁴⁰ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Santa is a cautionary tale: just as *Little Red Riding Hood* warns young women against seduction and the young against prostitution" (Pacheco XXI).

¹⁴¹ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Santa is directed, well, to women, to present to them a character with whom they can identify with at a distance and with whom the impunity of the spectator: look what you are saved from, this could have happened to you if

codes of time are reiterated through the antithesis of lower class women by presenting to decent women the life and outcome of indecent women, the life of the "other" who is seduced.

On the other hand, Pacheco offers an economic vision of the degraded state of Santa. Gamboa's text is prostituted as Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera has pointed out, since for him Gamboa's narrative style is the quintessential way to sell language to the mass cultures. Pacheco explains that during the porfiriato: "La prostitución industrializa la violación de *Santa*." ¹⁴² and to a certain degree it legitimizes or justifies it because within the world of economics it is permissible. Furthermore for Pacheco the verb to prostitute oneself is the verb that dominates the writer who is submitted to the market, since the prostitute is the quintessential product of capitalism. In this manner the vision of the *modernista* Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Pacheco's are similar since they both see Gamboa as a writer who has succumbed to the

you were born poor and if you would let yourself be seduced" (Pacheco XIX).

¹⁴² I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Prostitution industrializes the violation in *Santa*" (Pacheco XXII).

market. "El prostíbulo de Santa se halla organizado como unidad productiva lo mismo que la hacienda."¹⁴³ For Pacheco all members of the lower sectors of the porfiriato society ranging from an urban to rural space are victims of the wealthy, since both are placed within the margins of society, only to be used and exploited by the rich.

Although José Emilio Pacheco establishes the difference between Zola and Gamboa, it does not preclude that there are no similarities between both men and their novels. Álvaro Uribe presents, in his commemorative book of Gamboa published in 2010, some similarities between both writers. He states that both in the time period of releasing their future best-sellers were close to the age of forty and age in which novelists reach a level of maturity.¹⁴⁴ Uribe's comparison goes beyond superficial aspects of the novelists' lives, since he also draws a parallel between Santa and Nana: "both prostitutes will never stop whoring themselves, in the sense of giving their

¹⁴³ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "The brothel in Santa is organized as a unit of productivity much like an *hacienda*" (Pacheco XXII).

¹⁴⁴ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Ambos, en el periodo de ejecución de sus futuros *best-sellers*, se aproximaban a los cuarenta: edad que suele inaugurar la madurez de los novelistas" (Uribe 137).

bodies for money or arbitrariness".¹⁴⁵ Simultaneously he states that the reason both women enter the world of prostitution is very different. Uribe's vision suggests: "Ambas conocen el poder ilimitado de su sexo y lo ejercen a plenitud: menos para enriquecerse que para destruir, para usar a su antojo al macho que cree usarlas, para cobrarse con creces la doble inferioridad de haber nacido pobres y de ser mujeres." ¹⁴⁶ For Uribe, Santa is a destroyer of men, and is not destroyed by men as Pacheco has pointed out. Uribe and Pacheco do share the point of view that Santa's death comes to represent the punishment for her behavior. Uribe reiterates that the end of the novel is similar to its unsurpassed model *Nana*. Santa is punished with a disease that the author names as cancer, which seems to be syphilis or AIDS.¹⁴⁷ For this reason Uribe concludes that

¹⁴⁵ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Ninguna de las dos dejará nunca de putear, en el sentido de entregar puntualmente su cuerpo por dinero o arbitrariedad" (Uribe 141).

¹⁴⁶ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "both women know the limitless power of their sex and they exercise it to the full: no less to become rich but rather to destroy, to use the *macho* as they please who believes is using them, to claim in full the double inferiority of being born poor and women" (Uribe 141).

¹⁴⁷ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Es cierto que al final del libro, semejante en esto a su insuperado

Santa, at the end of her life, is punished for her behavior while Nana's death is not represented as a form of punishment.

The aspect Uribe and Pacheco leave out are the strong religious intonations and allusions to Catholicism in *Santa* and not in *Nana*. Superficially, the name of the protagonist is the first allusion to catholic beliefs, but, looking closely at one of the final moments before Santa is taken to the hospital for a hysterectomy, a vivid religious image prevails: "Una onda formidable de piedad acercó a Hipólito, la prosternó a sus plantas, abrazada a sus rodillas. En el mismo instante, acatando la costumbre, el palomo vino, volando desde las piezas oscuras, a posarse en el hombro de su amo "¹⁴⁸ (Gamboa 225). The narrator in this instance is not only transmitting the pain and suffering Santa is experiencing right before her death, but he is also vividly creating and elaborating upon a very stoic and static image

modelo *Naná*, Santa es castigada por una enfermedad providencial que el autor llama cáncer, que parece más bien sífilis y que hoy sería sida" (Uribe 48).

¹⁴⁸ Here is John Charles Chasteen translation and edition of the text from *Santa*: "A great wave of pity swept her toward Hipólito, and she knelt at his feet, embracing his knees. At that very moment, the pet dove flew in from one of the other, darkened rooms and landed on the shoulder of its master" (Gamboa 225).

of Hipólito who is described as a statue, perhaps of a Saint who has Santa wrapped around his legs, with a white dove on his shoulder like Saint David. Under the worldview of Catholicism the dove comes to symbolize the Holy Spirit. Seen as such, this image can be significant to the Catholic reader. Images such as the latter one are not present in *Nana* since one of the key aspects of French naturalism is a world in which everything is governed and explained through science and not religion.

Another difference between Zola and Gamboa's novels is the historical moment. According to Uribe, Zola was a Republican and a leader of freedom of expression in France and the novel is set in the Second Empire, which he militantly opposed.¹⁴⁹ For this reason *Nana* is not punished at the end of novel. On the other hand, according to Uribe, Gamboa was not a man who went against the established form of government:

Gamboa era, en cambio un monarquista resignado a la dictadura, un porfirista de corazón, un funcionario cada vez más alto en la jerarquía

¹⁴⁹ Uribe, Álvaro. *Recordatorio de Federico Gamboa*. México, D.F.: Tusquets Editores, 2009. Print.

oficial del *porfiriato*; sus novelas historiaban sin incondicionalidad, pero dentro de los límites autoimpuestos de la conveniencia política, la sociedad porfiriana a la que él no estaba descontento de pertenecer.¹⁵⁰

Following Uribe's logic it can be understood why Santa dies. The dominant reason behind Uribe's vision is because to him Gamboa was a man who closely worked with general Porfirio Díaz and at the final stages of the *porfiriato*, right when the dictatorship was about to end, "its leader, still president, had considered the possibility of promoting Gamboa into the realm of secretary between March and April of 1911 when Díaz was reorganizing the cabinet, which was all to calm the *Maderista* revolution".¹⁵¹ If Díaz

¹⁵⁰ I offer the following translation of the original Spanish: "Gamboa on the other hand, was a monarchist resigned to the dictatorship, a *porfirista* at heart, a government official each time a bit higher up in the official hierarchy of the *Porfiriato*; his novels historicized he was unconditional, but all within the self-imposed limits of the politics of society of the *porfiriato* to which he was not unhappy to belong too" (Uribe 138).

¹⁵¹ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "El propio Caudillo, todavía presidente, había considerado la posibilidad de elevarlo a secretario del ramo cuando entre marzo y abril de 1911 reorganizó *in extremis* su gabinete con el propósito ya vano de aplacar a la triunfante revolución maderista" (Uribe 82).

would have succeeded and won the election, then Federico Gamboa would have become a member of the cabinet who advised him, but as Mexican history indicates this did not take place. Uribe shows that Porfirio Díaz's defeat had an impact on Gamboa's life and career after the Mexican Revolution, since he becomes a marginalized intellectual. Gamboa flees México and is exiled in the United States and then in Cuba because in México he had no job opportunities because he was strongly linked with the porfiriato.¹⁵²

Well after the porfiriato Gamboa's novel *Santa* has become a literary phenomenon and a classic. The poor and young girl from Chimalistac has become a cultural myth. Uribe points out that "perhaps thirty years after Gamboa wrote the novel he had begun to think of the protagonist as someone intimately close to him, but not his."¹⁵³ Gamboa is still remembered for this character. *Santa* has garnished so much fame within Mexican culture that the novel was the first film with sound in México. For Uribe the popularity

¹⁵² Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Era él quien vanamente esperaría una imposible vuelta al pasado para novelar otra vez" (Uribe 91).

¹⁵³ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Quizá 30 años después de escribir esa novela había contraído la costumbre de pensar en su protagonista como en alguien cercano hasta íntimo, pero ajeno a él" (Uribe 122).

of this small town girl is due to the fact that "Santa from the moment the novel was published in 1903 becomes an archetype and, fifteen years later, her fictional nature transgressed only to contaminate reality on screen."¹⁵⁴ The essence of Santa pours out of the fiction presented in the pages of the book and penetrates Mexican reality with her tragic existence. Uribe explains this phenomenon furthermore since to him "it does not matter who wraps or propagates her, in any case since the point is to give an abstraction a historical reality."¹⁵⁵ This historical abstraction remains alive today due to that fact that this experience is a reality for many Mexican women living from Ciudad Juárez to Chiapas. For Uribe, "the novel is edifying o cathartic, pornographic or sentimental, but in any case *Santa* marks the end of the cycle that made Gamboa famous for morally ambiguous and sensually provocative

¹⁵⁴ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Santa fue un arquetipo desde la publicación de la novela que lleva su nombre en 1903. Quince años más tarde había transgredido su naturaleza ficticia para contaminarse de realidad" (Uribe 104).

¹⁵⁵ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "No importa, en todo caso, quién o quiénes las urden y las propagan; su propósito es darle realidad histórica, particular, a una abstracción" (Uribe 149).

narratives.”¹⁵⁶ In 2010 *Santa* is still read since for some women “el putear” is part of their daily labor, in order to achieve some economic progress, while for others *Santa* has become part of the collective memory of Mexican identity.

One of the last observations made by Alvaro Uribe, and perhaps one of the most provocative is the call he makes to writers, or more specifically, to women writers. He states, “it should not be crazy to expect in the upcoming years, still postmodern of the twentieth century for a narrator or preferably a women narrator, with a paired affiliation for French culture and Mexican culture who decides to create a novel where the miracle occurs of Santa knowing love between an equal with a reincarnated *Nana*.”¹⁵⁷ Why does he state this? And whom is he talking about? Perhaps in this announcement he is alluding to Cristina Rivera Garza, a writer whose novel at times can present postmodern

¹⁵⁶ Here is the text in its original Spanish: “Edificante o catártica, pornográfica o cursi, *Santa* cierra en cualquier caso el ciclo de las narraciones moralmente ambiguas y sensualmente provocativas que hicieron famoso a *Gamboa*” (Uribe 48).

¹⁵⁷ Here is the text in its original Spanish: “No es descabellado esperar que en los próximos años todavía posmodernos del siglo XXI, un narrador o de preferencia una narradora, con pareja filiación a la cultura francesa y la cultura mexicana, decida operar en una novela transgénica el milagro de que *Santa* conozca por fin el amor entre iguales con una reencarnada *Nana*” (Uribe 150).

elements, and who also rewrites *Santa* by creating Matilda, the protagonist of her novel, *Nadie me verá llorar* published in 1999. It is important to point out that both writers are part of the same publishing company of *Tusquets*. Although Uribe does not make a direct connection between this possible writer and Rivera Garza, one can speculate that the writer is Rivera Garza due to her research and historical novel.

The Collector of Ruins: Cristina Rivera Garza's *Nadie me verá llorar* (1999)

The renowned Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes has praised the fiction of Cristina Rivera Garza and placed her in the generation that Mexican writers have designated as "Generación del Crack".¹⁵⁸ Fuentes indicates that if this generation had published their novels in 1932, then they would have been taken to the top of the Teotihuacan

¹⁵⁸ Carlos Fuentes in *La gran novela latinoamericana* makes it clear that the Mexican novelists who form part of this generation are Jorge Volpi, Ignacio Padilla, Pedro Angel Palou, Eloy Urroz, and Cristina Rivera Garza. He also considers Xavier Velasco a relative of this generation. Although Cristina Rivera Garza and Xavier Velasco are placed within this generation, neither writer participated in writing "El manifiesto del Crack".

pyramid, only to have their hearts ripped out, and thrown to the nationalists' hounds.¹⁵⁹ He states that this generation in today's Mexican society does not need to justify their work, not even before Our Lady of Guadalupe or the *Malinche*; the two mothers of México, the good one and the bad one, the miraculous and the miracle-worker, the one who hands us the life vest of faith when we believe in nothing and the one who with ironic sadness warns us that we should not trust a thing, not even politics.¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, Brian L. Price sets forth that in 2010 an editorial tsunami inundated the market with historical representations; novels that reflected a tendency toward a recanonization of the common spaces and figures of Mexican historiography and for him Rivera Garza steered away from this form of narrative.¹⁶¹ Contrary to his visions of her novel and essays, one must consider that novels revisiting Mexican history are marketed toward the same audience and placed in the same bookshelves, and inevitably readers

¹⁵⁹ Fuentes, Carlos. *La gran novela latinoamericana*. México, D.F.: Alfaguara, 2011. 361. Print.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 361.

¹⁶¹ Price, Brian L. "Cristina Rivera Garza en las orillas de la historia." *Cristina Rivera Garza: Ningún crítico cuenta esto--*. Ed. Oswaldo Estrada. México, D.F.: Ediciones Eon, 2010. 111-33. Print.

(un)knowingly consume the books that perpetuate the already existing notions of the canon or Rivera Garza's novel which reveals the "untold" and painful past of the disenfranchised peasants of modernity.

In many ways, Rivera Garza's novel *Nadie me verá llorar* retells the story of the fallen woman, but engraved within the macabre and beautiful prose lies the tale of the two mothers of México, represented through Matilda, who as a young country girl is almost virginal like Guadalupe, but given the circumstances and placed in a urban environment she becomes "bad" like *la Malinche*. The clashing dichotomy within this character is one of the many reasons the novel has great appeal. In addition, as I will demonstrate, Rivera Garza's novel is in dialogue with Gutiérrez Nájera and Federico Gamboa, two men from nineteenth century *fin de siècle* México, who told the cautionary tale of the young girl who after becoming a prostitute in the city, is corrupted and eventually destroyed by the same organism.

The past Rivera Garza confronts is a world of intellectuals, mostly composed of men who have given the improper form and shape to the circumstance of women. And such visions are problematic because they present(ed) a dogmatic and misogynistic vision of women, since Magda and

Santa can only come to represent the "good women" who is confined to the home or the "bad women" who are confined to the brothel. Thus, Rivera Garza presents a third space through Matilda who rejects the brothel and home by preferring the insane asylum of *La Castañeda* as her own confinement. Above all, the underlining theme of the novel is the expression, incarnation, and representation of pain, as the narrator indicates that "el dolor lo obsesionó" (Rivera Garza 30) when describing Joaquín Buitrago, the photographer of the novel who becomes obsessed with Matilda Burgos.

Nadie me verá llorar is one piece of a trio of texts, all very distinct and independent in genre, but all deeply inbred; and when placed alongside one another their significance and importance becomes illuminated. The texts are: 1) Her doctoral dissertation, "Masters of the Street: Bodies, Power and Modernity in México 1867-1930", published in 1995; 2) Her novel *Nadie me verá llorar* published in 1999; 3) Her book-length essay *La Castañeda: narrativas dolientes desde el Manicomio General, México 1910-1930* published in 2010. All three texts are linked by the processes of translations they have undergone. Walter Benjamin's concepts of translation found in *The Task of the*

Translator illuminate the relationship of the three texts, since:

A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade (Benjamin 79).

Rivera Garza's texts break away from the barriers of the sentence, because her works in the process of translation not only change from English to Spanish, they also transform from a historical analysis to narrative, and back to a historical analysis once again. Thus, the complicated binary notion of "translation" and "original", in the case of Rivera Garza's text becomes much more problematic because not only does she create the "original" text using a language that is not her first, this new "translation" is done by her, eliminating the second person, the

translator that Benjamin's equation proposes and complicates from the beginning.

The first text, her doctoral dissertation, was published in English as a historical analysis, composed as a *konvolutt* incorporating medical documents and letters that were originally written in Spanish; and it concluded with an alarming criticism of the government by drawing a comparison between the Mexican Revolution and the then current Zapatista Revolution. The Mexican writer Rivera Garza, whose native language is Spanish, originally wrote her doctoral dissertation in English based on Spanish documents. The second text, published in the form of a novel titled *Nadie me verá llorar* and in Spanish is converted into a convoluted and warped representation of her research, mixing, blending, and confusing history from fiction by presenting an array of narrative voices and echoes that resonate within the text, leaving the reader in a state of uncertainty and uneasiness. The third text, *La Castañeda*, transforms from its first shape to the second by undergoing a process of translation, changing even more.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Even more complicated she took this doctoral dissertation and converted it back into a historical analysis in Spanish

This continual process of always changing, transforming and adapting her own work to the various times may seem confusing or hazy, but in fact this ongoing process of reflection after a period of time begins to show patterns as I will demonstrate within the seemingly chaotic texts. Benjamin has claimed: "Unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one" (Benjamin 76). Expanding this metaphor even further, from the beginning Rivera Garza's work, her doctoral dissertation, began as a "translation" and never as an "original" and in consequence the very origins of her work stem from that of an outsider gazing at the wooden ridge trying to catch a glimpse of the language forest, searching for the single spot that aims at the echo to begin the reverberation, paradoxically this same echo comes from her very own words when placed on the terrain of the

under the title, *La Castañeda* and for a Mexican community who in 2010 was on the eve of its celebration of one hundred years since the Mexican Revolution, and two hundred years since its Independence.

translation of the doctoral dissertation into a novel, and what was supposed to be a stable anchor propelling the second text, *Nadie me verá llorar*, is produced out of a source of instability. The constant echo that remains at the end of the translations is the sound of a voice preoccupied with the physical and emotional representations of pained bodies. "In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments part of a vessel" (Benjamin 78). Her work from the very beginning is set to totter and destabilize any notion or sense of an absolute truth set in place by political, medical or religious institutions, since anything and everything could always be otherwise, and thus the vessel composed of fragments is overtaken by uncertainty, which makes or leaves a mark on pained bodies.

Aside from the infinite complications and relationship between the "original" and "translation," it is only through this process that the transmittable residues of her work become apparent to the reader since each text acquires much more life after it's reincarnated by translation. The

trio of texts, like a vessel whose fragmented contents are the fuel propelling forward, arrives at the destination of a constant process of reflection and questioning of homogenous images of suffering bodies.

In her doctoral dissertation, Cristina Rivera Garza makes it clear that the pained bodies of the prostitute, the poor, and the insane are the main objects of her exploration during the porfiriato; shedding light upon all of the forgotten or ignored documents, letters, photographs, and medical records found in México's *Hospital Morelos* and insane asylum, *La Castañeda*.¹⁶³ It is in her historical text, *La Castañeda*, where Rivera Garza explicitly states the framework of her novel. At this juncture she finds herself conceptualizing her work after Walter Benjamin's notion of the collector of objects, the person who revisits all of the objects left behind to revindicate them, and bring them new meaning by creating a collage, a konvolutt. She states that "the function of the collage is to sustain as many versions as possible at once, and place them very close to each other, so close to one another as to create contrast, astonishment, joy; that is

¹⁶³ Rivera-Garza Cristina, "The Masters of the Streets: Bodies, Power, and Modernity in México, 1867-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Houston, 1995).

to say, knowledge produced by the unannounced epiphany, one that is composed or fabricated by the layout and architecture of the text."¹⁶⁴ Rivera Garza also makes it clear that "the advice of Walter Benjamin, and his peculiar notes on a philosophy of history once again make an appearance in her work, since the function of the collage is a strategy to compose a page of high contrast resulting in knowledge not as the explanation of the object being studied, but as the redemption of it."¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, the introduction of *La Castañeda* makes it clear that she is not attempting to tell the untold story of the oppressed or the "real" or "true" story of these three marginalized figures. Rather, it is meant to present the life experiences as they have been articulated, as they

¹⁶⁴ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "La función del collage es sostener tantas versiones como sea posible y colocarlas tan cerca una de la otra para provocar el contraste, el asombro, el gozo; es decir, el conocimiento producido por la epifanía no enunciada sino compuesta o fabricada por el mero tendido del texto, su arquitectura" (Rivera Garza 260).

¹⁶⁵ Here is the text in its original Spanish: "Y aquí es donde los consejos de Walter Benjamin, y sus peculiares notas para una filosofía de la historia, vuelven hacer su aparición: el collage como estrategia para componer una página de alto contraste cuyo resultado es el conocimiento no como explicación del <<objeto de estudio>> sino como redención del mismo" (Rivera Garza 259).

have been told by the doctors and patients, utilizing their own words and her imagination by presenting it in their own (in)coherent form. It is important to keep in mind that she is the ventriloquist of these objects because it is she who is manipulating the documents and images by juxtaposing them to her liking, and in doing so questions binary notions of *sano* and *insano*, *decente* and *indecente*. This grants her the power to steer the direction of México's "new" sense of nationalism in the twenty first century, which to her is marred with a silent discomfort of horror and pain caused by the narcowar.

The presence of pain and the questioning of homogenous thought becomes evident in Rivera Garza's novel through the re-exploration of the ruined objects of the past of the porfiriato initially found in her research. The novel *Nadie me verá llorar* initiates with Joaquín Buitrago's reflection of Matilda Burgos' photography who, after seeing her in the insane asylum *La Castañeda*, believes he has seen her before, and the images he owns of her help him remember that first time he met Matilda at the brothel *La Modernidad*. For Joaquín Buitrago "el dolor lo obsesionó " (Rivera Garza 30) since "el fotógrafo ya no es un simple

mortal de la época, un morfinómano sin salida"¹⁶⁶ (Rivera Garza 31), meaning that his shield and protection from the social and political turbulence of the time was morphine, since through this self medication, he was able to relieve himself of any pain. The very first time he encountered such shocking emotion was "En la obscuridad, Joaquín descubrió el dolor. No fue una palabra ni una sensación, sino una imagen: el rostro de una mujer en *rigor mortis*"¹⁶⁷ (Rivera Garza 30). From the beginning, the trigger which caused this discomfort was a woman in pain, and when Joaquín saw her:

Se detuvo frente a ella y, sin pensarlo, le pasó las manos por los cabellos humedecidos de lluvia y de sangre. Después se sentó a su lado, sobre el asfalto. La observó. Sus labios estaban reventados a golpes, y los brazos y piernas se doblaban en ángulos tortuosos. Trató de rezar

¹⁶⁶ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "[he] is no longer a simple mortal of his time, he has become a morphine addict" (Rivera Garza 21).

¹⁶⁷ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "in the darkness [he] discovered pain. It was not a word, not even a sensation: it was an image: the face of a women in *rigor mortis*" (Rivera Garza 19).

pero no recordaba ninguna oración. El mundo era, tal como se lo había imaginado, un lugar sin piedad y sin solución. El rostro de la mujer se clavó en su memoria. Ésa fue su primera fotografía¹⁶⁸ (Rivera Garza 30).

Because Joaquín is unable to forget this image "La fotografía era la manera de detener la rueda del dolor del mundo que cada vez giraba a mayor velocidad bajo las luces, sobre estrechos caminos de metal "¹⁶⁹ (Rivera Garza 31). Like the first photograph of the beaten and bruised woman left to die on the street, the main subjects before his camera lens are the incarnations of pained bodies, parts of them, not whole. Joaquín's interest in disarticulated pained bodies leads him to obsess over Matilda since from the very

¹⁶⁸ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "He knelt beside her and, without thinking, passed his hands over her hair wet with rain and blood. Then he sat down beside her, on the asphalt. He stared at her. Her lips were bruised and bloody from a beating and her arms and legs were bent at tortured angles. He tried to pray but no prayer came to his mind. The world was, as he had imagined, a merciless place, without reprieve. The women's face imprinted itself on his memory. That was his first photograph" (Rivera Garza 20).

¹⁶⁹ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "photography was a way, his way, of stopping the wheel of the world's pain, spinning ever faster under the lights, on narrow metal tracks" (Rivera Garza 21).

beginning he attempts to assemble the painful past of this woman.

Matilda Burgos, the protagonist of *Nadie me verá llorar*, can be seen as the new representation of the archetypical character found in French Naturalist and Realist narrative of the nineteenth century that Federico Gamboa and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera later recreate through their novel, *Por donde se sube al cielo* and *Santa*. Matilda moves out of the country and into the city to live with her uncle Marcos Burgos who is a doctor and a prominent believer of Positivism. Matilda leaves this rural space, due to her mother and father's (who is an alcoholic) death. Based on the French Naturalist formula of novels of the nineteenth century, her social conditions and environment determine her outcome because it is in the city where her corruption begins. Marcos Burgos who represents the scientific beliefs of the time, instills the necessary discipline and order in Matilda to make her *una mujer decente*. Matilda, aware of this, adapts to her uncle's hygiene rules, which are as follows:

LECCIONES DE HIGIENE DE MARCOS BURGOS

1. Lavarse las manos antes y después de comer, antes y después de usar el inodoro, antes y después de dormir.
2. Mantenerse continuamente ocupado para preservar la higiene mental. La ociosidad es la madre de todos los vicios. ...
5. Evitar el uso de cosméticos y de perfumes. Los primeros dañan la piel y los segundos causan neurastenia y otras malformaciones nerviosas. ...
8. La frase que Matilda nunca olvidará: <Las mujeres decentes se bañan todos los días antes de la seis de la mañana, siempre> .¹⁷⁰ (Rivera Garza 120-121)

The image of the *mujer decente* in Rivera Garza's text is a subversive parody of nineteenth century novels. Rivera

¹⁷⁰ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "HYGIENE LESSONS" BY MARCOS BURGOS

1. Wash your hands before and after eating, before and after using the toilet, before and after sleeping.
2. Remain constantly occupied in order to preserve mental hygiene. Idleness is the root of all evil.
5. Avoid using cosmetics and perfumes. Cosmetics harms the skin and perfumes cause neurasthenia and other nervous disorders.
8. [The sentence that Matilda will never forget:] Decent women bathe every day before six o' clock in the morning, always" (Rivera Garza 106-107).

Garza is aware of the fin de siècle Mexican novels. She re-creates those same narrative objects to redeem them in the present with a new meaning by presenting an alternative perspective and representation of women in a modern context. Her novel ascribes to this formula as in the earlier texts, in which the *mujer decente* is contrasted with a *mujer indecente*. The change and alteration in Rivera Garza's version, is that rather than juxtaposing two characters to emphasize one condition over the other, she emphasizes both conditions in one character. Meaning that Matilda Burgos comes to represent the *mujer decente*, who follows the already stated rules of her uncle and then becomes *the mujer indecente* who becomes a prominent prostitute in *La Modernidad*.

The appearance of Cástulo in Matilda's life quickly washes and fades away the notions of being a "good citizen" with good manners. The young man is a revolutionary who runs away from the law. He enters Marcos Burgo's house late one night, transgressing this space, since from this moment on Matilda (who represents the citizen who has learned how to follow orders) encounters someone who for the first time is questioning the same rules imposed upon her.

Inevitably, Matilda leaves her uncle's house, only to work in tobacco factories, then as a prostitute, and finally ends up in the insane asylum for refusing to provide service to a Sanitary Agent. Throughout this enigmatic novel, the reader is presented with echoes or murmurs that seem to come from no one or nowhere. One of these echoes states the following: "Hay que reinventar a la mujer "¹⁷¹ (Rivera Garza 34). And at another moment:

De todas las obsesiones que emergieron a finales de siglo, sólo las prostitutas alcanzaron la calidad de leyenda. Los poetas las compadecieron y las celebraron por igual. Los escultores tallaron el mármol y la madera con ellas en mente. Los pintores las inmortalizaron. Los médicos y los licenciados crearon el primer reglamento de prostitución para defenderse de su peligro y establecer las reglas del juego de cuerpos¹⁷² (Rivera Garza 158).

¹⁷¹ The English translation titled *No One Will See Me Cry*, reads as follows: "Women must be reinvented" (Rivera Garza 24).

¹⁷² Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "Of all the obsessions that emerged toward the end of the century, only prostitutes attained legendary status. Poets

Meaning that poets, painters, sculptors, and doctors were all obsessed with the figure of the prostitute, since their work focused on her body. Here lies Rivera Garza's criticism and reinvention of objects, specifically the figure of the prostitute because she blurs the line between *la mujer decente* and *la mujer indecente*.

Explicitly, Rivera Garza questions this twofold notion of gender through her narrators and characters direct criticism of Federico Gamboa and Gutiérrez Nájera. For example on one occasion, Joaquín and Diamantina read the following verses by Gutiérrez Nájera:

¡Oh mármol! ¡Oh nieve! ¡Oh inmensa blancura! /
que esparces doquiera tu casta hermosura! / ¡Oh
tímida virgen! ¡Oh casta vestal! / ¡Tú estás en
la estatua de eterna belleza; / de tu hábito
blanco nació la pureza / al ángel das alas, y
sudario al mortal!.¹⁷³ (Rivera Garza, 40)

pitied them and praised them, in equal measure. Sculptors carved marble and wood with them in mind. Painters immortalized them. Doctors and lawyers created the first laws regulating the practice of prostitution in order to defend themselves from their danger and establish the rules of the game for their bodies" (Rivera Garza 143).

¹⁷³ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "Oh marble! Oh snow! Oh unsullied whiteness / by the chaste

and both characters react to it in the following manner: "Pobre hombre. ¿Qué clases de mujeres conocería? 'Tímida virgen', válgame Dios. En ese momento Joaquín supo que Diamantina nunca le pertenecería "¹⁷⁴ (Rivera Garza 41). The two characters are not only subverting the poetry of a *modernista* poet, but they are simultaneously questioning the notion of the *mujer decente*, since to Joaquín and Diamantina this seems to be an outdated concept or vision of the world.

The narrator presents another instance of criticism in the novel by establishing Marcos Burgos and Julio Guerrero's solutions to prevent the *involución* of México; and for both men, this lack of evolution stems from a lack of hygiene. For Marcos and Julio the first step to propel México into a prosperous future means to have a strong and strict notion of cleanliness. At this time, the narrator also provides a "different" vision to this same problem:

beauty snow abroad! / Oh timid virgin, vestal chaste! / Thou art upon eternal beauty's statue, / and from thy white tunic purity was born. / To angels you give wings, and winding-shrouds to mortals!" (Rivera Garza 30).

¹⁷⁴ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "'Poor man. What kind of women must he know. 'Timid virgin,' for heaven's sake!' It was at that moment that Joaquín realized that Diamantina would never belong to him" (Rivera Garza 30).

El periodista y poeta Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera tenía otras soluciones en mente. 'Es preferible', escribía, 'ver al corrupto sucumbir que dejar morir al bueno y apto. Tal vez los criminales están enfermos, pero a los que sufren de enfermedades contagiosas se les debe aislar. A los que tengan la posibilidad de procrear niños enfermos se les deben negar los placeres del matrimonio y paternidad. No pondremos en riesgo nuestras vidas y nos vamos a apoyar el exterminio de la raza humana sólo para proteger a los débiles y los peligrosos.' Tanto Marcos como Julio Guerrero leían su columna 'Plato del día' en *El Universal* con desconfianza¹⁷⁵ (Rivera Garza 126-127).

¹⁷⁵ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "Journalist and poet Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera had other solutions in mind. "It is preferable" he wrote "to see the corrupt succumb than to allow the good, the fit, to die. Criminals may be sick, but those who have contagious illnesses should be isolated. Those who may procreate sick children should be denied the pleasures of marriage or motherhood. Let us not put our lives in danger or support the extermination of the human race simply in order to protect the weak and the dangerous." Both Marcos and Julio Guerrero read "Today's Plato," his column in *El Universal*, with mistrust" (Rivera Garza 112-113).

The most alarming aspect of this novel is Gutiérrez Nájera's solution, an idea that stems from social Darwinism; "survival of the fittest". Clearly, Gutiérrez Nájera believes the weak should be left to die, and the government should not protect the weak or the dangerous. Instead, Gutiérrez Nájera is convinced that these citizens should not be allowed to procreate and the sick should be isolated. Although Marcos and Julio do not trust Gutiérrez Nájera's perspective, undoubtedly the solutions offered by all the three men center around a concern with cleanliness. Gutiérrez Nájera advocated cleanliness at a societal level, since he wanted to isolate the sick, the ill, in order to maintain the city clean. On the other hand, Marcos and Julio rather than only isolating people believed it was important to teach all sectors of society how to be clean which for them meant educating. In addition, all three men are regurgitating the notions of evolution and progress imported from France. The characters Gutiérrez Nájera, Marcos, and Julio freely discussed the same figures that Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, the poet, considered to be masters of the streets, and the objects of redemption in Rivera Garza's research.

The now-classic writer of México, Federico Gamboa, becomes an object of parody by the narrator as well. He is mostly parodied for his novel *Santa*. Once Matilda becomes a prostitute, and changes her name to "La Diabla" an example of intertextuality becomes apparent between the characters of *Santa* and Matilda. Through both characters the treatment of the prostitute during the *porfiriato* is presented in two very distinct ways. For example: "A finales de 1907, cuando Matilda hizo de la prostitución su oficio, sólo las muy atolondradas o francamente estúpidas, como Santa, acudían al registro y pasaban la humillación del examen médico"¹⁷⁶ (Rivera Garza 160). It is important to point out that, during this time, prostitution had been legalized to protect men from illnesses, and for prostitutes this meant registering and undergoing routine health visits with the *Inspección de Sanidad*. As the passage reveals, Matilda differentiates herself from Santa because unlike her she does not register or undergo the physical inspection, which classifies her as an *insometida*.

¹⁷⁶ Here is Andrew Hurley's English translation of the text from *Nadie me verá llorar*, edited by Rodrigo Navarro: "In late 1907, when Matilda also practiced her profession in the streets, only the most scatterbrained or outright stupid, like Santa, bothered to register or expose themselves to the humiliation of the medical examination" (Rivera Garza 145).

Federico Gamboa's famous novel offers a long and descriptive passage detailing the injustices Santa experiences from the Sanitary Agents who did not respect her:

Son los agentes de Sanidad. El último peldaño de la pingosa escala administrativa. Estriban sus atribuciones en vigilar que las sacerdotisas de la prostitución reglamentada municipalmente, cumplan con una porción de capítulos, dizque encaminados a salvaguardar la salud de los masculinos de la columna. Y como a la vez disfrutan de cierto carácter de policías, es de admirar, en lo general, el sinnúmero de arbitrariedades que ejecutan, los abusos y hasta las infamias que suelen cometer a sabiendas, arreando a la prevención con señoritas honestas, pero desvalidas y mal trajeadas que resultan inocentes del horrendo cargo de prostitutas y a quienes se despide con un 'Usted dispense', que vale oro¹⁷⁷ (Gamboa 135-136).

¹⁷⁷ John Charles Chasteen translates and edits *Santa* in 2010 in English, it reads as follows: "It was a group of Sanitation Agents, the bottom rung on the city's administrative ladder devoted to the regulation of

This occurs moments before Santa is taken to *Hospital Morelos* where she will be examined to ensure she is "healthy". Following the logic of *Santa*, from the beginning Santa does not belong to herself. Elvira informs Santa: "Guarda tu *diznidá* para otra, ¿estamos? Lo que es tú, te encuentras ya registrada y numerada, ni mas ni menos que los coches de alquiler, pongo por caso...me perteneces a mí, tanto como a la policía o a la sanidad"¹⁷⁸ (Gamboa 24). Santa from the very first pages belongs to others thus it is not surprising to discover Santa is a victim of the institutions of the porfiriato.

In contrast to Gamboa's representation of the prostitute, the second chapter of Rivera Garza's doctoral dissertation and novel *Nadie me verá llorar* the figure of

prostitution. Society had entrusted them with the direct supervision of the professionals themselves, ensuring their compliance with a list of requirements supposedly intended to safeguard the health of the community's make citizens. And because they somewhat resemble police, perhaps it is not surprising that they exercise their authority arbitrarily and commit countless abuses, even a few really scurrilous ones, like intentionally hauling in helpless, poorly dressed girls, who turn out not to be prostitutes at all and whom they finally release with a priceless smirk and an 'excuse us, ma'am'" (Gamboa 106).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 15: "'Keep your dignity for another occasion, got it? You're already registered and have a number, like the coaches out there for hire on the street, let's say. You belong to me and the police and the public health department" (Gamboa 15).

the prostitute is explored, but differently. Rivera Garza's representation of the prostitute through Matilda, it is evident that her character is not a submissive and passive woman –instead she is rebellious. Rivera Garza's doctoral dissertation discusses Santa's mistreatment and a prostitute named Ana Álvarez –the real Diablesa– a woman who existed twenty years after the porfiriato. Rivera Garza affirms:

When assistance was denied because she was no longer a prostitute, Ana Álvarez wrote a letter to the *Inspección de Sanidad* asking to be reintegrated into the registry, ... In the letter, she explicitly manifested her will to continue with her old way of life, which, in comparison with the situation she had to cope with at home, represented a better choice. At the end of this document ... she had the nerve to sign both her name and her nickname. Ana Álvarez was indeed Queen Devil, *la Diablesa*. (Rivera Garza, 129)

In her doctoral dissertation it serves as an important juxtaposition between the Diablesa, an actual citizen, and Santa, a fictional character. Rivera Garza affirms the

following about both women: "Santa was a fictional character created by a man in 1903. La Diablesa was a creation of herself somewhere around 1930 " (Rivera Garza 130). For Rivera Garza the most compelling aspect of both women is how they represent two very different and distinct incarnations of prostitution in México. Rivera Garza in her later novel *Nadie me verá llorar* appropriates Ana Álvarez's experience and fictionalizes it by representing it in her novel, providing a voice for a woman who lived during the attempts of modernization in México. Consequently, the real "La Diablesa" is introduced into the world a fiction as a character that ridicules Santa, and presents a different representation of prostitution within a fictional world. Lastly, Santa is condemned for her immoral behavior and inevitably dies since she contracted syphilis. "La Diablesa" who before appearing as a character in Rivera Garza's novel represents the voice of a women who prefers to be reintegrated into the registry of prostitutes, since it was a better option than being a housewife.

Santa becomes a housewife like Ana Álvarez. Santa lives with el Jaraméño, but never marries because she prefers life in the brothel. The two distinct moments in Gamboa's novel that indicate Santa wanted and tried to

become a decent woman take place within the walls of institutions: state and church. The first instance occurs right after Santa's mother passes away. She visits a Catholic Church to pray and mourn for her mother's death. In church, kneeling before God, Santa imagines she turns her life around and leaves the brothel behind. The omniscient narrator begins with a question: " ¿Que qué apetecía? Ser igual a ellas o como se las imaginaba que serían: honradas, trabajando un montón de horas, viviendo en familia, queriendo a su novio"¹⁷⁹ (Gamboa 116). Santa weeping and mourning at Church, for a brief moment imagines how decent women behave. Those other women, *las mujeres decentes* recognize her and alert the priest of her presence in Church and her profession. The priest, knowing who Santa is, follows orders, removing Santa from Church, only to reiterate the morality of the time. Initially, Santa refuses to leave, but the priest threatens to call the police, and the narrator reveals: "La amenaza de gendarme amedrentó a Santa. ¿La policía?... No, no. La policía era su dueño, su amo, su terror; a ella pertenecía, como todas

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 89: "What did she want? She wanted to be just like them, or at least, the way that she imagined them to be: decent girls who worked long hours, lived at home, and loved their faithful boyfriends..." (Gamboa 89).

las de su oficio, como todo lo que se alquila y como todo lo que delinque"¹⁸⁰ (Gamboa 119). Santa wanted to change her life, but she was unable to do so because the religious institution had no space or tolerance for her. The priest, by threatening Santa with the police, forces her back into prostitution. The narrator adds: "Sólo ella sabía por qué la expulsaban, sólo ella; era huérfana y era ramera, pesaba sobre ella una doble orfandad sin remedio"¹⁸¹ (Gamboa 120). It is at this juncture that the three protagonists of the novels seen thus far (Santa, Magda, and Matilda) are orphans that enter the life of prostitution.

Santa, who thought of becoming a *mujer decente* at Church, later has the opportunity to become one. This opportunity takes place under the jurisdiction of a government institution. Santa is taken to *Hospital Morelos* to get checked, and once her exams reveal she is sick, she is imprisoned until *el Jarameño* rescues her. The Sanitation Agents allow *el Jarameño* to take Santa under one condition: to make Santa his wife, and to not allow her back into

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 92: "The threat intimidated Santa. The police? No, no. The police were her terror and the terror of all girls like her" (Gamboa 92).

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 92: "She alone knew why they had thrown her out, she alone. She was a harlot, harlot who had lost her mother, now doubly and irredeemably an orphan" (Gamboa 92).

brothels. *El Jarameño* who is deeply in love with Santa, complies with the request. *El Jarameño* and Santa do not marry, but live together for a few months. Initially Santa finds great pleasure as a housewife, but as the narrator states: "Era verdad. Aquel ensayo de vida honesta la aburría, probablemente porque su perdición ya no tendría cura porque se habría maleado hasta sus raíces, no negaba la probabilidad, pues en los dos meses que la broma duraba, tiempo sobraba para aclimatarse"¹⁸² (Gamboa 168). Santa out of boredom has an affair with a neighbor, leaves *el Jarameño*, and goes back to the brothel life that she missed. Elvira seems to be correct when she first tells Santa: "Eso, el apartamiento del burdel. Sólo que el burdel es como el aguardiente y como la cárcel y como el hospital; el trabajo está en probarlos, que después de probarlos, ni quien nos borre la afición que les cobramos, la atracción que en sus devotos ejercen..."¹⁸³ (Gamboa 77). Consequently,

¹⁸² Ibid. 144: "It was true. The experiment with a decent life had bored and displeased her, probably because her fall was irreparable. The damage had gone to the root, so to speak, because the months that the charade lasted should have been long enough for Santa to reacclimatize herself" (Gamboa 144).

¹⁸³ Here is John Charles Chasteen translation and edition of the text from *Santa*: "Except that the brothel is like jail, the hospital, or hard liquor. It's rough at first, but once

Santa experiences life as a housewife and prefers the life of a prostitute, since she goes back to that life.

Santa's journey as a prostitute in México City is very different from the fictional character of "La Diablesa," since Rivera Garza's character does not succumb to same institution because she dies in the insane asylum *La Castañeda*. Paradoxically, the real woman, Ana Álvarez, nicknamed "La Diablesa," like Santa prefers to be a prostitute rather than a housewife, since it provides a sense of freedom, even though it means surrendering to the pleasures and desires of men paid for her services. These women were faced to live a reality or a fiction in which, "allá... en un punto que ni el lenguaje sabe precisar; en el misterioso punto invisible, donde, por ejemplo, queda la muerte... y en ese punto misterioso punto invisible yacía lo que Santa ambicionaba"¹⁸⁴ (Gamboa 174). In response to this worldview the narrator in Rivera Garza's novel murmurs:

you've got a taste for it, nobody can take that taste away" (Gamboa 57).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 24: "Women, it has been said, is a microcosm of nature, the matrix of life, and for that very reason, the matrix of death, too, because life is constantly reborn out of death" (Gamboa 151).

"Hay que reinventar a la mujer"¹⁸⁵ (Rivera Garza 34). Rivera Garza's historical research and novel questions homogenous predetermined thoughts by reinventing the figure of the prostitute. Carlos Fuentes states that "Matilda, who has not read Lambroso nor Zola, breaks away from the determinism and confinement by means of rebellion; rebellion of prostitutes, meaning that as proof of Matilda's insanity is the rebellion against her predetermined destiny."¹⁸⁶ Thus, Matilda does not end her life as a housewife or as a rundown prostitute like Santa or Nana.

Although Matilda is not confined to the same space as Nana and Santa, all of these fictional characters, at the end of their tragic tales, die. Emily Hind in an interview with Rivera Garza, asks the writer about the disease, which causes Matilda's death. Rivera Garza responds, that she is not a doctor or a psychiatrist, and she is not capable of

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Hurley's translates *Nadie me verá llorar*, into English, it reads as follows: "Women must be reinvented" (Rivera Garza 24).

¹⁸⁶ I translate the following text from Spanish to English, written by Carlos Fuentes in *La gran novela latinoamericana*: "Matilda, que no ha leído a Lambroso ni a Zola, rompe el determinismo y el encierro mediante la rebelión. Rebelión de las meretrices. O sea, prueba de la locura de Matilda rebelde contra su destino predeterminado" (Fuentes 371).

providing a proper biological explanation of Matilda's state. Rivera Garza does elaborate that "Matilda está enferma porque está viva. Todo cuerpo se marchita; todas las mentes se atrofian; todos caemos. Todos somos mortales. Todos estamos, de una o de otra manera, enfermos."¹⁸⁷

Rivera Garza's work also questions the ideologies of the Mexican political apparatus. "La palabra justicia está de moda, la palabra igualdad, la palabra progreso"¹⁸⁸ (Rivera Garza 210). These three words —justice, equality and progress— are popular words in México at the end of the nineteenth century, and their echoes remain to be true in México at the beginning of this twenty-first century since pain continues to be a constant sentiment among the nation and the people of México.

The relationship between Mexican people and history is similar to the relationship that Joaquín and Matilda have with history. "Los dos anduvieron siempre en las orillas de

¹⁸⁷ I translate the following lines from Spanish to English, taken from Emily Hind's interview of Cristina Rivera Garza: "Matilda was sick because she was alive. All bodies wither, all minds become degenerate, everyone falls. We are all mortals. We are all, in one way or another, sick" (Rivera Garza).

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Hurley's English translation of *Nadie me verá llorar*, reads as follows: "The word 'justice' is much in vogue, the word 'equality,' the word 'progress'" (Rivera Garza 192).

la historia, siempre a punto de resbalar y caer fuera de su embrujo y siempre, sin embargo, dentro. Muy dentro"¹⁸⁹ (Rivera Garza 210). Furthermore, Rivera Garza questions the genre of the historical novel by cementing her characters within a context where history appears to not have a direct impact on their life. Matilda and Joaquín do not form part of any battles because "se han perdido todas las grandes ocasiones históricas"¹⁹⁰ (Rivera Garza 209). The reader of this novel is not reading the story of the soldier who fought in the revolution or the intellectual who was in support or against the porfiriato. The change of perspective in Rivera Garza's novel provides different insight and information of the same past other historical novel address. The reader does not learn war heroes, but instead listens to the story of the porfiriato's failed attempts of civilizing the common people, since it yearned to have a domesticated and educated group of *decentes*. Rivera Garza's novel rather than confronting History in her storyline, she places the plot in an urban space and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 192: "Both were forever on the wet, messy banks of history, ready to slip and fall out its spell and yet always inside of it. Very much inside of it" (Rivera Garza 192).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 191: "They have missed all the grand historic occasions" (Rivera Garza 191).

medical institutions, displacing important historical dates or battles within the margins of Matilda and Joaquín's life. Rivera Garza affirms: "Walter Benjamin stated: The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. Could it be indeed that processes of state formation are nothing more than a continuous and convoluted "state of emergency" (Rivera Garza 28) Meaning that important historical dates and battles do not alarm Matilda and Joaquín because for them every single day comes with various forms of emergencies, especially for Matilda.

How is this "state of emergency" from the "past" relevant or necessary in 2010 for México? It involves a year of festivities for the people and a time for the government and intellectuals to refocus the already constructed and imagined community. Moreover, what are the transmitted residues from Rivera Garza's own translation of the three inbred texts that remain for the reader? Perhaps the transgression of her fiction and historical research lies in her ability to address and recreate a human condition based on objects from the past, found in old medical archives and translations. Rivera Garza presents this to a Mexican readership that under a false pretense of

uncovering hidden gems from the past finds the buried mirror, which forcefully presents the brutal and violent reflection of the present in México. It is at this juncture, where the reader only by reaching an epiphany can potentially be illuminated, if he or she realizes that the ruined objects of the past have been redeemed and brought into the present with a newly acquired meaning.

Conclusion

The multiple relationships among texts by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Federico Gamboa, and Cristina Rivera Garza's go beyond the social context they share, since they all focus on a young girl who becomes a prostitute. Through the figure of the prostitute, the three writers present México's modernity and bourgeois society's negotiation of the issues and concerns it faced during the porfiriato. The tension between the *mujer decente* and the *mujer indecente* represents a macroscopic tension of México 's modernity because, through them, the nation attempted to consolidate the new modernity on one hand and, on the other, maintain old traditional customs of morality.

This daunting task that modernity brought for Mexican writers can be further understood through Franz Fanon's notions of the native intellectual. According to Fanon, there are three phases that a native intellectual may undergo: assimilation, disturbed or revolutionary.

In some ways, Federico Gamboa and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, created texts that closely aligned to Fanon's concept of the native intellectual of the first phase:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country. This is the period of unqualified assimilation. We find this literature coming from the colonies the Parnassians, the Symbolists, and the surrealists. (Fanon, 222)

Although Spain or France did not occupy México of the porfiriato, General Díaz aligned his dictatorial regime similar to the French model. John S. Brushwood indicates that many parts of México City were little bits of France,

placed in México, aspiring to prove to others that the country was a land of cosmopolitan sophisticates.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, Gutiérrez Nájera and Gamboa used the French literary model as a primary source of inspiration. In the case of Gutiérrez Nájera, as Brushwood suggests, it is much more clearly that much of his work in *Revista Azul* published poetry followed the French Symbolists. Gamboa is not commonly associated with the Symbolists. Brushwood demonstrates that Gamboa is commonly and erroneously regarded as México 's only Naturalist, yet he frequently shows a choice associated with Symbolism.¹⁹² The work of Gutiérrez Nájera and Gamboa presented the problems, contradictions, and tensions in México associated with modernity.

In the first text and novel by Gutiérrez Nájera, this tension is presented through Magda and the children of the prostitutes. His main focus is the modern woman of the city who acts like a man since she drinks and smokes. Magda, placed in the countryside, meets Raul, with whom she falls in love. In this rural space Magda is unable to belong

¹⁹¹ Brushwood, John Stubbs. *México in Its Novel; a Nation's Search for Identity*. Austin: University of Texas, 1966. 138. Print.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 150.

since, according to Raul's mother, she is not a *mujer decente* like herself because she does not take care of the home or live a religious life. In the end, Magda realizes that the only possible route to decency for women is education. Magda reaches the same conclusion that Gutiérrez Nájera arrives at when he discusses the children of prostitutes, that the government should educate them since its responsibility is to ensure the development of a better country.

The now-classic novel *Santa* by Federico Gamboa presents the same problem. Santa, the once innocent country girl who falls for the trickery and deception of Marcelino, is forced to leave the house. Once in the street, Santa leaves her rural past and moves to the city where prostitution is presented as her only solution. Although Santa's downfall represents the "cautionary tale" for all other young women in México, twice in the novel she makes an effort to become a *mujer decente*. Santa's first attempt is at church and there the thought of changing her urban and modern ways emerges, but it quickly fades away when the priest, ordered by the *mujeres decentes*, expels her from the Catholic Church. The other instance is when Santa lives

with *El Jarameño* as a housewife, but unable to adapt to this way of living, she returns to prostitution.

Although Gutiérrez Nájera, Gamboa, and Rivera Garza's work presents the tensions that arose during México's nascent modernity, Rivera Garza presents the dichotomy of the "decent" and "indecent" woman through the same character, Matilda Burgos, rather than creating two different characters. Consequently, Rivera Garza's work challenges the novel presented by Gutiérrez Nájera and Gamboa because, for Rivera Garza, the issue at hand is much more complex than establishing a simple dichotomy between the "decent" and "indecent" woman.

Matilda Burgos embodies the *mujer decente* and *indecente*. She becomes the vessel for the narrators to constantly question homogenous thoughts created or promoted by the government. Despite the direct and constant questioning of canonical Mexican writers from the nineteenth century and Porfirio Díaz, Rivera Garza's work also questions México's present.

Rivera Garza's work can be understood better with Fanon's notion of the native intellectual of the second phase. The work of the "disturbed" writer goes back over the line of those in power by making an inventory of the

"bad habits" drawn from the past. As Fuentes states about "La generación del Crack" if their works had been published in 1932, they would have been sacrificed to the nationalists' hounds. Furthermore, Fuentes's affirmation intersects with Fanon's notion of the native intellectual because Rivera Garza, by drawing an inventory of bad habits, begins to totter and destabilize the system in power. The following statement from her doctoral dissertation makes this clear:

The lesson I derive from the proceeding pages is that when willing to see disorder, disorder shows its face to question modernity as a historical norm and to dispute 'every victory, past and present, of the rulers'. As it stands in this turbulent 1995, the modernizers and the Salinista middle-class are in far greater risk than the urban poor who throughout centuries of alleged disorder have managed to construct a city in which only the initiated can survive (Rivera Garza, 372).

Thus, Rivera Garza can be seen as an example of the native intellectual of the second phase who is characterized as

being disturbed.¹⁹³ She intends to remember the porfiriato through old legends, using Walter Benjamin's estheticism and concepts – the *konvolutt* and "Theses on The Philosophy of History" – to bring light and new interpretations to those legends of the past. Rivera Garza, the disturbed writer, utilizes history as the preferred medium to discuss the present by revisiting the ruined objects of the past, only to re-vindicate them by bringing them new meaning in the present.

Rivera Garza also undertakes a process of translation by rewriting her own work, and it is there where the reader finds the overarching residue of her work, the pained bodies which strongly resembles the porfiriato, since Mexican people continue to desire to reach modernity, despite the injustices that have taken place and continue

¹⁹³ Franz Fanon's notion of the second phase of the native writer is as follows: "In the second phase we can find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is. This period of creative work approximately corresponds to that immersion which we have just described. But since the native is not a part of his people, since he only has exterior relations with his people, he is content to recall their life only. Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of borrowed estheticism and of a conception of the world, which was discovered under other skies" (Fanon 222).

to take place within the sectors of society that remain on the fringes, hoping to be modern.

In doing so, Rivera Garza's most current work shifts over to the third phase of the native intellectual, as a revolutionary: *Dolerse: textos desde un país herido* is a direct criticism of the government and a call to the people of México who live in a constant state of horror and pain, unable to speak and in shock as a result of all of the modern day war, much of which has been created by the government itself.

Fanon indicates that in the third phase, the fighting phase, the native intellectual, after trying to lose himself in the people and with the people, decides to shake the people up, and turns herself into an awakener of the people, and out of this emerges a fighting literature.¹⁹⁴ In order to achieve this concept, the artist who decides to illustrate the truths of her nation paradoxically makes the past their focus, and steers away from actual current

¹⁹⁴ Franz Fanon's notion of the third phase of the native writer is as follows "Finally in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honored place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature" (Fanon 223).

events because "what he ultimately intends to embrace are in fact the castoffs of thought, its shells and corpses, a knowledge which has been stabilized once and for all. But the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities" (Fanon 225). Rivera Garza's earlier texts focus on marginalized figures of history and on those who have been defeated.

Consequently, Rivera Garza presents the brutal realities to the people, and also reinvents and changes the typical historical novel, which has been commonly used as the vessel that presents the stabilized and static stories of past victories. Rivera Garza represents the pained bodies that have been destroyed during the porfiriato. For her the value of the defeated in history, as Borges once explained, it is that they can achieve a degree of dignity because there is a higher moral standard in loss.¹⁹⁵ Ultimately the danger of Rivera Garza's work totters

¹⁹⁵ *Dolerse: textos desde un país herido* by Cristina Rivera Garza. In this passage she quotes Jorge Luis Borges and elaborates that people tend to side with those who have been defeated. Rivera Garza cites Borges: "Los hombres siempre han buscado la afinidad con los troyanos derrotados y no con los griegos victoriosos. Quizá sea porque hay una dignidad que a duras penas corresponde a la victoria" (Rivera Garza 30).

between turning the experience of the prostitute into a commodity or redeeming that experience because in this process of re-mythicizing "La Diablaesa" she runs the risk of becoming another malleable object of the past.

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Chapter 4

Fin de Siècle Apocalyptic Novelists: Amado Nervo, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Jorge Volpi

Introduction

In México, over the year's writers of the "Crack Generation" have turned to Apocalypse as a driving force in selected works of fiction in order to explore the fear and desire of the "End of the World".¹⁹⁶ Alberto Castillo Pérez speculates that apocalyptic themes were common in 1996 because of the approaching change of century and as a result thoughts of an apocalypse in the new millennium were widespread.¹⁹⁷ From this generation of writers Pedro Ángel Palou in 1995 is the first to write an apocalyptic novel, *Memoria de los días*.¹⁹⁸ Long after Palou, in 2000 Jorge Volpi published *El juego del Apocalipsis: un viaje a Patmos*. Both

¹⁹⁶ Ignacio Padilla in *La industria del fin del mundo* makes it clear that society's approximation to an apocalypse or "End of the World" is based on a fear and desire. This will be explained later on.

¹⁹⁷ Castillo Pérez, Alberto. "El Crack y su manifiesto." *Revista de la Universidad de México* 2006: 83-87. Web.

¹⁹⁸ This novel is one of the fundamental narratives of the "Crack Generation".

of these novels take place in 1999 right before the feared "End of the World" of the new millennium. Although these two writers had written on Apocalypse before this recent turn of the twentieth century writers in México had created apocalyptic novels long before.¹⁹⁹

The Mexican poet Amado Nervo in 1906 published *Almas que pasan* a collection of short stories. Within this collection there is an apocalyptic short story, "La última guerra", which exemplifies the fear of humanities extinction and a desire of the world to end. Nervo's work tirelessly centered on death, religion, and the afterlife; these themes are parallel to those in Palou and Volpi's novels.²⁰⁰ In Palou's apocalyptic novel *Memoria de los días* Nervo is re-presented as a fictional character: this novel deals with *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor*, a religious sect that desperately waits and prepares for Apocalypse in 2000. Amado Nervo's work not only draws upon similar fears and desires that writers from the "Crack Generation" present in their apocalyptic texts, but a character in Palou's novel is named after Amado Nervo. In Volpi's novel, *El juego del Apocalipsis* a Mexican couple mysteriously wins a trip to

²⁰⁰ Reyes, Alfonso. *Antología de Amado Nervo: poesía y prosa*. Prólogo. 2001.

the Island of Patmos to celebrate the new millennium. The main parallels within "La última guerra", *Memoria de los días*, *El juego del Apocalipsis* are that all of characters in these novels (im)patiently wonder or wait for the world to end.

Approximations to Apocalypse

The term apocalypse as understood by Louis Parkinson Zamora's in *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction* situates the term around apocalyptic novels by Thomas Pinchon, John Barth, Walker Percy and Latin American Boom writers; Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar and Carlos Fuentes. In her study, Parkinson Zamora affirms, "our modern sense of apocalypse is less religious than historical" (1) since these writers use apocalypse to address the space of their historical times. Parkinson Zamora observes, "Novelists who employ the images and narrative perspectives of apocalypse are likely, therefore, to focus less on the psychological interaction of their characters than on the complex historical and/or cosmic forces in whose cross-currents those characters are caught" (Zamora 3). I would argue that

this observation is partially true in Palou and Volpi's novels. Although their novels explore complex historical and/or cosmic forces, I would dissent with Parkinson Zamora's first observation, since the two novelists emphasize the psychological interaction of their characters. In other words, these two novelists present the internal world of their characters, as well as the historical forces that their characters are placed in. In her study, Parkinson Zamora also adds, "the historiographer Hayden White has elaborated this paradox in his discussion of 'narrativity,' arguing for the indispensability of narrative endings to comprehensible historical discourse, and to a moral understanding of culture" (Zamora 19). Thus, humanity desires to have an ending of time presented to them, even if this is a fictional one, despite the disbelief in the end of history (paradoxically because of this fictional ending).²⁰¹

Another writer of the "Crack Generation" Ignacio Padilla, in 2012 published *La industria del fin del mundo*; a book that consists of a series of essays that explore how

²⁰¹ Zamora, Lois Parkinson. "The Apocalyptic Vision and Fictions of Historical Desire." Introduction. *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*. Cambridge [England: Cambridge UP, 1989. N. pag. Print.

Apocalypse has been presented and constructed in the Occident for over two centuries similarly to Parkinson Zamora's study. Padilla's study is essential to understanding Palou and Volpi's apocalyptic novels, as well as Nervo's conceptualization of a world that has faced a possible end of time. Padilla defines the various forms of apocalypse throughout history and their impacts on society. He arrives to the conclusion that society is in a phase, as he considers, the world after the "End of the World" and as a result society is no longer able to imagine Apocalypse. Padilla identifies this symptom as "postapocalyptic melancholy."

Padilla alludes to this postapocalyptic melancholy in his study: he believes that in our disenchanted collectivities we are delighted with the vertigo caused by the new millennium because the will to death produces an active force that makes us feel alive, interesting, and dignified.²⁰² In this new millennium, for him, the task is not only to create a devotional account of the end because this articulation is also a political, poetic, and economic

²⁰² "En nuestras desencantadas colectividades, nos deleitamos en el vértigo milenarista y lo procuramos porque la voluntad de muerte produce en nosotros fuerza activante que nos hace sentir vivos, interesantes, dignos" (Padilla 19).

phenomenon.²⁰³ In other words, the films, self-help books, political narrative of the government, and literature all explore this fear of time coming to an end, and within these narratives there are various energies (erotic, aesthetic or political) for different purposes.

In this new millennium, the most concerning energy for Padilla is the government's fictionalization of the end of time. He alludes that prior to this new millennium the government had created a narrative where the end of the world was a possibility, and by doing so, it profited from people's fear. Simultaneously, Padilla appears to suggest that it was not just governments who used this fear to fuel their own political agenda's, since writers seemed to explore these fears through their novels as well. Thus, Padilla affirms:

Es verdad que los hombres necesitamos cuentos para sobrevivir el cuento de nuestra existencia. Esos cuentos, sin embargo, a veces van más allá de la simple resolución de nuestros miedos, dudas, y deseos. Quien escribe una historia —o

²⁰³ "El milenarismo no es sólo un relato devocional; es también un fenómeno político, poético, y económico: comprende todos los usos colectivos e incluye el modo de capitalizar la energía pánica convirtiéndola también en energía erótica, estética o política" (Padilla 55).

quien la cuenta o invoca- puede y suele también alterar la Historia. Esto lo han entendido los autores e interpretes de los textos apocalípticos (Padilla 61).

Consequently, within this context an author can potentially change History by telling, writing or invoking a story, even though this might suggest that a resolution to the fears, doubts, and desires of humanity will never be achieved. Padilla's concern is not the lack of resolution to these fears, but the abundance of interpreters of apocalyptic texts because government knowingly manipulates these fears in order to profit from those who need a story in order to survive the story of their existence. This results into stories that attempt to articulate an unidentifiable or inexplicable aspect of life, death, and not necessarily to help people who fear life after death, but to profit from these fears.

According to Padilla, the challenge of the writer is to identify the unidentifiable and narrate it with words what cannot be done, to tell life after death. For Padilla these apocalyptic images are an outline and gratifying attempt to articulate the inarticulate in order to find answers to the inscrutable questions that are laid out by

death, ethics, time, and matter.²⁰⁴ One of the sublime tensions and paradoxes of the human condition is embedded in apocalyptic novels in which man is going back and forth between hope and vengeance.²⁰⁵ On one end, hope leads men to envision a utopia, but for Padilla these are collective fantasies from which when one awakens these turn out to be nightmares.²⁰⁶ As Parkinson Zamora explains utopia within her study, "It is on this point that an apocalyptic vision may be distinguished from a utopian vision. Whereas apocalypse is impelled by the historical dialect between evil and good, and confronts the violence of the present, utopia focuses on a future, perfect world" (Zamora 17). As a result, as Padilla explains, Apocalypse is another form of nostalgia for a paradise lost, rather than a view of a

²⁰⁴ "Las imágenes apocalípticas son sólo eso: bocetos, narraciones autojustificadoras, intentos gratificantes de articular lo inarticulable para hallar una respuesta a las inescrutables preguntas que nos plantean la muerte, la ética, el tiempo y la materia" (Padilla 69).

²⁰⁵ "Entre las tensiones y paradojas de la condición humana sublimadas en el relato milenarista, se cuenta también el constante fluir del hombre entre venganza y esperanza" (Padilla 80).

²⁰⁶ "Las utopías, señala Gray, cuando apartadas de un sentido de la realidad, son fantasías de liberación colectiva que al despertar se revelan como pesadillas" (Padilla 82).

possible future.²⁰⁷ Considering Parkinson Zamora's affirmation, "Nostalgia for an idealized past is related to a longing for an idealized future, but the former is based on the undoing of historical experience, the latter on the completing of it " (Zamora 18). Palou and Volpi's novels present nostalgia for the past while constantly waiting for the future. Nervo's short story yearns for a different future while bearing in mind the destructive nature of the technological advances of the present.

The importance of apocalyptic novels, as Padilla states, is that some apocalyptic prophecies and some final dates have been catalyst for change or a time of self-examination.²⁰⁸ Humanity appears to make a change when it believes it is near the end of time, as if it was suddenly presented with a second opportunity. Padilla elucidates,

Pero hay algo más en este temor escatológico: la esperanza de que lo temido no nos hiera y de que sean otros, reales o imaginados, quienes padezcan el asedio, el ataque, la extinción. El fin del

²⁰⁷ "El Apocalipsis es una nostalgia del paraíso perdido antes que un vistazo a un futuro posible." (Padilla 82).

²⁰⁸ "Buena parte de las profecías apocalípticas y algunas fechas perentorias han servido como catalizadores del cambio y como legítimas arenas para el autoexamen" (Padilla 150).

mundo conjuga estas variantes del miedo hermanado con el deseo: *tenemos*, sí, un final estridente y espantoso para nosotros y para los nuestros, pero *deseamos* encima que ese final no nos toque, y que nuestra supervivencia – con el castigo a lo que nos oprimen y nos parecen injustamente dichosos– nos dé la razón. Esperamos que el colapso del estado de las cosas retribuya al cabo nuestras penas, modifique en nuestro favor la existencia y nos premie al fin con ser artífices, habitantes y consumidores de la Utopía (Padilla 177).

Within this context, humanity fears the end of time because it could be the end of their own existence, but desires it as well, hoping to be saved, so that all of the wrongdoers can be punished. In the end, Padilla's statement presents the selfish or merciless side to humanity; Nervo, Palou, and Volpi's characters are placed in situations where these tensions are explored.

Inevitably, Padilla's conceptualization of Apocalypse refers back to his notion of postapocalyptic melancholy. He believes that in our present it is impossible to identify

an Armageddon in our imminent future since an idea of the future cannot be conceived.²⁰⁹ Padilla states,

Sólo en un escenario como éste parece posible creer que se ha apagado el combustible apocalíptico: sin perspectiva, sin conflicto y sin mutación a la vista, no hay progreso porque tampoco hay miedo ni deseo. A cambio queda sólo el tedio, que es incombustible. Queda el helado aburrimiento que no nos impele ni nos paraliza del todo: el *Spleen* de la decadencia postapocalíptica simplemente nos agota sin consumirnos, como un mal sueño, y nos sumerge en un letargo que ya no tiene nada de revolucionario, menos todavía de defensivo o agresivo (Padilla 187).

Padilla's statement is similar to the sentiment in Nervo, Palou, and Volpi's novels since it can be associated with Charles Baudelaire's spleen, which can be understood as another articulation of postapocalyptic melancholy; this sentiment appears to be the only neutralizer of the devastating and subliminal power of the binomial, terror

²⁰⁹ "No podemos ubicar el Armagedón en un futuro inminente ni remoto cuando de entrada no somos capaces ya de concebir la idea misma de un futuro" (Padilla 182).

and desire that grips, unites, confronts, updates, and motorizes humanity.²¹⁰ Thus, Padilla arrives to the conclusion that time is circular like Nietzsche's eternal return. Perhaps this too, is true of Nervo, Palou, and Volpi's texts since they present dislocated portraits of circular worlds, where the chaos of time is the chaos of consciousnesses, where everything is a threat and nothing in reality will ever end because it seems like it never began, worlds where everything is possible because nothing is possible.²¹¹ Thus, the end of the world or the end of time, after all, is the constant update of our consciousness, reminding us that we will die. Padilla paraphrases Borges and states the following, let's say that the end of the world is a ghost, but we are the ghost; it's a ticking time

²¹⁰ "La melancolía postapocalíptica parece ser la única forma de neutralizar la devastadora y sublimante potencia del binomio de terror y deseo que atenaza, cohesiona, confronta, actualiza, y motoriza a la humanidad" (Padilla 187).

²¹¹ "Retratos dislocados de mundos circulares donde el caos del tiempo es el caos del sentido, mundos donde todo es amenaza y donde nada en realidad terminará jamás porque parece que no empezó nunca. Mundos donde todo se vale porque nada vale" (Padilla 194).

bomb, but we are that bomb; it is a monstrous idea, but it us who has created that monstrous idea.²¹²

Padilla's conclusion leads into Miguel López-Lozano notions of dystopian tropes found in Mexican and Chicano writers of the turn-of-the-millennium. This monstrous idea, as Padilla understands it, for López-Lozano is due to the effects of globalization, and within Mexican culture this means the latest phase of modern development.²¹³ For López-Lozano, apocalypse is part of a larger system, which he associates to Latin America's colonization (as it was first considered to be paradise on earth to the first explorers) and to him from these origins the conceptualization of utopia in the America begins.

López -Lozano associates these early conceptualizations of utopia with the first attempts of modernization in Latin America, since they promised

²¹² "El fin del mundo, después de todo, es la actualización constante de nuestra consciencia de que moriremos. Parafraseando a Borges, digamos que el fin del mundo es un fantasma, pero nosotros somos el fantasma; es una bomba de tiempo, pero nosotros somos esa bomba; es una idea monstruosa, pero somos nosotros quienes la hemos creado" (Padilla 195).

²¹³ "Through the use of dystopian tropes, turn-of-the-millennium Mexican and Chicano writers address the potential effects of globalization –the latest phase of modern development– on the landscape of cultures of Mexico and the borderland" (López-Lozano 40).

economic growth, but when these projects failed or were not fulfilled, it was when people began to imagine a dystopian society brought in part to the failures of modernization. For López-Lozano, "modernity gave birth to the concept of representative democracy that guarantees that each citizen has his/her own voice heard in the destiny " (40). Thus, people seemed to believe they were close to achieving utopia.

For Estrella López Keller, the concept of utopia dates back to medieval literature. She explains:

Utopía, el no-lugar, ha sido objeto de múltiples definiciones. Una suficientemente general, a la par que escueta, es aquella que se refiere a la utopía como «la descripción minuciosa de una organización social perfecta». Milton o Hartlib se referían a ella como «modelo de república ideal». Ese no-lugar de Moro, que con el propio neologismo no quiso dar a entender que fuera bueno o malo, adquirió en poco tiempo el significado de algo positivo. Organización social, república ideal; es decir, un modelo terrenal. El Paraíso no es una utopía, pues es esencial el aspecto de ordenación material de la

vida en comunidad, cosa innecesaria en espíritus seráficos (López Keller 8).

Thus, the notion of utopia rather than a world in our afterlife is understood as an ideal government system or republic, similar to López-Lozano's conceptualization of utopia as the first colonizers believed in the Americas. For López Keller, these ideal government systems have changed throughout history. She believes that in modern times one of the main factors of the origin of utopia was the development of the sciences, as well as the unfolding of the imagination through new mechanical reproduction of sound and images, things that seemed impossible at the time.²¹⁴ In earlier stages of early modern science, people shifted their fate onto progress promised by science, but as López Keller explains, this begins to change in the twentieth century:

²¹⁴ "No olvidemos que uno de los factores que estuvieron en el origen de la utopía en los tiempos modernos radicaba en las esperanzas puestas en el desarrollo de la ciencia, y la imaginación se podía desbocar pensando en huevos incubados artificialmente (Moro y Bacon) o en la reproducción mecánica de sonidos, imágenes o fenómenos atmosféricos (Bacon), por poner sólo algunos ejemplos, cosas que parecían casi imposibles. Pero mientras que las previsiones científicas de estos utopistas tardaron siglos en convertirse en realidad, toda la parafernalia tecnológica inventada por un Julio Verne está ya aquí, desde hace décadas, mucho antes de lo que él podía pensar cuando la ideó." Estrella López Keller (13).

Esta aparición de una literatura utópica pesimista es el reflejo de una quiebra de la fe en el Progreso, que parece apagarse en el siglo XX. No de forma rotunda, por supuesto, ya que es difícil que desaparezca de golpe una idea de carácter redentor y milenarista en su misma esencia, una idea en la que se ha creído durante tantos siglos, y que ha acompañado a numerosos movimientos religiosos y seculares, tanto de pensamiento como de acción, a partir de los primeros años del Cristianismo (López Keller 14).

The break from the possibility of achieving utopia lead society into a dystopian view of the world, which could be perceived as another form of apocalypse since it's a desire to end the current state of a system or institution, but when this is no longer a possibility pessimism and indifference amongst people becomes common, echoing Padilla's postapocalyptic melancholy.

Presumably, for López Keller the function of utopia and dystopia are very similar since both criticize the present by creating an alternative image of it. One fundamental difference between both is that a utopia presents an ideal reality and provides constructive criticism, but a dystopia

is not always a reaction to the present or a questioning of utopia.²¹⁵ López Keller understands dystopia as such:

La distopía o utopía negativa se caracteriza fundamentalmente por el aspecto de denuncia de los posibles o hipotéticos desarrollos perniciosos de la sociedad actual. En este sentido está mucho más anclada en el presente que las utopías clásicas; no parte de la razón o de los principios morales para elaborar un modelo ideal, sino que deduce un mundo futuro de pesadilla a partir de la extrapolación de realidades presentes (López Keller 15).

Thus, a negative utopia or dystopia not only rejects current developments in a society, which parallels Parkinson Zamora's affirmation, "At the heart of apocalypse lies the contradictory proposition that we will never be satisfied, that historical transformation will never be definitely resolved " (Zamora 16). In other words, dystopian texts present a nightmare of the world in the future parting from aspects of present reality.

²¹⁵ "La distopía, pues, no es un conjunto de prejuicios, sentimientos o ideas frente a determinados aspectos de una sociedad utópica (esto sería la crítica a la utopía, que ya hemos visto)" (López Keller 15).

Julio Ortega suggests that Latin-American literature in the nineties marks the end of utopian literature, but not in the sense of non-existent idealized worlds. For Ortega, the end of the century marks the end of great passionate narrators such as Carlos Fuentes, but it is neither the end of a cycle nor the end of history, but rather of utopia; which to him this means the end of radical creativity, one that is free from domesticating powers and from rhetorical hegemonies.²¹⁶

Hence, in this study, I am interested in how Nervo, Palou, and Volpi's texts denounce specific aspects of Mexican society. Parkinson Zamora's following observation of apocalyptic novels applies to this context, "Novelists who use apocalyptic elements, like the biblical apocalyptists, are often critical of present political, social, spiritual practices, and their fiction entertains the means to oppose and overcome them " (Zamora 4). In other words, Nervo, Palou, and Volpi's texts are critical of the their present, specifically people's attitudes or

²¹⁶ "El fin del siglo en las obras de estos grandes narradores pasionales será, por lo mismo, el tiempo no del fin sino del ciclo, no de la historia sino de la utopía; esto es, de la creatividad radical, aquella que está libre de los poderes domesticadores y de las hegemonías de la retórica" (Ortega 171).

the continual efforts of the government to modernize México through capitalism. For novelists in order to achieve this criticism, as Parkinson Zamora indicates, "They use the historical vision and narrative forms of apocalypse to explore the relationship of the individual, the community, and the novel itself to the processes of history" (Zamora 4). In other words, as Parkinson Zamora explains, the concept of apocalypse can be understood as the chronotope of these novels, as their organizing principle and their figurative center.²¹⁷ She adds, "It is what makes time visible in them and determines their relationship to historical reality" (Zamora 4). Lastly, as Parkinson Zamora adds, that Apocalypse forces the reader to ask himself, and the novelists to consider profound questions about human history and destiny, about the relation of the individual to the human community, and about the transcendence of suffering: the end of life and after.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ (Parkinson Zamora 22).

²¹⁸ Ibid, (23).

The World After the End of the World in "La última guerra"
by Amado Nervo

In more than one short story, chronicle, and poem Amado Nervo presents dystopian themes.²¹⁹ Undoubtedly, a great portion of Nervo's work, as Alfonso Reyes suggests, was an effort to find the best path between life and death.²²⁰ Nervo's work attempted to explore the unknown aspects of spiritualism, magic, and science.²²¹ His work always focused on religion and when this would not help him understand the world, he relied on science in order to explain the unexplainable: treating it as another form of religion.²²² Philosophy was also present in his work, specifically Fredric Nietzsche's "eternal return".²²³ Nervo's interest in these subjects was due in part to understand the relationship between life and death and life after

²¹⁹ According to Rachel Hayward Ferreira these are texts with dystopian themes: ; "La última guerra", "La última diosa", "La fotografía del pensamiento", and "El hombre a quien le dolía el pensamiento". One can also add "El fin del mundo" and "Apocalipsis".

²²⁰ Reyes, Alfonso. *Antología de Amado Nervo: poesía y prosa*. Prólogo. p 16. 2001.

²²¹ Ibid, (20).

²²² Ibid, (20).

²²³ Ibid, (20).

death. This led Neruo into science fiction in order to explore the society of his time, which to him seemed to be heading toward an apocalypse or the end of time. This is clear in his poem *Apocalíptica* found in *Perlas negras* a collection of poems; the poetic voice in the poem states, "y juró por el que vive en los siglos de los siglos que no habrá más tiempo" (Neruo 96). In addition, Doña Corpus, a character from his novel *El donador de almas* was "empeñada en que se acabará el mundo cuanto antes" (Neruo 30). For José Ricardo Chaves Neruo's work, along with other *modernistas* from his time period, exemplify the tensions they found between science and religion.

Neruo as a young boy spent many of his formative years learning about Christianity and practicing Catholicism, as he was close to becoming a priest. Later, as a young man, in México during Porfirio Diaz's modernization and indoctrination of positivism with the help of "los científicos", he developed an immense interest in the sciences. This newfound knowledge, according to Chaves, allowed Neruo to question the fundamental principals of religion, and in doing so he became fearful of it. Chaves explains "Miedo en sentido amplio, desde luego, miedo metafísico, pérdida de Dios, de asidero ontológico

trascendente y no sólo inmanente" (Chaves 20). Paradoxically, for Nervo the new sciences of his time lead him to an agnostic perspective. In order for Nervo to reconcile this religious loss as Chaves explains he adopts science to explain his faith. Thus, much of Nervo's work can be considered science fiction or fantasy. Chaves explains:

En las historias fantásticas de estos escritores, lejos de que el autor presente una situación o un elemento insólito sin ningún sustento lógico, se busca un apoyo en el discurso de la ciencia, el que, lejos de constituir un elemento negativo para el milagro, se vuelve su aliado (Chaves 20).

Thus, Nervo's work constantly intertwines his religious knowledge along with the then science from his time. For example, Doña Corpus, the religious character from *El donador de almas*, strongly desires the world to end. Ironically, Doña Corpus voices this desire to the doctor she works for, who comes to represent the scientific believes of the time, but to complicate matters even more this doctor has an abstract patient that is willing to donate his soul to him, and this patient is more of an angelic abstraction. This novel has been considered part of

occultism since it highlights Neruo's anxieties of life after death that neither science nor religion could explain.

According to Chaves, Neruo's religious deception does not manifest itself in a dramatic way, but as a good modern man he prefers his texts to be humorous, distant, ironical, and skeptical; highlighting his non traditional and progressive self which attempts to not maximize tragedy, but rather face it with a smile and distance. This also drives Neruo to not believe in miracles, but rather attempt to explain them with science or the pseudoscience of his time.²²⁴ Thus, one of the themes in Neruo's work is attempting to explain one of his biggest concerns, the end of the world or the end of time. He attempts to do so, all from a scientific perspective, avoiding the religious world-view of entering Heaven or Hell, as it is commonly believed in Catholicism.

²²⁴ "Esta decepción religiosa no es mostrada por el autor de una manera dramática, pues —como buen moderno— prefiere que dominen en sus textos el humor, el distanciamiento, la ironía, el escepticismo, que representan la contraparte 'progresista de Neruo, su yo no tradicional, que lo lleva a no querer maximizar la tragedia, sino más bien a aminorarla por la sonrisa y la distancia; y que también lo conduce, no a creer en el milagro, sino a querer explicarlo con argumentos de la ciencia o pseudociencia de su época, y que hoy nos resultan tan fantásticos como lo que pretendían explicar'" (Chaves 28).

Nevertheless, Neruo wrote numerous texts dealing with apocalyptic themes the main example of his apocalyptic text is "La última guerra", which is part of *Almas que pasan* a collection of short stories published in 1906. More specifically, this short story for López-Lozano critiques the dystopian use of technology.²²⁵ Rachel Hayward Ferreira states that Neruo speculates the end of the world and life in the near future, as a result of science and technology.²²⁶ Again, Hayward Ferreira affirms as well that "La última guerra" is Neruo's best-known example of an apocalyptic text, set in the far future.²²⁷ Hayward Ferreira explains that texts set in the far future, such as Neruo's short story, tend to be set in hypothetical worlds that have achieved an ultimate destiny.²²⁸ Neruo's short story takes place in 5532 and it takes place before World War I; in

²²⁵ López-Lozano, Miguel. "Utopian Dreams, Apocalyptic Nightmares: Rewriting Mexican History in the Times of NAFTA." Introduction. *Utopian Dreams, Apocalyptic Nightmares: Globalization in Recent Mexican and Chicano Narrative*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 2008. N. pag. Print.

²²⁶ Haywood, Ferreira Rachel. "The Impact of Darwinism." *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2011. N. pag. Print.

²²⁷ Ibid, (118).

²²⁸ Ibid, (119).

this short story the world comes to an end due to humanities actions and not as a result of a natural disaster.²²⁹ For Hayward Ferreira, it is fundamental to understand this text as part of the genre of science fiction and one that emphasis the impact of Darwinian science on Latin American fiction.

Hayward Ferreira's interpretation of "La última guerra" stresses the present Darwinian elements and concludes with Nietzsche's idea of the 'eternal return'. In this short story, humanity has achieved three revolutions, after each race has rained supreme over the other. "In addition to their physical evolution, humans evolve mentally. They now dedicate themselves to intellectual and spiritual pursuits, leaving any remaining tasks requiring physical force or action of any kind to the likewise evolving lower animals" (Hayward Ferreira 119). Thus, the premise of the short story is based on the oppressed species that are beginning to organize in order to cause a fourth revolution. "The rebels are the horses, dogs, monkeys, and elephants who carry out all nonintellectual tasks, who run the machinery" (Hayward Ferreira 120). Thus, these animals begin to plot and think like humans, since

²²⁹ Ibid, (118).

they desire to be like this new hegemonic race that oppresses them because "animals still occupy an inferior position in society. They still perform the meanest tasks, and their rights are determined for them by humans" (Hayward Ferreira 121). The most vivid example of Hayward Ferreira emphasis of Darwinian theory of Evolution in "La última guerra" is the following:

Animals eventually acquired an understanding of human language and developed a language of their own. Perfected humanity considered animals' language primitive and refused to learn it. In 5532 the role of the animal language changes from an inferior workerspeak, to the secret code of the rebellion, to the *lingua franca* of power (Hayward Ferreira 121).

Hayward Ferreira's interpretation of Neruo's short story begins to filter in Nietzsche's 'eternal return' since according to her, within the text, "equality is attained by those next in line on the evolutionary scale but, in order to be 'masters' as well as 'free' they exclude those on the rungs below" (Hayward Ferreira 121). Thus, the animals to achieve equality they must reproduce the apparatus of being a master as this is associated with freedom. This is

perhaps the strongest criticism Neruo presents in his text, as Hayward Ferreira suggests, "each new 'humanity' is no better than the last, containing the same tragic flaw and repeating the same mistakes, but with bigger guns" (Hayward Ferreira 123). Thus, the cyclicity of the text lays in each living creatures inability to breakaway from the system of continual oppression of another species in order to progress and achieve freedom. As Hayward Ferreira indicates, "each new revolution is represented as doomed from the start. No race has learned the lessons of the first three great revolutions, and it seems likely that this fourth revolution is not 'the last war' but simply the last in which humans will participate" (Hayward Ferreira 124).

The predominant aspect of the apocalyptic nature of "La última guerra" is not that the story takes place in the distant future after numerous revolutions nor that humanity has achieved a level of perfection nor that animals begin to take the place of peasants and develop their own language. The main apocalyptic aspect of the short story is subtle: it is the inevitable annihilation of humanity after the fourth revolution as led by animals, since according to the logic of the text; each new race always succeeds since

the previous one fails to recognize the flaws of the race before it.

In the last passage of this short story, the reader finds a mysterious narrator that "humanos son ellos y piadosos son para matarnos" (Nervo 196). This narrator is indifferent to this death since he knows all too well that this new race will have to face it's own destruction: "después, a su vez, perfeccionados y serenos, morirán para dejar su puesto a nuevas razas que hoy fermentan en el seno oscuro aún de la animalidad inferior, en misterio de un génesis activo e impenetrable" (Nervo 196). The final words from the short story echo Nietzsche's 'eternal return' since it all ends with the following: "surjan nuevas humanidades...para que todo recomience" (Nervo 196). Hence, Nervo presents a strange world in which humanity has achieved a level of perfection through progress only to be destroyed by an inferior species that longs to have its place, and as soon as that same species achieves their goal it will eliminate humanity only to be annihilated in the future by some other living species that longs for its place.

Therefore, Nervo's initial fear of a world without God gives way to "La última guerra" in which the Darwinian

beliefs of his time and Nietzsche's philosophical concepts of time, 'eternal return', attempt to provide an answer or explanation to one of the most fearful and puzzling questions, what is life after death? Nervo's apocalyptic short story, rather than providing a definitive answer to this question or presenting an alternative form of Paradise, concludes that inevitably humanity will perish from earth as a new species will come to dominate and annihilate it. For Chaves, Nervo's levity and fluidity is something that brings a contemporaneity among the religious readers of post-modernity, given this literary asceticism this Mexican writer is moved away from any accusations of heavy prose in a decadent style like Huysmans, D'Annunzio or Silva .²³⁰ Although, Nervo's work is not considered to be heavy prose, almost a century later Pedro Ángel Palou – aware of Nervo's literary impact in México and beyond, as well as his obsession with death, the afterlife, and cyclical time– fictionalizes Amado Nervo as the scribe who brings together various forms of written and oral languages

²³⁰ "Esta *levedad* y fluidez de la prosa nerviana es algo que le brinda una cierta contemporaneidad entre los calvinistas lectores de la posmodernidad, dada su ascesis literaria, y que aleja del escritor mexicano cualquier acusación de prosa pesada, al estilo decadente de Huysmans, D'Annunzio o Silva " (Chaves 29).

of *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor* the religious sect who desperately waits for Apocalypse at the end of the twentieth century right before the new millennium in 1999, similarly to Doña Corpus in Nervo's *El donador de almas*.

Apocalypse in *Memoria de los días* by Pedro Ángel Palou

Parkinson Zamora suggests that contemporary apocalyptic narratives usually recreate the past or project alternative futures, in which the present is brought into question.²³¹ In Pedro Ángel Palou's *Memoria de los días*, the narrator creates a fictional character named Amado Nervo and arrives to the same conclusion as *Fin de siècle* Mexican writer Amado Nervo: time is conceived cyclically where the past, present, or future are all part of an eternal process that will never end. I will also argue that there are two significant parallels between Amado Nervo the narrator in *Memoria de los días* and Amador Nervo the Mexican *Fin de Siècle* writer. The first parallel is the religiosity or fascination with apocalypse of the writer and narrator. The

²³¹ Zamora, Lois Parkinson. "The Apocalyptic Vision and Fictions of Historical Desire." Introduction. *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*. Cambridge [England: Cambridge UP, 1989. N. pag. Print.

second parallel is the need of both Nervos' to find a new language that explores the internal world of the individual. I will extend this last parallel, even further to include Pedro Ángel Palou since he to attempts to find a new language that explores the process of writing and time.

In "Cinco problemas para el novelista mexicano (y latinoamericano) en el nuevo milenio" as the title suggests Palou explores the concerns of Mexican novelist in this new millennium. Palou suggests that one of the main anxieties is the current shift in narrative from the "retos de confrontación con la estética" in Sergio Pitol and Carlos Fuente's narrative to current works that value an individual's experience or memory. According to Palou, narrating in the footsteps of Fuentes and Pitol can result into marginalization. He explains this while quoting the Argentinean writer Juan José Saer,

"Como dice bien Saer, "un escritor en nuestra sociedad, sea cual fuere su nacionalidad, debe negarse a representar, como escritor, cualquier tipo de intereses ideológicos y dogmas estéticos o políticos, aun cuando eso lo condene a la marginalidad y la oscuridad. Todo escritor debe fundar su propia estética...en un mundo gobernado

por la planificación paranoica, el escritor debe ser el guardián de lo posible", territorio que parece negado por definición en medio de la decadencia (Palou 177).

Hence, Palou holds the same value as Nervo since he to attempts to create his own esthetics, in light of new technologies, and in Palou's historical context these technologies are Internet and television. For Palou, the modern technologies of the twenty-first century value the arbitrary and mundane acts of any individual and their subjectivity like mainstream publications and self-help books. Palou's main interest, as a novelist, is the process of reflection and not so much, whether his fiction stems from his own personal experiences; instead he utilizes the experience or unconscious fusion of experiences to shine through his narrative.²³² Palou believes that humanity nowadays appears to only be interested in people's mundane acts, and to him this is do in part to humanities inability to identify with a novelistic hero because there is no such

²³² Palou, Pedro Ángel. "Cinco problemas para el novelista mexicano (y latinoamericano) en el Nuevo milenio." *INTI* 65 (2007): 171-77. *Jstor*. Web.

thing as heroism or a possibility of an epic.²³³ This worldview echoes Padilla's postapocalyptic melancholy since it is no longer possible to envision utopia or apocalypse because according to Palou people can no longer identify with a great epic. As Palou explains the function a novels plays on its reader,

Antes se leían novelas porque nuestro mundo era ancho y ajeno, insuficiente, hoy se leen memorias porque se considera que una vida, toda vida es autosuficiente. ¿No estaremos glorificando la banalidad? La crudeza ha sustituido a las verdades sutiles, incontrovertibles y la experiencia siempre individual, siempre egoísta con verdad o tintes de verdad -como en *Boys don't cry* o *Amores perros*- ha sustituido para siempre a la experiencia colectiva, social. Aquí y así nos tocó vivir. Lo privado se ha vuelto totalmente público, lo banal objeto de la mirada de *voyeur* del hombre sin atributos del siglo XXI (Palou 176).

Consequently, for Palou this glorification of banality is a symptom of decadence. Palou does not understand decadence

²³³ Ibid, (176).

as a loss of energy, talent or morale; on the contrary, it is a very active time in literature in which the novelist must address these deep concerns and uneasiness since nothing is clear or definite.²³⁴ Paradoxically, for Palou the main possibility within this decadent time is to face the loss of possibility, thus, repetition and frustration are the unbearable consequences; boredom and exhaustion are the greatest historical forces.²³⁵ In *Memoria de los días*, these are the futile possibilities.

Palou is aware that the current reader is in search of easily digestible readings, which appear to be mere recreations of the narratives presented in "reality television" or made available through new mediated forms of reading, and incorporates this narrative structure into *Memoria*. Palou believes that readers search for stories that appear real, even though they know it is all a fabrication that "appears real" like in television talk shows.²³⁶ Again, Palou aware of this type of reader, knowing or unknowingly in *Memoria* creates a text that attempts to

²³⁴ Ibid, (177).

²³⁵ Ibid, (177).

²³⁶ Ibid, (176).

provide a false sense of truth to readers since from the beginning of the narrative everything appears to be "real".

The overarching theme in *Memoria* is *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor*, a religious sect that embarks upon what appears to be a pilgrimage that begins in Michoacán and ends in Los Angeles; where they will wait for judgment day in Plaza Olvera. As Lieselot Baer explains, the heart of the action within the novel,

En *Memoria de los días*, Palou rehace el universo mexicano desde la fantasía, cuando Jorge Amado, luego de tomar algunos pulques, encuentra el valor para contar la historia de una niña que vendía playeras de las mariposas monarcas; hasta que una secta descubrió que ella era la reencarnación de la Virgen en pleno fin del mundo. A esa niña, la asedian un brujo de Catemaco y una curandera de Huautla. La novela exalta ritos y religiosidades del México moderno, en un contexto en que el régimen del partido único ha dado paso al gobierno de un presidente vitalicio, que cuenta con un Consejo de Historiadores, encargados de reescribir la

historia y censurar los hechos que manchan el sistema político (Baert 65).

Within the pilgrimage of the characters whose ultimate goal is to wait for the end of the world, as Baert indicates, lays modern México 's excessive religious rituals and corrupt political system.

On the surface, Palou's apocalyptic novel *Memoria* represents Amado Nervo as a fictional character and scribe/narrator who attempts to reconfigure the religious sect's journey *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor* who waits for the end of the World. This novel takes place in the near future in 1999 and it was published in 1995. The very first sentence of the novel states, "Escribo" making it clear to the reader that this is writing, set in the present, and in first person singular following the tone of someone who is retelling a series of memories. The narrative voice of fictional Amado Nervo begins, as if the world was approaching an end, creating a sense of urgency, "Soy el único que puede hacerlo ahora, cuando ya se han dado las señales inexorables del final. Los tiempos se han cumplido y yo ya he dejado de soñar: soy el escribano, el artífice de la palabra, el hacedor de la memoria" (Palou 13). As a consequence, from the beginning of the novel this fictional

Nervo will finally achieve what the "real" *Fin de Siècle* writer Amado Nervo desired to witness the end of time. On the other hand, the reader will be asked to consider the possibility of facing Apocalypse.

Paradoxically, this fictional Nervo tells the reader that he is the architect of words and the maker of memory. This informs the reader that the structure of the narrative, one person sharing their subjective experience to appear "real", but simultaneously Nervo the narrator is a fictional character based on a real historical man. In this context, the task of the narrator is to share his own memory, but to also merge together the collective memories of the different members of the religious sect. Ultimately this novel reads like fiction as the narrator suggests that he is the architect of words and memory.

The suspenseful arrival of apocalypse and Nervo's urgency to write it all down before it is too late are apparent from the beginning. This fictional Nervo asks the reader to consider the following,

Todo lo que ocurrió fue para *esto*, para que yo copiara, juntara y cosiera los fragmentos del Universo sin alterarlos, porque omitir o añadir una letra puede llevar a la destrucción del

mundo. No es ese mi único miedo; de cualquier forma el final se aproxima y yo sólo soy un vagabundo del tiempo, un náufrago rescatado en el espacio sideral de la pregunta, un loco al que le han sido dadas las glorias más grandes de estos instantes finales; conocerlos y guardarlos celosamente del olvido. Este es mi recuerdo y el recuerdo de los otros; ésta, la Memoria de los Días (Palou 13).

In this context, it is evident that this novel will no longer be told in first-person since this fictitious Nervo will not let oblivion steal the memory of others and his own, meaning that rather than re-writing the memory of others he is going to present it to the reader as it was presented to him. As result, the novel presents a series of characters and bazaar situations all out of order, as Lieselot Baert explains:

El líder de la secta es Dionisio Estupiñan, que es el último sacerdote de la Paz del Señor y que es además el nieto del redentor. Amado Nervo, poeta mexicano, acompaña el grupo comoperiodista. Hay también dos prostitutas, Herlinda y Emilia; un sacerdote, el Padre Truquitos; tres enanas,

Corina Sertuche, Piratia Morgan, Mascarita Sagrada; un cocinero, Patroclo Ramírez; Fray Estruendo y Rómulo Rascón que es en realidad el alter ego de Martín Ixcoátl; dos ciegos, Cristóbal y Sempronio, y la Vigia de la Noche de los Tiempos. Este conjunto emprende un viaje que va de Angangeo, Michoacán a Los Ángeles. El objetivo de la secta es transmitir el mensaje divino para llegar así a la salvación antes el Juicio Final, que según ellos tendrá lugar el 31 de diciembre 1999 (Baert 67).

The array of *carnavalesque* characters all have their experience and/or memory of this religious pilgrimage. Throughout his narrative, Nervo attempts to make sense out of all of these memories, in order, to present it to the reader. Thus, the novel consists of various voices based on the documents, conversations, letters, aphorisms or memories that Nervo compiles. As a result the narrative voice changes from one chapter to another. Baert highlights the religious sect's most significant episodes along with the characters that remember them,

La novela está dividida en veinte y dos capítulos, reagrupados en cuatro grandes

apartados. El primer apartado "El castillo de la pregunta", contiene los capítulos cero hasta seis: "el loco", "el mago", "la sacerdotista", "la emperatriz", "el emperador", "el hierofante" y "los enamorados". El segundo apartado "El duro deseo de durar" contiene seis capítulos: "el carro", "la historia", "el ermitaño", "la rueda de la fortuna", "la fuerza" y "el colgado". El tercer gran parte de la novela, "Incendio de amor", contiene también seis capítulos: "la muerte", "la templanza", "el diablo", "la torre", "la estrella" y "la luna". El último apartado, "La media noche de la luna", constituye al mismo tiempo el apartado menos elaborado, contiene únicamente tres capítulos: "el sol", "el juicio" y "el mundo". Se añade también una nota final, que aclara la novela en su totalidad. (Baert 66).

As this long list of chapter titles suggest, the novel constantly changes from one voice to another, which to Baert exemplifies one of the elements of the new historical novel since in each chapter the narrator employs heteroglossia.

The first three sections are comprised of six small chapters. Encrypted within the structure of the novel, the number of the beast "666" lays hidden, making for a subtle reference to *The Book of Revelation*. Baert describes other religious aspects within the novel *Memoria*,

En *Memoria de los días* Palou describe una secta, los últimos seguidores de la Iglesia de la Paz del Señor, y como este grupo percibe y prepara el Juicio Final, que tendrá lugar según ellos el 31 de diciembre 1999. La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor se fundó en 1866 por un cierto Padre Roquito. La secta se construye alrededor de la Milagrosa o la Virgen, que es en realidad Guadalupe Guzmán, una niña de catorce años y que, según los miembros de la secta, es un tipo de Jesucristo moderno. No cabe duda alguna de que Palou alude a las nociones bíblicas de "El Primer Tiempo", "El Segundo Tiempo" y el "Tercer Tiempo", que aparecen también literalmente en la novela. El "Primer Tiempo" refiere en realidad al tiempo de Moisés, "El Segundo Tiempo" es el tiempo de Jesucristo y el "Tercer Tiempo" equivale al Juicio Final (Baert 66).

Although, later on in this novel, the text appears to drift back and forth from one voice to another, scattered throughout the text are murmurs from the fictitious Nervo, "Lector mío, cucaracha o larva futura que pases tus pupilas sobres estas líneas, esto ha sido escrito para la muerte, para la debida prevención para recibirla" (Palou 18). Reminding the reader of all of the stages of time –past, present, and future– and to all potential readers since the narrator is aware that his life will end in death; echoing Amado Nervo's concern in "La última guerra". This also invites the reader to consider that this novel is aware of its own existence.

Through this form of metafiction Nervo the narrator includes his own comments throughout the novel while composing and bringing together all of the voices from the other members of the religious sect. Thus, as Baert suggest, Amado Nervo the character constructs himself as well within the narrative, and as a result there are two Amado Nervo characters within the text; Amado Nervo as created by Amado Nervo the narrator and the narrator Amado Nervo.²³⁷ This duality within the text does not consider

²³⁷ Baert, Lieselot. *La frontera entre ficción y realidad en las obras de Pedro Ángel Palou: Un estudio de los*

Amado Nervo, the poet who existed outside of the novel at the end of the nineteenth century in México.

Baert attempts to explore the importance or function of having a character named after Amado Nervo within this novel. For Baert, including an important historical figure into a novel does constitute as a significant element of the New Historical Novel, but from thereon it is difficult for her to identify what is being put into question or subverted by having a narrator named Amado Nervo. Baert affirms,

El efecto de la manera de presentar Amado Nervo es, por consiguiente, difícil de descubrir. Amado Nervo fue un poeta mexicano muy apreciado. Por eso, parece ilógico que Palou intente cambiar la imagen vigente de Nervo. Tampoco presenta una reconstrucción de la imagen de Nervo y por la poca información en cuanto al aspecto personal de Nervo, tampoco parece ser un intento de poner énfasis en un aspecto no conocido u olvidado de Amado Nervo. La única explicación aceptable parece ser, por la temática de la novela,

personajes de en la alcoba de un mundo (1992) y Memoria de los días (1995). Thesis. Universiteit Gent, 2010-2011. N.p.: Gent, 2011. Web.

introducir una nueva imagen del misticismo de Nervo (Baert78).

I will clarify her final observation in which the only logical explanation to include the name of Amado Nervo as the name of a character was to introduce a form of mysticism since this explanation is simplistic, and it is precisely what Palou hopes to avoid and simultaneously present to the reader. In the previous section, I have already demonstrated Amado Nervo's abundant concern with the end of time and humanities role in it, as well as his fascination with science and technologies of his time. Although Baert, might have arrived to the conclusion that Palou's only effort to include Amado Nervo was to present a new form of mysticism since the novel asks the reader to consider that as a possible explanation. Nervo the narrator states, "Vivir con nombre de museo, de glorieta, de calle, te permite cierta distancia con el mundo; una actitud contemplativa. Nada más. Si tengo que ver algo con el otro Amado, será por su religiosidad última" (Palou 15). This narrator explains to his reader in simple terms that the only parallel between Nervo the man and Nervo the character is their religiosity. Considering Palou's essay "Cinco problemas del escritor latinoamericano" and the literary

manifiesto of "Crack generation" where the intent of its members is to create rigorous literature meant for an elite, but produced in massive quantities elucidates beyond Baert's initial observations.

This generation of writers also intended to create novels that nourished themselves from other forms of literature, as Palou suggests; aside from the religious parallel between Nervo the narrator and Nervo the man, Palou utilizes this name since Nervo the man also wrote literature that voraciously nourished itself from other literatures.²³⁸ In *El Crack y su manifiesto*, Alberto Castillo Pérez explains that this group of Mexican writers believed that literature did not have to look to society for inspiration, but to literature itself; the novel nourishes itself from other novels and it looks for other themes and references in other novels.²³⁹ This implies that from the beginning these novelists intended to write "profound

²³⁸ "Este libro habla, como todos, de muchos otros libros sin los que no existiría; la tentación del palimpsesto, quizá. (Palou 1995: 278)" (Baert 94).

²³⁹ Castillo Pérez, Alberto. "El Crack y su manifiesto." *Revista de la Universidad de México* 2006: 83-87. Web.

novels", demanding more from readers.²⁴⁰ These novelists also proposed to write novels that were non-linear, complex in syntax, and polyphonic narratives in which they presented a grotesque or caricaturized representation of the world.²⁴¹ Perhaps, the biggest effort of this generation was to define their generation as one that separates and breaks a part from Boom literature.²⁴² For these writers breaking away from the literary tradition, as they presented it in their written manifesto, meant they would be marginal writers during their time. Nevertheless, outside of the context of their manifesto they were not marginal writers since from the beginning they had the support of their publishers: it was all a marketing strategy.²⁴³

The writers of the "Crack generation" desired to be part of the tradition of "profound novels", similarly to those same writers of the Boom and before. For Castillo Pérez, this notion of the "profound novel" first appears in John S. Brushwood's *México: A Nation's Search for Identity*. Castillo Pérez explains, "Esta tradición de la novela

²⁴⁰ Ibid, (84).

²⁴¹ Ibid, (84).

²⁴² Ibid, (84).

²⁴³ Ibid, (86).

profunda, según se lee en el *Manifiesto Crack*, habría sido inaugurada por Agustín Yáñez en 1947 con *Al filo del agua* (Castillo Pérez 86). In other words, Castillo Pérez affirms that in *Crack Manifiesto* these writers come to understand Brushwood's notion of "profound novel" as a tradition of novels and novelists who believed that creative work was the most genuine expression for an artist committed to his work.²⁴⁴ For Castillo Pérez, this term is utilized and re-presented in a completely different way by these novelists of the "Crack Generation" than how Brushwood had first explained.²⁴⁵ For Brushwood the main example of a "profound novel" was *Al filo del agua* mainly because it was not a social protest, *costumbrista* or anecdote novel. Brushwood explained, "The book itself is indeed "al filo del agua" literarily. And it is in a similar position as an expression of the Mexican nation because it transposes the reality of the moment of its setting, historically past, to the reality of the present, the moment of awareness" (Brushwood 8). Thus, perhaps the biggest paradox in this generation's literary manifesto is that it attempts to breakaway from past literary tradition,

²⁴⁴ Ibid, (87).

²⁴⁵ Ibid (87).

while still attempting to be part of it. Inevitably, this generation of novelist manifests their literary rupture from the past only in writing. In their manifesto, they suggest that words are one in the same; the old can be considered a novelty becoming a *cut and paste*, and which is why for Castillo Pérez they do not “crack” away from past literary tradition.²⁴⁶

On the one hand, these novelists of the “Crack Generation”, including Palou, write “profound” novels as they come to understand it, as a writer’s dedication and commitment to their creative work. On the other, their novels also prescribe to Brushwood’s notion of a “profound novel” as he first explained it with *Al filo del agua*. These novelists of the “Crack Generation” turned to narrative, which placed the historical past of their nation in the present or in the future in order to highlight a moment of awareness.

Prior to these writers of the “Crack Generation” and even Agustín Yáñez’s *Al filo del agua* Amado Nervo’s work of fiction explored both concerns associated with the “profound novel”. Nervo’s work has been associated and considered part of *modernismo*, a literary movement that

²⁴⁶ Ibid, (85).

felt the need to renovate language and break away from the literary tradition of the time. For Nervo, *modernismo* was very simple, as he understood that there were two literary trends; one that looked to the outside and the other that looked to the inside.²⁴⁷ He believed that writers who looked to the outside were the majority, and those who looked to the inside were the minority.²⁴⁸ Thus, Nervo and Palou both understood their work as part of a minority and not the majority, since both *fin de siècle* writers searched within the internal worlds of literature in order to create novels and short stories that nourished themselves from Mexican and Occidental literatures. Ironically, although Nervo and Palou both considered themselves to be marginal writers both of their works was/is disseminated across México and abroad. This sentiment of creating marginal work stemmed from their need to create new forms of expression, new forms of language in order to alter previous ways of understanding the world around them, particularly the present, as their apocalyptic narrative suggests.

²⁴⁷ Nervo, Amado. "El Modernismo." *Obras completas De Amado Nervo ...* Ed. Alfonso Reyes. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1920. N. pag. Print.

²⁴⁸ "Los que ven hacia afuera son los más. Los que ven hacia dentro son los menos" (Nervo 96).

Nervo and Palou both look to the future in "La última guerra" and *Memoria* in order to express their concerns of the present, which strongly parallels Yáñez's intent in *Al filo del agua* although this novel looked to the past. Ultimately, all three writers look to another time in order to explore the complexities of the present reality of their time and explored what it meant to be a committed writer to their work in order to produce new visions of reality that no longer re-produced the visions of the world that they had inherited. Thus, Nervo early on at the end of the nineteenth century, along with other Latin American and Spanish *modernistas*, affirms, "Hemos creado nuevas combinaciones, nuevos regímenes; hemos constituido de una manera inusitada, a fin de expresar las infinitas cosas inusitadas que percibíamos" (Nervo 99). Palou, along with the other members of "Crack Generation" at the end of the twentieth century share the same literary purpose as the *modernistas* since they too have a strong desire to create new forms and combinations of language that break away from the literary tradition of the past. Nervo and Palou's novels, along with the works of the literary enclaves they represent do not breakaway from literary tradition nor create a new language, but it is important to consider that

both had a strong desire to create new narrative that departed from the tradition of the time. Neruo and Palou truly believed their apocalyptic works had somehow taken them one step closer to this goal, although their texts suggest they were well aware that time followed a cyclical pattern.

Jorge Volpi's "Half Distance" Apocalyptic Novel

Jorge Volpi's novel *El juego del Apocalipsis* (2000) takes place in the Island of Patmos where John wrote *The Book of Revelation*. The time within the novel is 1999 right before the new millennium. This novel was originally published in 2000 and later published in *Días de ira* in 2011 as a collection of three hybrid texts which Volpi considers "half distance": *A pesar del oscuro silencio* (1993), *Días de ira* (1994) and *El juego del Apocalipsis* (2000). In *La industria del fin del mundo*, Ignacio Padilla suggests that *El juego del Apocalipsis* is an eccentric mix of *Los premios* by Julio Cortázar and *Doctor Fisher of Geneva* by Graham Green, and Padilla also believes this

novel could have been the essays within his book.²⁴⁹ Padilla explains that in Volpi's novel a couple –Andrea and Joaquim– travel to Patmos to discover that the end of the world happens everyday and that destruction and renovation as announced by prophets alludes to the suffering everyone is destined to experience.²⁵⁰

In addition, Ana Quiroga claims that Volpi confirms that *El juego del Apocalipsis* is an apocalyptic text. Quiroga adds that Volpi was on the Island of Patmos for a period of time while writing this novel and that the entire novel is fiction.²⁵¹ Quiroga considers Volpi's fiction a trip through a delirium of truth due to the excess that takes its characters to life or death situations.²⁵² Thus, for Quiroga Volpi's "half distance" text is a series of stories about insane characters.²⁵³ As José de Segovia suggests, the couple in *El juego del Apocalipsis* are alone in a hotel

²⁴⁹ Padilla, Ignacio. *La industria del fin del mundo*. México, D.F.: Taurus, 2012. Print.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, (88).

²⁵¹ Quiroga, Ana. "Días de ira: nuevo libro de cuentos del mexicano Jorge Volpi." Weblog post. *Ana Quiroga*. N.p., 17 May 2011. Web.

²⁵² Ibid, (N.p.)

²⁵³ Ibid, (N.p.)

room, only to later meet monsieur Loucas's a French millionaire and his bizarre group who are initiating the game of Apocalypse: Terry Anderson an Oxford professor, hired to provide the historical origin of the legend of apocalypse, a Korean couple and a Canadian couple also play the game: the true intentions behind this mysterious game is to see if it is possible to make a couple of newlyweds hate each other after two weeks.²⁵⁴ Before delving into Volpi's strange exploration of apocalypse in this text, it is necessary to understand what the writer considers to be a "half distance" fiction.

As Jorge Volpi explains, the three works of fiction in *Días de ira* are hybrid narratives since they cannot be considered novels because they are too short, and could not be short stories because they are too long. According to Volpi, *El juego del Apocalipsis* along with the two other works of fiction cannot be considered novel or short story, since it would be defined based on its defects or what it

²⁵⁴ De Segovia, José. "El apocalipsis de Volpi." *Entrelíneas* Dec.-Jan. 2004: n. pag. Web. "Solos en un hotel, conocen a un grupo de un millonario francés, que bajo la dirección de un profesor de Oxford, buscan el origen histórico de esta supuesta leyenda, en un misterioso juego que desemboca en tragedia" (Segovia).

lacks.²⁵⁵ Instead, Volpi suggests that these three texts should be considered "half distance" texts because they include the suspense of a short story and the depth in characters and action of a novel. Regardless, a "half distance" text as Volpi explains is perceived as a monster, a deformed child that cannot be tamed.²⁵⁶ In other words, as Volpi explains, if a short story is a dictatorship, then a novel represents anarchy; then a "half distance" text is more like a democracy (or an oligarchy) a world with a few respected laws.²⁵⁷ Volpi considers the following works as part of this "half distance" tradition; *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* by Gabriel García Márquez, *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo, *Aura* by Carlos Fuentes, *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, *The Death of Ivan Illych* by Leo Tolstoy, *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann, and *Bartelby, the Scrivener* by Herman Melville.

Although within Mexican fiction Volpi considers Carlos Fuentes's *Aura* and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* as examples of 'half distance' narratives in 1884 Amado Nervo published

²⁵⁵ Volpi, Jorge. *Días de ira: tres narraciones en tierra de nadie*. Madrid: Páginas de espuma, 2011. Print.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, (11).

²⁵⁷ Ibid, (12).

Otras vidas an earlier example of "half distance" texts. Nervo's collection of short novels or long short stories consisted of the following works of fiction; *El Bachiller*, *Pascual Aguilera* and *El donador de Almas*. All of these three "half distance" texts were initially published separately, and were later published as one collection. From the very beginning *Otras vidas* was understood as three short and strange *costumbrista* novels. They were considered *costumbrista* novels simply because they took place in México 's province and because they could not be placed as part of another literary genre.

In a sense Volpi and Nervo's "half distance" trilogies share many parallels since both first appear as individual texts and were later published as trilogies. In addition, both trilogies explore the complexities of the science of the time as well as possible psychological disorders such as schizophrenia. In both trilogies, the first "half distance" texts conclude with a character that commits suicide by castration. In this context, Jorge Volpi's "half distance" trilogy *Días de ira* parallels Amado Nervo's "half distance" trilogy *Otras vidas*. Furthermore, Volpi's novel *El juego del Apocalipsis* draws upon interests related to the fear and desire of apocalypse as Nervo explores this in

the "half distance" text *El donador de almas* and short story "La última guerra".

In his study, José de Segovia explains that in Volpi's novel apocalypse represents the end of history from which another emerges.²⁵⁸ Segovia turns to professor Terry Anderson, a character in the novel that represents the premier intellectual on Apocalypse.²⁵⁹ As a result, Terry understands apocalypse, as such, since according to him D.H. Lawrence first described *The Book of Revelation* as a revolutionary text. For Segovia, in Volpi's novel this notion of a revolution does not take place within a society or nation, but rather it manifests itself through the very personal interactions that the characters have with one another. As Segovia explains, Volpi presents a battle in the novel between good and evil within each character, specially the main characters as they are unknowingly tested by monsieur Loucas the French millionaire.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ De Segovia, José. "El apocalipsis de Volpi." *Entrelíneas* Dec.-Jan. 2004: n. pag. Web.

²⁵⁹ Terry Anderson, outside of this text existed: a Lebanon militant group held him hostage.

²⁶⁰ De Segovia, José. "El apocalipsis de Volpi." *Entrelíneas* Dec.-Jan. 2004: n. pag. Web.

Joaquim and Andrea's descent into destruction parallels monsieur Loucas game of the Apocalypse. Most of the games and rituals begin with a meal, followed by a historical lesson from Terry Anderson related to Apocalypse, and the game stems from that lesson. The scholar, begins by telling the following,

Primero, la leyenda. Según la tradición canónica, el Apocalipsis, el último de los libros que componen el *Nuevo Testamento*, fue escrito por san Juan, el discípulo más querido de Jesús, durante su destierro en esta isla de Patmos, usada tradicionalmente por los romanos como plaza de exilio debido a su lejanía y la aridez del suelo... (Volpi 58).

Terry Anderson's first explanation of Apocalypse details the origins of this legend. This character then adds the following,

La mayor parte de los estudiosos coinciden en que Juan de Patmos, como suele llamársele ahora, no es el mismo autor del Evangelio ni de las cartas atribuidas a él que figuran el *Nuevo Testamento*, aunque sin duda se trata de alguien que perteneció a la llamada 'escuela joánica', es

decir, al círculo de seguidores del apóstol
(Volpi 59).

As the novel suggests, Terry Anderson is the only character that elucidates topics and themes related to Apocalypse, and this historical explanation is presented explicitly through this character in the narrative. Thus, for brief moments when Terry Anderson explains Apocalypse the narrative appears to be an informal essay on the topic of Apocalypse. This fictitious scholar within the novel later delves into the etymology of apocalypse,

Como ustedes saben, en griego, *apocalipsis* significa 'revelación' (como se conoce el libro en inglés), un género profético muy en boga entre los siglos II a.C. a II d.C. Atendiendo a la etimología del término, sólo se puede *revelar* algo que está oculto; algo que está ahí, cerca de nosotros, o incluso en nosotros, pero que no somos capaces de ver sin la ayuda divina (Volpi 59).

After Terry Anderson's explanation of apocalypse, the narrative changes. In other words, the game controlled by monsieur Loucas and played by Joaquim and Andrea applies Anderson's lesson as a rule in the game. That is to say

that because the word Apocalypse in Greek means to "reveal", the players must reveal a dark aspect of their life that no one knows. As a result, monsieur Loucas selects Andrea to be the second to reveal an unknown aspect of her life. Andrea quickly confesses an incestuous secret relationship she had with her brother as a little girl. After a few other characters reveal unknown aspects of their life the game concludes.

After the game, the Joaquim and Andrea go to their hotel. Their Joaquim is furious with Andrea for confessing such a thing that makes him look like a fool: he knows it was all a lie because Andrea does not have a brother. Andrea responds, "Querían descubrir detalles escandalosos de nuestras vidas y yo me limité a colaborar con ellos. Han de estar emocionados con mi historia" (Volpi 66). This brief scene showcases how the narrator in the novel, constantly presents diverse aspects of the legend-surrounding apocalypse, and then ties that explanation to further along the plot, highlighting humanities perverse and evil side. Every night for a week the players meet to play the game: until the arrival of the New Year in 2000.

On the second day of the game of Apocalypse Andrea and Joaquim learn from Terry Anderson about the visions of the

apostle: who proclaims the last battle between Jesus and the Antichrist, the triumph of the Jesuits, the destruction of Babylonia (a symbol of evil) and the glory of the New Jerusalem, that is to say the Kingdom of God. Again, the function of this explanation within the text serves the purpose of taking the players to the next game, and not to instill fear of an actual end of the world. Monsieur Loucas, immediately after Anderson's explanation, suggests the following to the players,

Pero, una vez más, quizá nos sirva para entender mejor a san Juan y, acaso, para comprendernos mejor a nosotros mismos. Mi propuesta de hoy es la siguiente: no que imaginemos el fin del mundo (para eso están las aburridísimas películas de catástrofes), sino el fin de nuestro propio mundo individual...(Volpi 79).

As the passage suggests, the characters are asked to consider the end of their on world that is to say their life. Thus, in this text the notion of the end of the world is seen as part of a perverse leisure activity in which the players are not truly afraid of the world coming to an end.

Once again, Monsieur Loucas begins to select players to share with the group what they would do if they had one

year to live. As a result, from this game Andrea and Joaquim begin to disagree, since when Joaquim is asked about his plans: he shares that he would be on boat with Andrea to die in her arms, and she becomes upset because he never mentioned wanting to have children. Thus, constantly throughout the novel, after Anderson's lessons and Monsieur Loucas's games the couple argue in a melodramatic fashion which leads them to scrutinize one another to the point of intensely loving and hating one another.

In other words, the objective of monsieur Loucas, after each game begins to slowly take a toll on Andrea and Joaquim. Thus, by the third lesson the couple is no longer communicating with one another. Monsieur Loucas explains this lesson, "Es curioso – prosiguió el francés–, porque hay quien piensa que hoy, justo hoy, veinticuatro de diciembre de 1999, no estamos celebrando el nacimiento de Nuestro Señor, sino el del Anticristo" (Volpi 93). He desires to believe this because he genuinely considers that one human being is capable of encompassing evil. Terry Anderson explains,

El cristianismo tradicional nunca ha aceptado esta posibilidad –indicó Terry–, la cual, por otro lado, ha tenido bastante fortuna entre los

evangélicos y otras sectas fundamentalistas... ¿En qué se basan para creer algo así? Bueno, en su lectura literal de la Biblia afirma que, según Juan, el Anticristo es por encima de todo un impostor, un gran hipócrita....Al principio se comportará como un mesías. Será abyecto imitador de Jesús. De ahí que, para cerrar el círculo de los parecidos, ellos asuman que debe ser un hijo del demonio. En tal caso, como señaló monsieur Loucas, debería nacer hoy, veinticuatro de diciembre (Volpi 95).

As the passage suggests, the Antichrist later becomes a representation of evil, which within monsieur Loucas game of the Apocalypse is as follows "Para él, el Anticristo habitaba en cada uno de nosotros, era esa parte maligna y perversa que todos tenemos dentro..." (Volpi 133). Thus, near the final games, right before Christmas Eve, monsieur Loucas once again attempts to disrupt and destroy the relationship between Joaquim and Andrea. Monsieur Loucas tells Joaquim that "Ella no puede amarlo sin límites porque está segura de que va a ser correspondida de idéntica manera..." (Volpi 101) the French millionaire adds, "Así es, querido amigo. Lo lamento. Andrea le tiene tanto miedo a su

amor que prefiere destruirlo" (Volpi 111). Monsieur Loucas efforts are not in vain since after this conversation Joaquim following into this man's game tells Andrea the following, "Ahí, en el mismo lugar donde hacía casi dos mil años se la había ocurrido al Señor divulgar su plan eterno, el fin de nuestra historia, le dije: Basta de engaños, Andrea. En cuanto llegemos a México, no quiero volverte a ver" (Volpi 119). The relationship comes to end, which within the logic of the novel appears to be how apocalypse is understood as the narrator suggests, "Las relaciones humanas sufren el mismo inevitable destino. No hay que esperar terremotos, plagas o incendios: ocurre todos los días, cada hora... Sin que apenas nos demos cuenta" (Volpi 129).

In addition, this obsession with the figure of the Antichrist becomes the emblem of evil and all perverse actions one human being is willing to inflict upon another human being for ujmere joy. Thus, monsieur Loucas's game culminates on New Year's Eve as he attempts to achieve his ultimate goal of Joaquim and Andrea hating one another, but once on the boat waiting for the new millennium the Frenchman attempts to take his game even further. Monsieur Loucas encourages Joaquim to push Andrea off the boat,

"Piénselo—insistió—. Nadie lo sabría. Este viento podría arrastrar a personas mucho más pesadas" (Volpi 131). To convince Joaquim to push Andrea, monsieur Loucas suggests the following, "¿Sabe cuántas personas abandonan voluntariamente el mundo en Nochevieja? Bastaría un leve empujón, sólo eso... Y usted volvería a ser libre, querido amigo, completamente libre, como usted desea..." (Volpi 131). Instead, destiny had another plan since Joaquim in disbelief of monsieur Loucas's request reacts by pushing him away and as Joaquim explains, "Cuando alcé la vista, monsieur Loucas ya no estaba con nosotros" (Volpi 132). As a result, monsieur Loucas dies and his death was considered another accident, another one of those small tragedies provoked by "...el nerviosismo y la imprevisión ante la llegada del año 2000" (Volpi 132). It is not until the end of the novel that Joaquim, as well as the reader, discover that the entire game was based on a wage because monsieur Loucas was obsessed with the antichrist and not with the mythical Beast, with the psychological interpretation of Saint Augustus. Terry Anderson confesses to Joaquim that, "Monsieur Loucas nos aseguró que era capaz de lograr que, en menos de dos semanas, una pareja de recién casados terminara odiándose" (Volpi 133) and adds that the

Frenchman had insisted that he was able to convince Joaquim into wishing for the death of his wife.

Ultimately, monsieur Loucas even after his death achieves his goal: Joaquim and Andrea to hate each other and separating. Thus the French millionaires triumph marks an apocalypse between characters. As Jose Segovia suggests the characters in Volpi's novel hide their intentions and are shielded behind their masks, until the reality of their life manifest itself as an apocalypse.²⁶¹

Conclusion

The main connection of Nervo's dystrophic nightmare of México with Palou's religious sect *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor* and the Mexican couple in Volpi's novel is the fictionalization of Apocalypse, as well as an explanation of time, particularly of time after death. Inevitably, within all of these narratives one of the main purposes is to serve as revelatory text to its reader, as John of Patmos had first intended with *The Book of Revelation*. As Parkinson Zamora points out, one of the main goals of apocalyptic novels is "revelation, then, as much about the

²⁶¹ (Segovia).

capacity of language to conceal as to reveal" (Parkinson Zamora 15). Hence, these three texts rely on an apocalyptic vision that once hoped for "the radical transformation of old worlds into new, is [now] absent in the entropic vision" (Parkinson Zamora 5). Palou and Volpi's novels do not present any transformation of reality meanwhile Nervo's short story does since it is entirely based on a far future. Regardless of the three fictions presented by these three writers, as Parkinson Zamora affirms,

Apocalypse modes of apprehending reality appeal to us in our secular times because they rest on the desire that history possess structure and meaning, if only the structure and meaning we attribute to it in our literary forms and fictions. It is by dealing seriously with this fundamental human desire that novelists create fictions of enduring relevance (Parkinson Zamora 24).

On the contrary, these three novels clearly indicate that history does not possess structure or meaning. Considering the narrative structure of each text as a possible articulation or imagination of time or a conception of existence in which humanity succeeds at failing to

understand the nuances of time and revolutions. This is the case, in Nervo's short story which fails to predict the end of the world in 1999, similar to the religious sect in Palou's apocalyptic novel *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor*, as well as Andrea and Joaquim who fail to continue to be together despite that perverse game they unwillingly played in the Island of Patmos in 1999. Thus, all of these three texts focus on various possibilities to imagine the end of time or the extinction of humanity on earth. Lesliot Baer suggests that apocalyptic novels follow three potential conceptions of time. The first is biblical time, where the present time is presented in a linear form in a state of dystopia, longing for apocalypse in order to reach utopia. The second would be an entropic conception of time in the text, where everything appears to be controlled by mere chaos and randomness. The third would be cyclical conception time where the text seems to follow a spiral notion of time. Ultimately, although the three texts explore apocalypse, none actually reach the end of time, but through their structure and content do present one of the three conceptualizations of time that Baer suggests. In Nervo's "La última guerra" the conception of time is cyclical: the world in Palou's *Memoria* presents entropic

time, as everything appears to be in a constant state of chaos: Volpi's *El juego del Apocalipsis* presents a world in which time is understood as the relationship people share, and that to him follows a cyclical notion of time, as some live and others die as if in a spiral.

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Chapter 5

Fin de Siècle Novelists at the End of the Twentieth Century

I have considered how twentieth century fin de siècle Mexican novelists such as Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Cristina Rivera Garza explore the complexities brought by modernization during the porfiriato. The novels of these authors offer a re-reading of writers and themes from the end of the nineteenth-century. In pastiche narratives, these authors appropriate distinct historical documents and by doing so, history is emploted differently. Echoing Franco's notion of pastiche texts of this period, this form of narrative is more than copying or imitating because it requires the appropriation of another's style to make it say something different, allowing for "the productive space of discrepancy".²⁶² Thus, these Mexican "modern parodies" use "[...] 'someone else's discourse for his or her own purposes by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has (and which retains) an intention of its own' then 'two semantic intentions appear, two voices'" (96). In each chapter, Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou, and

²⁶² Franco, Jean. "Fin de Siècle in Latin America." *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature* 14.1 (1990): (7). Print.

Cristina Rivera Garza appropriate a series of documents, texts or images from the porfiriato in order to present their critique of this time period and of their present. These fin de siècle authors offer a re-reading of nineteenth century fin de siècle, and as a result they are critical of the late twentieth century in México.

In chapter one, the historical narratives of *Expediente del atentado* by Álvaro Uribe and *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz* by Pedro Ángel Palou present Porfirio Díaz as a fictionalized character. Both of these novels emphasize different episodes from Díaz's dictatorship. In both texts, the narrative structure is completely different. Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* is composed of an array of voices and texts. Palou's *Pobre patria mía* is comprised of only Porfirio Díaz's voice. These two writers re-contextualize history by incorporating it into their fiction, and in doing so they question Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial regime. Uribe's novel is in dialogue with Federico Gamboa's diary and with his own biographical research on Gamboa. Palou's novel is in direct dialog with Diaz's *Memorias*. Palou appropriates the general's diary and mimics the dictator's tone and thought processes.

In their novels, one finds elements from Seymour Menton's characteristics of the New Historical Narrative. In Álvaro Uribe's *Expediente del atentado*, five of the six characteristics are evident: metafiction, intertextuality, conscious distortion of history, famous historical figures, and it emphasizes the impossibility of ascertaining a truth in history. In Pedro Ángel Palou's *Pobre patria mía: la novela de Porfirio Díaz*, there are three of the six characteristics. In Palou's novel one finds intertextuality, a famous historical figure as the main character, as well as exaggeration. In both novels, Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic is also present, which for Menton is one of his six characteristics of the New Historical Narrative.

The narrative structure of these two novels exemplifies some of the synoptic concepts that White explains in *Metahistory*. Álvaro Uribe's *Expediente del atentado* is emploted like a satire and it is expressed with a satirical trope and a contextualist argument. On the other hand, Pedro Ángel Palou's *Pobre patria mía* is emploted like a tragedy through a metonymical trope and with a mechanistic argument. In both texts, the conclusion centers on the notion of the eternal return. They create a

narrative in which an aspect of the thirty-four years of the porfiriato is re-created. In their texts, Palou and Uribe destroy and reconstruct an aspect of Latin-American literature, as Volpi argues, in this case one of the most enigmatic times in Mexican history, the porfiriato.

In their novels, dictator Porfirio Díaz becomes the focus in Palou and Uribe's re-exploration and in this process both novelists re-present this controversial man in two distinct ways. Uribe's text presents Díaz as a powerful omniscient presence. On the other hand, Palou attempts to humanize Díaz, asking the reader to re-vindicate him back into history as more than just the evil tyrant that brought poverty to México. These historical re-creations and appropriations presents to readers' new articulations of emerging imaginaries.

In chapter 2, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Federico Gamboa, and Cristina Rivera Garza's novel explore México 's modernity, and in the context of prostitution. Rivera Garza's work questions many of the French naturalist themes and tropes as Gutiérrez Nájera and Gamboa presented them in their novels. In her work, Rivera Garza extends the common dichotomy between the characterization of the "decent" and "indecent" woman. In Rivera Garza's text, this dichotomy of

the "decent" and "indecent" is manifested in Matilda Burgos character rather than creating two different characters, as it was commonly presented in nineteenth century novels. Matilda Burgos becomes the vessel in which the narrator constantly questions homogenous gender behaviors as designed by the government. Her novel presents a re-reading of canonical Mexican writers and questions the discourse of psychiatry of the late nineteenth century in México.

Following Fanon's notion of the native intellectual of the second phase, Rivera Garza's work can be better understood as such. According to Fanon, the work of the "disturbed" writer goes over the line of those in power by making an inventory of the "bad habits" drawn from the past. In her work, she remembers the porfiriato through old legends, using Walter Benjamin's estheticism and concepts – the *konvolute* and "Theses on The Philosophy of History" – to bring light and new interpretations to legends from the past. Rivera Garza, as the disturbed writer, utilizes history as a medium to discuss the present. The third phase, the fighting phase is where the native intellectual, after losing herself in the people and with the people, decides to shake up the people. The native intellectual

turns herself into an awakener of the people and from this a fighting literature emerges.²⁶³

In order to achieve this, the native intellectual must illustrate the truths of her nation. In her work, Rivera Garza achieves this by focusing on the past, and steering away from the present because "what she ultimately intends to embrace are in fact the castoffs of thought, its shells and corpses, a knowledge which has been stabilized once and for all" (Fanon 225). In her work, Rivera Garza presents the brutal realities of the people specifically, prostitutes. In her novel *Nadie me verá llorar*, she does not present the stories of past battles or generals. Rivera Garza represents the pained bodies that were impacted by the porfiriato. For her, the story of the defeated holds more value. As Borges once suggested, the defeated could achieve a degree of dignity because in loss there is a

²⁶³ Ibid, (223). Franz Fanon's notion of the third phase of the native writer is as follows "Finally in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honored place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature".

higher moral standard.²⁶⁴ The danger of Rivera Garza's work would be to turn this experience of the defeated into a commodity.

In chapter 3, I explored the works of Amado Nervo, Pedro Ángel Palou, and Jorge Volpi's. These texts are symptomatic of a common concern during fin de siècle, a fear of the world, history, and time coming to an end. In Amado Nervo's short story, "La última guerra", we read a dystrophic nightmare of México. In Pedro Angel Palou's *Memoria de los días*, a fictional Amado Nervo tells the journey of the religious sect *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor* that prepares for the end of the world in 2000. In Jorge Volpi's *El juego del Apocalipsis* a Mexican couple mysteriously wins a free vacation to the Island of Patmos. All of these texts present different fictionalizations of Apocalypse, as well as a possible explanation of time after death. In these narratives, Apocalypse is revelatory, as John of Patmos had first presented it in *The Book of Revelation*. These texts

²⁶⁴ Rivera Garza, Cristina. *Dolerse: textos desde un país herido*. Oaxaca: Sur+, 2011. (30). Print. In this passage she quotes Jorge Luis Borges and elaborates that people tend to side with those who have been defeated. Rivera Garza cites Borges: "Los hombres siempre han buscado la afinidad con los troyanos derrotados y no con los griegos victoriosos. Quizá sea porque hay una dignidad que a duras penas corresponde a la victoria".

rely on an apocalyptic vision that hopes for "the radical transformation of old worlds into new, is [now] absent in the entropic vision" (Parkinson Zamora 5). In Palou and Volpi's novels, reality is not transformed. In Nervo's short story, there is a transformation of reality because it is entirely based on a far future. In Nervo's short story, the narrator fails to predict the end of the world. Similarly the prediction of the religious sect in Palou's novel *La Iglesia de la Paz del Señor* of the world reaching an end in 1999 fails. In Volpi's text, Andrea and Joaquim fail to continue to be together despite the perverse game they unwillingly play at the Island of Patmos in 1999. All of these texts present different ways to imagine a possible end of time or the extinction of humanity on earth, a common theme in fin de siècle writing.

As Lesliot Baer suggests, apocalyptic novels follow three conceptions of time. The first is biblical time, where the present time is presented in a linear form in a state of dystopia, longing for apocalypse in order to reach utopia. The second would be an entropic conception of time, where everything appears to be controlled by mere chaos and randomness. The third would be a cyclical conception of time where the text seems to follow a spiral notion of

time. Although the three texts explore apocalypse, none actually reach the end of time. In Nervo's "La última guerra" the conception of time is cyclical: the world in Palou's *Memoria* time is entropic, as everything appears to be in a constant state of chaos: Volpi's *El juego del Apocalipsis* presents a world in which time is understood as the relationship people share, which to him follows a cyclical notion of time. Overall, these three texts explore Apocalypse in very different ways. During fin de siècle, despite the century, the fear and desire of the end of time is a widespread belief that makes its way into literary texts.

In these three chapters, the writers turn to various aspects of nineteenth century fin de siècle. Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Jorge Volpi are aware of history's malleability and exploit the past differently. History is understood, as Enrique Krauze explains, as the weight of the past has sometimes been more present than the present itself.²⁶⁵ Krauze believes the past seems to be the only foreseeable future and in their historical narratives Álvaro Uribe, Pedro Ángel Palou,

²⁶⁵ Krauze, Enrique. Mexico, *Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997. (xiii). Print.

Cristina Rivera Garza, and Jorge Volpi exploit this belief. Although Krauze's notion of the past coincides with the historical narratives of these novelists, one aspect does not coincide. The historical narratives of these authors do not attempt to separate the past from the superimpositions of imagination, because to them this task is impossible to achieve. For these novelists, history is a series of superimposed imaginations. For them, the task as historians and novelists is to re-narrate and re-invent the superimposed imaginations of "the past as it came to be invented" in the nineteenth century. Above all, as Krauze suggests, one must consider a mature contemplation of Mexican history and all of the wrong directions it has taken.²⁶⁶ That way "Mexicans could begin to compose a new history for themselves, free of that part of the past that is only weight and sickness. The history of México could then begin to be a story of Mexican lives" (798). In this study, the writers look to the clout and sickness of the porfiriato, and attempt to make sense of the problematic aspects brought by the process of modernization, only to find that history like fiction largely depends on who emplots the story.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, (798).

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