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ROMANTIC ANXIETIES: REWRITING OF HISTORY AND PERSONAL TURMOIL IN FÉLIX VARELA'S JICOTÉNCAL (1826)

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Romance Studies (Spanish).

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ABSTRACT

Kelly A. Goldsmith: Romantic Anxieties: Rewriting of History and Personal Turmoil in Félix Varela's *Jicoténcal* (1826)
(Under the direction of Juan Carlos González Espitia)

Jicoténcal is a fictional rewriting of the Spanish conquest from the indigenous point of view. Rather than ascribing to a Manichean characterization of the Spaniards and Tlascaltecas as wholly good or bad, an attitude of ambivalence is directed at both the natives and the European invaders. The characters in the work are met with anxiety as they try to negotiate their identities during a time of political uncertainty. *Jicoténcal* not only honestly struggles with the conceptions of nation building in the midst of colonial rule and the union of two disparate cultures, but it also reveals the personal and cultural anxieties present at the time of its composition.

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First published in 1826, *Jicoténcal* is arguably the first Latin American historical novel, as well as the first example of *indigenismo* in the region (Pérez-Lagunes 21). The narrative, a fictional rewriting of the Spanish conquest from the indigenous point of view, portrays Jicoténcal the elder and his son, known as Jicoténcal the younger, both of them leaders of the Tlascaltecas. Father and son eventually battle against Cortés and his Spanish soldiers. Staying true to history, the novel ends with the triumph of Cortés over the indigenous people. What makes the work particularly striking is the way in which it depicts both the indigenous and the Spaniards throughout the text. Rather than a Manichean characterization of either side as wholly good or bad, an attitude of ambivalence is directed at both the natives and the European invaders.

Jicoténcal has not been the focus of much critical analysis, and in fact the studies have ignored many aspects of the work apart from historical discrepancies regarding its publication. For example, while it is generally accepted that the work was published in Philadelphia by William Stavely, there are critics who question the location of its publication. As Luis Leal points out, some critics believe that the book could have actually been published in Cuba rather than the United States (Leal 10). Scholars have also paid special attention to the work's authorship, arguing that *Jicoténcal* could have either been written by José María Heredia or Félix Varela, both of them from Cuba. Given the anti-colonization elements in the novel, the author likely remained anonymous in order to avoid condemnation from the Spanish government, as "Fernando VII […] often proclaimed death sentences in absentia for political dissidents of Spanish territories" (Sae-Saue 189). In contrast to previous studies, this analysis does not seek to

investigate questions of authorship or publication. Instead, it focuses on the varying roles which anxiety plays in the work and argues that the anxiety exhibited by characters within the work mirror the anxieties felt by Varela and some of his contemporaries during the nineteenth century.[1]

The term "anxiety" is broad and complex, therefore it is important to define what the word means in the context of this study. Anxiety has been a long-discussed topic by writers and philosophers since the time of the Greeks, and one that stretches to our day. Anxiety was also discussed during Varela's time. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a nineteenth century philosopher and theologian, looked at anxiety as it related to religion and the future. The Danish thinker viewed anxiety as a psychological experience of turmoil that is normal to human existence, just as sin, in his view, is likewise a normal aspect of humanity (Kierkegaard 21). Kierkegaard also looks at anxiety as it relates to the future. Arne Grøn explains how Kierkegaard saw anxiety towards the future:

> Even though we say that the future fills us with anxiety, we also provoke anxiety ourselves, because the future is not yet something determined. What makes us anxious is not only the future but also our preconceptions of the future: preconceptions that may make us unfree towards the day today and tomorrow. This means that a human being in this anxiety about the future strives or contends 'with himself' (4).

Thus, for Kierkegaard anxiety is seen as a concept of action; it causes us to reflect and act in response to our fears (Kierkegaard 137). Man must grapple with his own feelings in order to

[1] This work relies on Luis Leal and Rodolfo J. Cortina's 1995 publication of the work. The two critics attribute authorship of the novel to Félix Varela.

conquer anxiety, and ultimately, for Kierkegaard, this means analyzing one's own sin (Kierkegaard 20).

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, although later than Varela's text, also analyzed anxiety. While his conceptualization of anxiety differed from Kierkegaard's, some elements of Freudian anxiety are similar. Freud defines anxiety as "something felt," typically of an "unpleasurable character" that results in "motor discharge of definite pathways" (Freud 69, 70). Perceived anxiety results then in a physical or emotional response. As with Kierkegaard's theories on anxiety, it results in action. For Freud, however, anxiety is the result of perceived dangers that can be traced back to the gestational period in the womb, although he notes that such a definition makes it very difficult to qualify exactly what "danger" is (Freud 73).

What is most relevant for this paper in regards to Kierkegaard and Freud's theories on anxiety is their conceptualization of anxiety as a fomenter of action. In consequence, I define anxiety as an emotional response to a tangible or intangible object that causes characters to act. This anxiety and this moving of action are both related to the idea of impending future, as explained by Grøn, and therefore a connection with the contextual situation of the author in regard to the condition of former Spanish colonies can be plausibly made. Characters in *Jicoténcal* are driven by anxiety in response to conflict with superiors, feelings of love, and personal ambition or desire for wealth. I will focus on specific characters' anxieties and the ways in which these apprehensions provoke them to respond. Characters that will be discussed include Jicoténcal, Cortés, Magiscatzin, Ordaz, and Teutila. In parallel, I will discuss general anxieties that are present in the work. These anxieties, which affect a variety of characters, include those related to retaining personal freedom from government, modernization, religion, as well as anxiety related to self-glorification and personal gain. In each case, the anxiety felt by characters

is a result of the clash either with something external or within them. Anxiety drives the actions of the characters and, as previously mentioned, also hints at the anxieties possibly felt by Varela and his contemporaries.

Before analyzing anxiety in *Jicoténcal*, it is useful to first look further at the ways in which critics have approached nationalism and the propagandistic messages in the novel. Critics have questioned which literary movement the work belongs to and how it exhibits liberal Rousseauian values. Most scholars agree that the novel is situated "between neoclassicism and romanticism," exhibiting traits of both literary movements, including a strong tie to the political (Mitchell 8). *Jicoténcal* is undoubtedly, as one critic points out, "a novel about patriotism" (Herráez 56). *Jicoténcal* reflects the political situation in Latin America at the time, as well as the anxieties these newly formed governments and their citizens faced. Rousseau and the example of the French and American Revolutions were particularly influential throughout Hispanic America around the time of *Jicoténcal*'s publication (Mitchell 9). Many countries were in the throes of revolution against Spain during this period resulting in a new fundamental problem: how would the new governments approach the question of governance? In the case of Mexico, the setting of *Jicoténcal*, there was much dissension about how to govern the new country (Herráez 54). Mexico was debating whether continue Spain's legacy by forming a monarchy —as that embodied by Agustín de Iturbide, who was announced Emperor of Mexico in 1822—, or allow for a "popular" government, such as that represented by Guadalupe Victoria in 1823. *Jicoténcal* sought to give answers to these types of questions and influence political views at the time by "advocat[ing] a republican form of government" as demonstrated in "Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* and *On the Social Contract*" (Mitchell 7).

One particularly important aspect of Rousseau's *Social Contract* is his idea that while people within a society should be free, they can only be free insofar as they act according to the common good. Rousseau states the following:

> In order then that the social contract may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, secures him against all personal dependence. In this lies the key to the working of the political machine; this alone legitimizes civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses (14).

In order for government to function, then, individuals must be forced to do what is in the best interest of society. Critics have maintained that this is one of the major points of *Jicoténcal*, and with good reason: characters in *Jicoténcal* are constantly admonished to put the nation above all else, including individual identity and personal desire. For example, when the younger Jicoténcal finds himself in love with Teutila, who is part of an enemy indigenous group, Jicoténcal the elder asks him, "¿Me prometes que sabrás vencer tus pasiones en obsequio de tu patria y de Teutila?" (21). In other words, he expects that his son will put aside his personal feelings in order to honor his *patria*. By putting his countrymen before Teutila and his own desires, he is in fact doing good to Teutila and to himself as part of the social body. Faithfulness to the nation is held above all else and is considered to be beneficial for all members of a particular society, even at the expense of individual desires.

Placing this work within the context of literary Romanticism presents a fundamental problem: the individual's needs and desires, encouraged and venerated by Romanticism, are denied within Rousseau's political framework. In Rousseau's envisioned government one gives up personal freedoms in order to gain protection or some other benefit from government, resulting in a clash between the individual will and autonomy and society. While Romantic works in Latin America often had political goals, as in Esteban Echeverría's "El matadero" and José Hernández' "Martín Fierro," Romanticism's emphasis on the individual makes it difficult for the values of the movement to completely align with those present in Rousseau's government formula due to its social contract. As can be seen in the quote by Jicoténcal regarding his son's romantic interests, various characters in the work are frequently forced to choose between loyalty to the *patria* and loyalty to their own wants or desires. In the case of Jicoténcal the younger and his feelings for Teutila, he anxiously struggles to navigate his own desires with the best interest of his countrymen. Throughout the work, such struggles between personal feelings and nationalistic duty produce vortices of anxiety for Jicoténcal and other characters.

Ordaz, the Spanish soldier positively portrayed in the novel, is a prime example of another character who struggles with his personal feelings and questions authority. It is difficult for him to act in accordance with his nation's definition of the common good. In contrast to Ordaz' positive characterization, two characters in particular are heavily criticized for their negligence of the common good: Cortés and Magiscatzin. Towards the beginning of the work, the text contrasts the newly formed republic of the Tlascaltecas with the Spaniards, characterizing them as positive and negative, respectively. The narrator describes Hernán Cortés, stating that for him "el resentimiento y el interés personal se vieron en lugar de la causa del pueblo, en un momento tan crítico de tanta trascendencia. Las pasiones presidieron en el consejo

de la nación y los tlascaltecas fueron al fin víctimas de su discordia" (5). Cortés' "ansiedad devorante" for personal gain neglects what is best for the common good and drives him to make dishonorable decisions (136). His anxiety to gain wealth and power, an anxiety which he embraces, causes him to act impulsively and according to his own desires as he conquers Mexico. He snatches up jewels when he has the opportunity, and he uses Marina to satisfy his sexual desire even though such actions would have been likely looked down upon by both the government and the Church. The juxtaposition of Cortés' actions and the consequences that the Tlascaltecas face as a result supports the idea that the entire fault of the conquest comes down to Cortés' desire for personal gain and ignorance of the common good. Had he not been so selfish, the indigenous would not have suffered the ill fate that they did. But it would be a mistake to think that this negative characterization is only aimed at the Spaniards in the work. Let us examine the case of the indigenous character of Magiscatzin, who is criticized in a similar manner to Cortés, especially in the scene in which the Spaniards ask if the Tlascaltecas will form an alliance with them. It is when "principiaron las pasiones a acalorar la discusión" that Magiscatzin delivers his discourse admonishing the Tlascaltecas to join the Spaniards (6). The text subtly points to Magiscatzin as someone full of passion and emotions who acts according to his desires. As the plot continues to unfold, it becomes clear that Magiscatzin serves as a negative example to readers for his personal ambition and drive. It is his own desires—the desires of the individual—that oppose the common good of his nation and serve as his ultimate failure.

In spite of the novel's message through the characters of Magiscatzin and Cortés that it is negative to follow personal desires or passions when they do not agree with the common good, the work sometimes offers positive characterizations of characters who neglect the common

good for their own self-interests. Ordaz' case is particularly deserving of attention. It would make sense for Ordaz to question Cortés. After all, the work is highly critical of the Spaniards, so Ordaz' character, as the lone honorable Spaniard, understandably rejects Cortés' mandates. However, this points to the contradiction within the text surrounding republican governments and the problem of concretely defining the "common good," while also affirming the validity of following one's own personal inclinations. Ordaz experiences anxiety as he struggles to remain faithful both to his country and to himself. He is torn between Cortes' directives and what he feels to be true according to his own conscience. He is forced to grapple with the issues that arise when what is being prescribed as beneficial to the common good goes against the individual concept of good. This will be discussed further, but for now we look at the ways in which Ordaz examines himself and turns towards his emotions, and how these feelings reject the notion of sacrificing oneself for the common good.

Ordaz struggles with the particularly dishonorable action of Cortés taking Teutila prisoner. After witnessing his superior talk strongly to Teutila, the omniscient narrator states that, "Diego de Ordaz huía de sí mismo y, cual un tímido caminante al que unos bandoleros acaban de dejar en libertad, daba vueltas alrededor del cuartel, sin dirección ni designio. El aire de la madrugada fue refrescando un poco el volcán que ardía en su cabeza y en su pecho" (44). Ordaz begins to feel anxiety about Cortés' actions, and he also begins to recognize his feelings for Teutila. His inner emotions are compared to a volcano, an image charged with meaningful connotations. The volcano is a classically Romantic image of an unstoppable and dangerous force of nature. The word evokes images of a large mountain spewing forth fire and ash. A volcano does not obey the will of man, but operates according to its own natural system. Man is unable to stop it or reason with it. Ordaz is fleeing from himself because he does not know what

to do with these new found emotions. How does one react to feelings of opposition against a leader? What does one do when faced with a desire for an impossible love? Perhaps this is the first time Ordaz has to confront conflicting feelings, and it is clear that he does not know what to do with them. Given the image of the volcano, however, it is also clear that they are likely to take over him. He literally has to go outside for some fresh air in order to temper his passion. He is faced with anxiety as he attempts to navigate his personal feelings. His anxiety arises not only from the confusion that comes from questioning his superior, but also from his recognition of his own feelings. He is anxious to have what he desires—ultimately, Teutila and peace with the indigenous—but also torn as he considers disobeying Cortés. Rather than denying his feelings in order to comply with the expectations of his government, Ordaz ultimately embraces his anxiety and acts on it, resulting in his following his own desires.

The volcano itself, in line with the reference to Ordaz' passions earlier in the text, also metaphorically represents his inner emotions. After Ordaz is embarrassed by Marina when he is with Teutila, he hears people talking about the "volcán del Popocatepetl," an active and menacing volcano that the residents fear (54). This volcano is described as having a violent, "espantosa columna de humo," emitted "sin ceder a los vientos […] grandes" (54). The text notes that the people were afraid of the volcano not only for the fear of physical destruction, but also because the smoke and ash were "almas de los tiranos que salían a castigar la tierra," as though nature were being used for punishment (54). The text evidently points to the classic Romantic theme of man versus nature and presents man as helpless before nature's forces. Nevertheless, the volcano can also represent Ordaz' inner emotions and turmoil, and by extension, the inner desires and feelings of everyone else who is trying to negotiate their personal desires and needs with the duty that society expects of them. Seen in this way, the volcano is the

passion and desire of Ordaz, which is as scary as—if not more so—than nature itself. While Romantics consistently are seen as the "yo frente el mundo," their focus on the individual also points them to look inwardly, at themselves. Looking within and realizing the capabilities and potential of man can be distressing and terrifying and Ordaz is tackling this head on.

The image of dangerous nature as representation of inner sentiment reappears when Ordaz decides to climb the volcano, an action that results from the character's willingness to resolve his anxiety. This particular scene demonstrates the tension between social virtue and personal desire and the anxiety that arises from it, provoking Ordaz to confront unmanageable and fierce nature. Ordaz decides to climb the volcano for three different reasons. First, he is concerned with impressing Jicoténcal and proving his courage. Second, he knows that scaling the volcano will afford him some "prestigio religioso," as his courage to scale a volcano that is supposedly emitting "las almas de los tiranos" is a sign that his faith in God is strong (54). Third, and arguably the main reason for his decision to climb the volcano is his desire for Teutila. More than anyone else, Ordaz wants to prove to her that he is "valiente," and he wants to impress her (54). It is primarily his emotion and desire to glorify himself that drives him to tackle this feat. He is not scaling the volcano to prove that the Spaniards are superior to the indigenous—that is to say, he is not acting on behalf of the common good—but intends to reach the height of the volcano for himself and his own good. Furthermore, volcanoes, linked to the idea of nature in the New World, associate Ordaz with a distinctly American image, marking a slow and subtle shift in his communal identity. This transformation disassociates him from Spain, signifying that his personal desires are of more value than his country's interests. In one sense he is becoming his own country as he follows his emotions, but his decision to do so within the work ultimately makes him increasingly American. Ordaz is the perfect transitionary character for Varela's work.

As former Spanish colonies struggled to negotiate their identity, they had to find a way to reconcile their conflicting Spanish and indigenous heritages. Ordaz, as he transitions away from Spain and becomes increasingly associated with American imagery, functions as an example of the ways in which Spanish and American identities could meld together. Ordaz stands out as a propagandistic character, and Varela's work had the potential to demonstrate to readers that Spanish and indigenous heritages could coexist and come together to form a new, unified national identity, encouraging independence and autonomy from Spain as well as peace among inhabitants of the colonies who came from varying backgrounds.[2]

If the volcano is representative of Ordaz' emotions and the smoke spewing out of the volcano is his emotions coming to the surface and clashing with the world and society, then the fact that the smoke maintains a thick column above the volcano in spite of the wind represents the way in which government cannot suppress man's primary desires and emotions. While characters are expected to comply with what is best for their government, even at the expense of

[2] Ordaz' shift to an American commonality is reminiscent of Gonzalo Guerrero, a shipwrecked Spaniard who assimilated into Mayan culture. In Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera*, Guerrero shows his customary indigenous tattoos and piercings as well as his indigenous wife to Gerónimo de Aguilar —the other surviving Spaniard from the shipwreck—, indicating that his personal, political and cultural affiliations have completely shifted (Díaz del Castillo 22). Aguilar unsuccessfully tries to convince Guerrero to leave with the Spaniards by appealing to his Catholic faith, but Guerrero bids him farewell while asking him to leave some Spanish green crystal beads to show to his tribe (24). Cortés meets Aguilar and uses him to gather information about indigenous customs that would be vital to the conquest (24). Cortés is told by Aguilar that Guerrero is a high-ranking military figure among the Maya (24). Guerrero's willingness to attack the Spaniards demonstrates the extent to which he has united himself with the Maya, just as Ordaz' actions of loyalty to Jicoténcal and Teutila show how he becomes increasingly American. According to Díaz del Castillo, when Cortés learns of Guerrero's rejection to join his ranks the *conquistador* remarks, "En verdad que le querria haber á las manos, porque jamás será bueno dejársele" (24). Not only is Guerrero completely severed from his Spanish identity, but we also see Cortés as vengeful. As in *Jicoténcal*, the depiction of Cortés recorded by Bernal Díaz del Castillo shows the darker and less heroic side of Cortés' character.

their own happiness, Ordaz rejects his society's expectations in favor of his own wants, or perhaps shifting in favor of another commonality. The wind, try as it may, is unable to dissipate or suppress the volcano's ash. In the same way, Rousseau's vision for government, while certainly upheld within other parts of the novel, is being undermined in Ordaz' character. While the government can ask that its citizens put aside their own will for the sake of the republic, man continues to search and negotiate his desires, and will not always act in the interest of the government as a whole, but sometimes in the interest of himself alone. Nevertheless, by following his own desires, Ordaz continues to increasingly associate himself with the Americas, suggesting that he may be becoming a part of another government and acting in favor of another country's "common good."[3]

Interestingly, the young Jicoténcal is present for Ordaz' feat. As already mentioned, Jicoténcal is frequently expected to do what serves the common good and to deny his desires. He says to Ordaz, "Más de una vez he querido yo subir a la montaña y mi padre me ha contenido, […] faltaba un motivo que justificase nuestro poco respeto a la opinión general. Pero dime: ¿qué motivo has podido tú tener para exponer así tu vida sin necesidad?" (55). Again seeing the volcano as a metaphor for personal emotions and desires, this time for the younger Jicoténcal, he makes clear that he also wanted to climb the volcano—that is, to express or live out his desires—but that the older Jicoténcal has kept him from doing so. Over and over again in the work, the younger Jicoténcal is asked to deny himself for the sake of his people. Climbing the volcano for

[3] The column of smoke can also be seen as a phallic symbol, representative of Ordaz' sexual desire. It is his feelings for Teutila that first cause him to feel the volcano of emotion within him. His anxiety to reach the top of the volcano in order to win her affections drives his ability to, at least in this moment, reclaim his sexuality from societal constraints. Rather than viewing his sexuality as something shameful, he embraces it.

Jicoténcal would have not been accepted according to "opinión general" (55). Since Jicoténcal's desires were not in line with what is best for his people—that is, his desire to marry someone of an enemy tribe, which he is forbidden to do—at least until Marina's negative example converts Teutila into an indigenous woman of high esteem. Jicoténcal is confined to operate within the framework of the common good. Ordaz' willingness to allow himself to feel something that is forbidden within his society points to his character as one who subverts the government expectations, and he causes the young Jicoténcal to reflect on his own desires.

Relatedly, despite his personal rationale for climbing, Ordaz does ask Cortés for permission to climb the volcano before setting off on his journey. The text says that Cortés "lo acordó con poco miramiento […] exponiendo a Ordaz a perecer, arriesgaba la reputación de los españoles, porque la preocupación dominante haría mirar su desgracia como un castigo del cielo a tan impía temeridad. Mas las pasiones no son por lo común las mejores consejeras" (54). Cortés then, agrees that Ordaz may do this as long as he knows that his success or failure will reflect upon the Spaniards. Cortés is preoccupied with honor for his nation. Ordaz is also concerned with honor, but rather than desiring to honor Spain, he wants to esteem himself. The estimation that he most desires is not from Spain, but from Teutila. While his actions will serve the dual purpose of both honoring Spain and allowing Ordaz to honor himself and his emotion, he only acts out of the latter. The very fact that he is climbing Popocatepetl due to his love for an indigenous woman is in itself rebellious. It would be dishonorable for a Spaniard to show romantic interest in someone "inferior." Thus, his anxiety to impress and have Teutila drives his actions. By noting that individual passions are not typically best for society at large, Cortés implicitly critiques Ordaz' real motives for scaling the volcano even without being aware of them.

In spite of the rules and will of his *patria*, Ordaz finds himself in love with an indigenous woman. Rather than denying his emotions for Teutila, he embraces his anxiety for her attention and approval inwardly, and this is shown by his decision to literally climb an active volcano that instills fear and worry to everyone else. This anxiety that others feel toward the mountain represents the anxiety directed at their own inner wants and emotions. Unlike Ordaz, they are afraid to deviate from society's obligations and unable to confront their inner selves. It is possible that they do not know what they want and value, or perhaps that they do and find themselves too afraid to allow themselves the freedom to feel and pursue what they want due to fears about societal castigation or reprimand. By confronting his feelings Ordaz rejects the *bien común* and opts to embrace his own will without consideration for how it will affect the *patria*.

Teutila and Jicoténcal also struggle to operate within the framework of the common good due to their personal feelings for one another. When Teutila is telling the story of how her people were conquered by the Tlascaltecas, she quotes a conversation between the two Jicoténcals in which the younger leader of the Tlascaltecas expresses his anxiety to his father about his feelings for Teutila. He says, "Las leyes me prohíben casarme con una enemiga y el cielo me une a ella," and he proceeds to ask his father for advice on how to conquer the "pasión desdichada" felt by both Teutila and himself (20, 21). Man's rigid laws in this portion of the text are contrasted with the ways of heaven, or perhaps the ways of nature. Even though loving an enemy is not to the benefit of the common good, Jicoténcal recognizes that there is something natural about what he feels. Associating his feelings with heaven implies that his feelings are not bad, and perhaps are acceptable under God's law even though they are not accepted by that of man's. This implies that there is something unnatural and ungodly about Jicoténcal's inability to express and live out of his true feelings for Teutila. Furthermore, Jicoténcal's great anxiety that he feels due to the

presence of such feelings evokes sympathy in the reader, resulting in an empathy with Jicoténcal's suffering and a desire for the realization of his relationship with Teutila. As such, one can interpret the text as subtly critiquing the way in which society boxes Jicoténcal in according to what it deems acceptable, taking away his ability to live out of his emotions, while it also presents him as a hero that places the *patria* first.

At the end of the work, Teutila also acts according to her own passions outside of the common will or good. She feels deep anguish and anxiety over Jicoténcal's death and decides to take revenge. Her anxiety about what has happened and need to make things right drive her decision to attempt to kill Cortés. The text asserts that "Cuando la justicia social nos abandona, nos queda la natural," demonstrating that sometimes when legal means are not adequate, taking matters into one's own hands and acting outside of the law is acceptable. Jicoténcal has died and Cortés is still alive. For Teutila, this is a horrible injustice. In this case, social justice is inadequate. She has no means to legally go about righting the wrongs endured by her people. She decides that she will kill Cortés on her own, rather than go about punishing him diplomatically or within the confines of the law. Law and social justice become secondary to personal passion and vengeance. Furthermore, the text asserts that ultimately, justice belongs to God; it is He who punishes those who act dishonorably. Nevertheless, Teutila cries out, "Permitid que mi brazo sea esa terrible vengador que nos salve a todos de tanta desolación" (138). She asks to be able to bring justice to all the indigenous people who have been wronged by Cortés, and goes on to ask God to inspire her and prepare her for the task she is about to carry out, noting that "la justicia [es] de mi causa," and that her "causa es la tuya," that is to say, the cause of God. Due to Cortés' treatment of the indigenous, taking revenge against him would ultimately be to the benefit of all Tlascaltecas. While the text places Teutila's desire for vengeance within this social context, she

is ultimately motivated by her own feelings of grief toward Jicoténcal's death. Furthermore, she is taking matters into her own hands, acting outside of society's rules and regulations in order to take her revenge, as she plans to kill him with Ordaz' dagger. In the end, she fails. One scholar notes that her "failure to murder Cortés […] suggests not only female political inefficiency, but also that women can only be a sexual influence or sexual property. She cannot be honorable in the same way that Xicoténcatl is honorable" (Sae-Saue 200). While this may be true in part, this interpretation ignores the fact that Teutila has to fail—she can't kill Cortés, or else the story of the conquest would be altered in a way that would take away from the work's critique of the Spanish. The total desolation of the Tlascaltecas by Cortés evokes more sympathy in the reader and also causes the reader to look more negatively on Cortés. She may not kill Cortés, but the fact that she takes it upon herself to seek her own revenge and even plots to kill the Spanish conquistador demonstrates a reclaiming of personal agency. While it is in the best interest of the indigenous for Teutila to attempt to kill Cortés, her decision ultimately arises from her own desire for personal revenge than for her people. Also, the only other person with whom Teutila discusses her plans to kill Cortés is Marina. These two women, arguably marginalized and kept outside of society throughout the work, are in the end able to entertain and, in the case of Teutila, attempt to execute a plan of vengeance approved only by themselves. The text may be trying to uphold the idea that characters operate within the frame of the common good, but Teutila is not acting according to societal norms. Her rebellion is evident not only because she is operating outside of the law and taking vengeance into her own hands, but also because as a woman she lacks the societal approbation to have any agency to with which to begin. Her love for Jicoténcal and the anxiety she feels as a result of his death drive Teutila to act, even without official approval from the indigenous community. The text conveys a conflicting message, as it asserts

that Teutila is honorable for acting according to the common good, when she is actually operating outside of it.

As demonstrated, such individual struggles against society occur regularly throughout the novel. Through its rewriting of the *conquista*, *Jicoténcal* seeks to answer the question of how a new government should operate by creating a new nationalistic vision for Hispanic America, one that incorporates both aspects of its past—the indigenous, and the Spanish. Characters in the work are frequently expected to act virtuously, a trait that Rousseau found to be essential to a healthy society (Genova 59). In line with Rousseau's views on what he calls "the sovereign" (12), the novel constantly decries tyranny as it critiques the actions of the Spaniards during the *conquista*. Furthermore, there is little doubt that the novel intentionally "sirve para criticar al reino despótico de Fernando VII" (Mitchell 23).

In order to create a new functioning republic, it was absolutely vital that colonized regions created a sense of unity among their people. How could the new nations successfully move forward without a sense of belonging, shared history, and duty to the new governments? Thomas Genova argues that while *Jicoténcal* presents a narrative in favor of a republican government, it is an unequal one that privileges certain classes based on "family networks and racial phenotype" (55). Nevertheless, the very fact that the author rewrites the *conquista* in a way that looks negatively on the Spaniards and positively on the Tlascaltecas and includes characters who serve as foils on both sides, reveals a need to demonstrate that both sides are capable of honor and virtue. For example, while Cortés is consistently vilified, Ordaz serves to demonstrate that not all Spaniards are bad. On the other side, young Jicoténcal stands as an example of a "classical hero" while Magistcatzin is like Cortés, dishonorable, vengeful, and overly ambitious (McPheeters 407). The women also stand out for their roles in the work. Teutila is faithful to

Jicoténcal, heroic in her efforts to attempt to kill Cortés even though she is ultimately unable to do so. Marina begins as a dishonorable character, inciting strife between Teutila and Ordaz. In the end, however, she realizes that mistreating Teutila and obeying Cortés was misguided, but she is trapped. Not only does she have nowhere to go, but she is forever connected to Cortés due to her pregnancy with their child. Her repentance of her misdeeds as well as her pregnancy, however, can be interpreted as signs of hope that the Spaniards and natives can come together and create a new legacy going forward. In a place in which two very different historical heritages were converging together, the novel creates a story line and communal message that indicates that both heritages can be embraced in a way that honors and rejects aspects of both.

It is important to consider the role of anxiety related to personal freedom and government in *Jicoténcal* precisely because the text is written with the intention of politically influencing or mirroring the new governments that were being formed at the time of its publication. The anxiety within the work can be seen as a reflection of the author's anxieties during the 19th century. By extension, it can perhaps be seen as a universal type of anxiety that all individuals feel upon giving up their personal rights for the sake of the greater good. Romantic individual and political ideals clash in *Jicoténcal*, in a way that leaves the reader with a series of questions. First, who ultimately defines the "common good," and how? Thinking about the new governments forming during the 19th Century, this question is of utmost importance. Countries like Mexico may have been distancing themselves from a Spanish tyrant, but they may have felt anxiety about the ways in which the new government might continue to infringe their personal rights. Secondly, how does one negotiate personal feelings and desires with the common good of a nation? At what point is a nation infringing upon personal beliefs and actions? To what extent does one accept this infringement? While *Jicoténcal* may seem to whole heartedly promote a republican,

Rousseauian government, it also demonstrates the ways in which such a government can cause emotional anguish and anxiety by neglecting its citizens certain personal freedoms. Thus, the political message in the work may be considerably more nuanced than it seems within the context of literary Romanticism.

Relatedly**,** another general type of anxiety present in the work relates to modernization and machinization. *Jicoténcal* not only rejects the "machinization" of individuals within society, resulting in the questioning of Rousseau's ideas discussed above by encouraging individuals to resist operating as cogs within a political machine, but it also associates fear and anxiety with industrialization and the transition to modernity. A text that anticipates these anxieties in Varela's work is Thomas Carlyle's "Signs of the Times." In this text the 19th Century philosopher and writer who greatly influenced intellectuals and writers of his day anticipates the coming Industrial Age. While he sees industrialization as positive on the one hand for the ways it has benefitted man materially and physically, on the other hand the text is marked by anxiety, frustration, and even anger as Carlyle laments and criticizes what modernization is doing to men's spiritual and emotional inner lives. Carlyle argues that men cannot act according to their own needs and desires or spiritual inclinations, but that are coerced to submit to the machine—that is, an ordered, rigid way of behaving and seeking society's approval. He mentions that politics are particularly afflicted by this "Mechanism"; the "Machine of Society" is the "grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements" (Carlyle 38). He does recognize the need of some order in government, but for him society and politics are becoming too inflexible, ignoring the spontaneity, spirit, emotions, and intellect of man. As one critic points out, Carlyle's text cannot necessarily be seen as a source of inspiration for the author of *Jicoténcal* (Herráez 58). However, Carlyle's essay serves as a work

of counterpoint in relation to the novel, as both texts critique man's ever increasing dependence on machines and departure from personal agency, as well as fears regarding modernization in general.

Fears related to machinery and weaponry are repeated within the work. In some cases, this tension echoes the concerns of the indigenous about the Spaniards' weapons, which can also be seen in *Visión de los vencidos*.[4] In *Visión de los vencidos* the coming of the Spaniards is anticipated by a series of omens. Many of these omens feature visions of fire. For example, the first omen, a vision of fire in the sky, acts as a symbol of Spanish weaponry and the resounding boom of their guns, which were unknown to the Nahuas before the arrival of the Europeans (León Portilla 20). Later on in the work, the chronicler describes the firing of Spanish guns:

> Y cuando cae el tiro, una como bola de piedra sale de sus entrañas: va lloviendo fuego, va destilando chispas, y el humo que de él sale, es muy pestilente, huele a lodo podrido, penetra hasta el cerebro causando molestia. Pues si va a dar con un cerro, como que lo hiende, lo resquebraja, y si da contra un árbol, lo destroza hecho astillas, como si fuera algo admirable, cual si alguien le hubiera soplado desde el interior (42).

The sounds heard by the native onlookers are dizzying and frightening (León Portilla ibid). Not only are the weapons fear inducing, but the Spaniards themselves are cold and machine-like to the eye. The chronicler points out that the only parts of the men that can be seen are their white faces (León Portilla 42). The rest of their body is covered by iron: "Sus aderezos de Guerra son

[4] *Visión de los vencidos* is a collection of writings on the Spanish conquest by indigenous groups in the Central Valley of Mexico. It includes illustrations, narratives detailing the conquest, and poems. It chronicles the years leading up to Cortés' arrival and ends after Moctezuma's death. Unlike Varela's work, the Nahua text is consistently critical of the Spanish. For more information, see Miguel León Portilla's critical edition of the work.

todos de hierro: hierro se visten, hierro ponen como capacete a sus cabezas, hierro son sus espadas, hierro sus arcos, hierro sus escudos, hierro sus lanzas" (León Portilla 42). The Spaniards don't appear to be men, but machines of modernity. They have lost any appearance of autonomy in the eyes of the indigenous people, and instead appear as a mass of gray iron. This can be interpreted as a critique *avant la lettre* of industrialization and machinization, as the natives fear and criticize the Spanish use of modern weapons.

Similar critiques are present in *Jicoténcal*. The young Jicoténcal, responding to Magiscatzin's proposal to ally with the Spaniards exclaims, "La flaqueza humana ha acogido siempre con una tímida credulidad semejantes profecías pero ¡Desgraciado el pueblo que se deje alucinar por los que intentan sacar partido de ellas! Sus armas de fuego, sus palacios flotantes, no son más que obras de la industria humana, que se admiran porque no se han visto" (Varela 8). It is not necessarily surprising that the Tlascaltecas in the work—or the Nahua in *Visión de los vencidos*, for that matter—would find unknown technology to be negative. After all, coming into contact with the unknown, especially a gun, would be a particularly frightening experience. Nevertheless, although Jicoténcal is very clearly concerned with the Spaniard's weapons, his greater anxieties extend beyond the weapons to man's fabrication of things generally. Human industry is to be rejected rather than celebrated. His anxiety causes him to speak with exclamations, typical of Romantic texts that allow for free expression of human emotion. The transition to modernity is depicted negatively, as something otherworldly and foreign. It is possible that the text may be relying on accounts in the *crónicas* in order to accurately depict the fear that the Americans felt at the sight of the Spaniards' horses and weapons. However, such characterizations of technological advances may reflect Varela's own anxieties during a time of great uncertainty regarding the future of the former colonies.

Moreover, when Ordaz, a Spaniard, is struggling with questions of whether or not to obey Cortés, he asks the priest Bartolomé de Olmedo, "¿Conque no debemos examinar la conducta de los mandatarios y nuestro deber queda reducido a una obediencia tan ciega como la de una máquina al agente que la mueve?" (45). The image produced by this rhetorical question is one of a man operating as a cog within a machine. He is not able to look at his own values and act according to them; he is expected to do what is asked of him by his superior, regardless of the ramifications. Ordaz does not agree with Cortés and part of what makes him an honorable character in the work is his willingness to go against what his superior says. This quote and Ordaz' actions serve as a clear critique of the Spaniards because what they do to the Indigenous is dishonorable. It also shows Romantic features of the character, as individual purpose is held above government's imposed standard. Furthermore, when we consider the historical context of the work, Ordaz' character gives peninsular people in the American continent permission to join forces with the colonies fighting for independence. Spaniards living in the Americas are shown that a change of allegiance from Spain can be justified as the protection of the autonomy of the colonies, rather than fully condemned as an unjust exercise of power in places where peoples should be free.

In contrast with Jicoténcal, Cortés notes that, "Esta es la usanza de nuestro país, donde el soldado se presenta con sus armas hasta en los templos de Dios" (47). The Tlascaltecas ask the Spaniards to lay aside their weapons before entering their sacred space, out of respect for their people and gods (47). Cortés makes it clear, however, that his men will do no such thing. Thus, not even the church is free from the presence of machines. But, there is also a mix of the mechanical and the spiritual. The Spaniards are bringing machines of destruction into a sacred place, profaning the religion of the Tlascaltecas. The tone and context of the conversation

between Cortés and the Tlascaltecas is a critique of violence and the mechanical reaching into and affecting the church. The Spanish soldiers have no respect for the sacred, exemplified by the fact that they bring their weapons into the service. The juxtaposition of machines—guns—with the sacred space of the temple echo the anxiety and tension between free will and authority, as the machines detract from the sacred space by shifting attention from prayer, worship, and the expression of faith to one of fear and violence.

Not only does the close proximity of religious ritual with modernity evoke anxiety as individuals attempt to remain free from mechanical behavior, but the clash between the religions of the Old World with those of the New results in another sort of spiritual angst, one that points to the broader cultural anxieties felt by indigenous people at the time: Do we remain faithful to our religious heritage, or do we convert to Catholicism? Since Columbus' arrival, the Spaniards justified the conquest by evoking the importance of converting the indigenous peoples. In his letter to Luis de Santángel, for example, Columbus talks about the possibility of converting the indigenous as a way of bringing them under the Spanish crown (Columbus). In his second letter, Cortés describes the horrors of the Nahua religion and constantly argues that God was on his side, creating a divide between the religious beliefs of the Spaniards and the Nahuas (Cortés 11). When Bartolomé de Olmedo, the friar with the Spaniards, questions Teutila's faith, anxiety to prove that she knows God without the Spaniards results in her justification of her belief. Speaking to Olmedo she says,

> ¿Y quién te ha dicho, extranjero […] que yo no adoro al autor de todo cuanto existe? […] Confieso que sabéis más que nosotros en las cosas que inventan los hombres, porque veo que traías máquinas y que hacéis cosas a cuyo conocimiento no hemos llegado todavía; más para conocer la existencia de un Ser que ha

> ordenado el sol y las estrellas y que preside a toda la naturaleza, basta no cerrar los ojos a lo que éste nos dice continuamente (15).

This response has religious ramifications, as Teutila is responding to Olmedo's assertion that she does not know God. Teutila affirms that she knows the "autor" and "fuente de todas [las] virtudes," in spite of knowing less about the ways of man, with which Olmedo is very familiar (15). This display of knowledge on the part of Teutila critiques the Spaniards' Christianization of the indigenous by clearly demonstrating that the so called "*salvajes*" already knew God before the Spaniards arrived, legitimizing indigenous religious traditions insofar as showing that they are not lesser than Catholicism. The quote also supports the overall message in the work that the Spaniards abused the Tlascaltecas. However, Teutila's distinction between her religion and Olmedo's also points to a marked distinction between following man and following God and makes knowing God a personal relationship rather than a societal one. By admonishing Olmedo to open his eyes and see God in nature, Teutila points to the Romantic sublime. Man looks at nature and experiences awe and even fear at the contemplation of the power and incomprehensibility of it, pointing man to reflect on God. The key here is that seeing God through nature is dependent on personal feeling and inner reflection of what is seen. One must be moved by nature and open to the feelings and sensations that arise within them. Teutila is capable of this sort of inner reflection, but Olmedo is limited to the regulations of the Catholic Church which required believers to comply with their every statute, often encouraging church members to keep feelings outside of religion. Teutila's need to justify her religion and spiritual state to Olmedo is a result of the anxiety that she feels when Olmedo suggests that she does not know God. Again, Spanish values are seen in conflict with indigenous ones, and Teutila's ability

to defend her faith demonstrates the possibility of coexistence and cooperation between Spaniards and indigenous peoples living in the colonies.

Jicoténcal is a work that not only honestly struggles with the conceptions of nation building in the midst of colonial rule and the union of two disparate cultures, but one that also reveals the personal and cultural anxieties present at the time of its composition. Through the close examination of several characters' personal anxieties in light of more recent psychological studies we can see that often the desire for the common good is subsumed by more intimate and personal desires. We also see the ways in which modernity and technological advances incited fear and anxiety in characters resistant to the foreign and unknown. The cold, metallic descriptions of the Spanish contrast with the warmth and passion felt by Ordaz, showing the potential to break through hard exteriors. The fears felt by the Tlascaltecas upon seeing Spanish weapons also suggests that progression into modernity is not always better, as Carlyle points out. Perhaps Varela's text encourages readers to look not only to the future as a means of moving forward, but also towards the past. As characters' anxiety about the future, the actions of others, and their own feelings causes them to act, readers see that in *Jicoténcal*, despite the work's tragic end for the Tlascaltecas, there is hope for reconciliation and unity as colonies move towards independence.

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