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A Search for Identity: Frances Calderon de la Barca and Life in Mexico

Molly Marie Wood

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A Search for Identity:
Frances Calderón de la Barca
and
Life in Mexico

Molly Marie Wood
M.A. History
University of Richmond
1992

Thesis Director
Dr. Hugh West

Scottish-born Frances Calderón de la Barca, wife of the first Spanish minister to Mexico, recorded her observations and interpretations of mid-nineteenth century Mexico in a series of letters and journals. In 1843, she published Life in Mexico, an edited version of her letters. Acclaimed for its style and descriptive qualities, Life in Mexico also reveals the author's personal struggle to define herself and her role in Mexican society. Life in Mexico provides historians with a unique perspective into Mexico's cultural and ideological relationship with the European and American world.

A variety of both manuscript and published primary sources have been consulted, including the 1966 edition of Life in Mexico which contains previously unpublished material from Fanny's journal. Research into Fanny's life and times has uncovered reasonable explanations for the often contradictory and ambiguous nature of Life in Mexico.

Approval Page

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Hugh West

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A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY:
FRANCES CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA
AND
LIFE IN MEXICO

by

MOLLY MARIE WOOD
M.A., University of Richmond, 1992

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Richmond
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INTRODUCTION

Life in Mexico, an account of nineteenth century Hispanic culture by an outsider, provides historians with a unique perspective into newly independent and politically turbulent Mexico's cultural and ideological relationship with Europe and the United States. As historian William Prescott noted when it was first published in 1843, there was "no country more difficult to discuss in all its multiform aspects, than Mexico. . . ." ¹ Life in Mexico is a book that works to interpret not only Mexico, but Mexico's relationship to the other world that the author knew so well and so demands we understand what historian Norman Graebner, in Ideas and Diplomacy, called the "intellectual milieu" of both nations or regions.² Frances Calderón de la Barca's observations and interpretations of the world around her reveal some of the larger collisions of culture, values and ideology between European, American and Hispanic worlds in the nineteenth century.

Life in Mexico has great merit on many different levels -- as a literary work, as an eye-witness account of events in Mexico from 1839 - 1842, as a social commentary and as one of

¹ William Hickling Prescott, Review of Life in Mexico by Madame Calderón de la Barca, in The North American Review, LVI (Jan 1843): 146.

² Norman Graebner, Ideas and Diplomacy. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), vii.

the few accounts of the period by a woman. It had an immediate impact in the United States and Great Britain. During the war with Mexico General Winfield Scott of the United States Army adopted the book as an official guide for his soldiers in unfamiliar territory.³ Prescott reviewed the text, emphasizing that for

picturesque delineation of scenery, for richness of illustration and anecdote, and for the fascinating graces of style, no [work] is to be compared with Life in Mexico.⁴

Upon reading Life in Mexico for content rather than style, one cannot help but notice its contradictory nature. The Scottish-born author was at times the superior European traveller, critical of a backward Mexican society and culture, and at other times an enthusiastic supporter of the Mexico she experienced. The key to this contradiction and ambiguity liesⁱⁿ the author herself.

Frances Calderón de la Barca's interpretation of life in Mexico was shaped by the contradictions and variety of her own life. After a firm patrician upbringing in Edinburgh and a classical education, Fanny, as she preferred to be addressed,

³ See Stanley Williams, Spanish Background to American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 90, and Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, Maya Explorer: John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and Yucatan (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), 259.

⁴ Prescott, Review of Life in Mexico, 170.

immigrated to Boston, and then moved to New York a few years later, where she met her Spanish husband. A year after their marriage, the couple went to Mexico, where Fanny wrote the letters and journal that would make her famous. In later years while in Washington she played the role of a diplomat's wife before settling in Madrid. Fanny defies easy description or stereotyping. Her two and one-half years in Mexico reflected the great contradictions in her experiences up to that point, but also served as the major turning point in her life as she searched for her own identity.

ORGANIZATION

Due to the abundance of material in Life in Mexico alone and the amount of information available about Fanny's life and times, this thesis is limited by certain boundaries. The focus, as stated above, is on Fanny's particular interpretation of nineteenth century Mexico in light of her own search for identity and ambiguous nature. Part One, consisting of Chapters One and Two, concentrates on Fanny's life up to and including the years she spent in Mexico.

Chapter One is a biographical sketch emphasizing the period of Fanny's life before she went to Mexico. An exploration of Fanny's environment and her actions during these formative years helps clarify the observations she makes while in Mexico.

Edinburgh, Boston and New York all shape Fanny's outlook and intellect. By the time she leaves for Mexico, her questioning, rootless and contradictory nature is evident.

Chapter Two explores Fanny's life in Mexico, where she established her identity as an author. Her struggles with Mexican society are documented in terms of her previous experiences. Specifically outlined are her roles as a woman in Mexico, her contradictory comments about politics, social responsibility, the Hispanic culture and, most importantly, her experience with religion. Finally, Fanny attempts to bring her conflicts to some sort of resolution.

Part Two, consisting of Chapters Three and Four, explores details of Fanny's book itself. Chapter Three concentrates on the most outstanding example of Fanny's ambiguous nature while in Mexico -- her religious experience. Through the eyes of Fanny, a romantic-minded Protestant, we observe the power and strength of the Catholic Church in nineteenth century Mexico. She was enamored of Catholicism, but could not overcome certain problems and criticisms of the Church. Religion became, however, a critical component of her search for identity when she took note of the strength and pervasiveness of the Mexican Church. Eventually, she succumbed and converted, revealing a very real sensitivity to issues such as the contribution of American anti-Catholic feeling in the United States to the popularity of the Mexican American War, or as Fanny may well

have viewed it, the War of Northern Aggression. Chapter Four covers other examples, from the text, of Fanny's ambiguous nature in Mexico. A social commentary emerged as Fanny struggled with issues of race and nationality, class, and gender. Fanny incorporates each of these issues into her already established position in society. As in the case of religion, her contradictory views move gradually toward some sort of resolution. Her views of Mexican society are valuable for understanding the differences between nineteenth century North American and Hispanic American culture and ideology.

Finally, the Epilogue, Chapter Five, summarizes the remaining years of Fanny's life after Mexico, and the conclusions drawn from the first four chapters. When she settled in Madrid in 1854, she was at last confident of her place in society and had resolved the struggle for identity that had reached its peak many years earlier during her time in Mexico.

Research Note

In 1966, Doubleday published a new edition of Life in Mexico, edited by Howard T. and Marion Hall Fisher and containing previously unpublished material from Fanny's journals. The Fishers had initiated, some twenty-five years earlier, work on a new, completely annotated edition of Life in

Mexico when they obtained access to two of three original manuscript journals belonging to descendants of Fanny's older sister, Richmond MacLeod. The third journal apparently is not extant. The Fishers' intent was to add background to the events Fanny described, the places she visited, her everyday experiences, and to "round out from many sources the portraits of people whom the author met and knew."⁵ The Fishers include in the text the material from the Journal, carefully correlated with the original text, but differentiated from the original by a bolder typeset.

In comparing the published text to the Journals, the Fishers discovered that much of the material for publication came, in fact, from the intermittent journals that Fanny kept and not merely from the letters she wrote home from Mexico. In drawing from the journals Fanny revised and censored some material. The Fishers speculate, logically, that Fanny made many of the revisions for the sake of discretion and to conceal the identity of living persons. Her husband was concerned about the possible diplomatic impropriety of publishing an account of his wife's impressions of Mexico so soon after residing there. Most of the names that were left blank in the text were easily recognizable anyway. Fanny made other revisions, it seems, because her feelings and opinions changed with time and

⁵ Frances Calderón de la Barca, Life in Mexico Howard T. and Marion Hall Fisher, eds. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), xxii.

familiarity, which she acknowledges in her original text.⁶ Her writing reflected increased tolerance and respect for the Mexican culture and people. Naturally, on re-reading certain portions of her text written early in the trip, she felt compelled to adjust and temper her judgments. But even taking into consideration all these reasons, there is still much that is contradictory in Fanny's interpretations, leaving room for the historian to maneuver through the text, analyze and speculate about Fanny.

The New Yorker offered a typical review of the new edition of Life in Mexico, lauding the "copious, entertaining and illuminating notes. . . ." ⁷ The Library Journal stated that "a definitive edition of this quiet persistent classic has been long overdue."⁸ But overall, the 1966 edition, with its new wealth of information, excited little scholarly interest, with the exception of noted intellectual historian Charles Hale in the Hispanic American Historical Review. Calling the book "an exceptional piece of work," Hale believed it should "enhance the value of the work for scholars." The addition of the journal footnotes, he realized, would provide an even more

⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxii. See also, Life in Mexico (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) 23.

⁷ Review of Life in Mexico, edited by Howard T. and Marion Hall Fisher, in New Yorker 46 (17 Oct 1970): 191.

⁸ Review of Life in Mexico, edited by Howard T. and Marion Hall Fisher, in Library Journal 91 (1 Sep 1966): 3946.

uncensored and honest view of nineteenth century Mexico.⁹ To date no other scholars, Mexican or American, have pursued the additional information available about Fanny Calderón de la Barca's experience in Mexico.

For the sake of consistency and easy reference, in citations where the original text, as taken from the 1981 edition of Life in Mexico, agrees with the edited and annotated 1966 version, I cite the 1981 edition page number in the footnote. In other words, the 1966 edition is cited only when there is a difference from the original text, or a deletion from the original text.

⁹ Charles Hale, Review of Life in Mexico edited by Howard T. and Marion Hall Fisher, in Hispanic American Historical Review 47 (1967): 581.

PART I -- THE LIFE

Chapter One

"[I] Fell Asleep With My
Thoughts in Scotland. . . ." ¹⁰

Frances Calderón de la Barca achieved fame as the author of Life in Mexico and gained a solid reputation in the United States and Great Britain as a witty, knowledgeable and intelligent observer. Yet the text of Life in Mexico and the journals uncovered by the Fishers reveal a mass of contradictions and ambiguity. Fanny struggles, through her narrative, with issues of race, class, religion, and her particular role in Mexico as a diplomat's wife. Fanny's interpretation of her experiences in Mexico reflects her own personal experiences. Only by exploring her background and her life can we understand her ever-shifting positions. From the patrician background of her formative years in Scotland to the intellectual life of Boston, marriage to a foreign gentleman she met in New York, two and one-half years in Mexico and the travels of a diplomat's wife, Fanny's life was rootless and lacking in definition until she finally settled in Madrid more than a decade after her visit to Mexico.

¹⁰ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 62.

I. Edinburgh

Coming of age in early nineteenth century Edinburgh, Fanny acquired an intellectual and cultivated but ultimately practical outlook on life. She was born Frances Erskine Inglis (pronounced Ingalls) in Edinburgh on December 23, 1804, the fifth of ten children produced by William Inglis and Jane Stein Inglis. William Inglis, a Whig and a Mason, was a member of a branch of the legal profession known as the Writers to the Signet and an active member of an important, wealthy and aristocratic family in Scotland.¹¹ Men of William Inglis' generation lived under the legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment, the period in late eighteenth century Scotland of outstanding intellectual and cultural activity which encompassed, as Richard Sher asserts, "every aspect of life and thought." Middle and upper-class professional men, men of letters and intellectuals, dominated the provincial setting of Edinburgh and emphasized the status quo.¹² Lawyers represented an affluent class of highly intelligent, well-educated, well-read and usually politically well-connected men. In short they formed a sort of "cultural

¹¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxiii,xxiv.

¹² Richard Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). See introduction pp. 3-19 for Sher's definition of the Scottish Enlightenment. See also 10-13.

elite."¹³ William Inglis conformed to this description. Sher points to a radical shift in the importance of lawyers over Scottish clergymen in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Led by Sir Walter Scott, men of the legal profession became predominant in intellectual and literary life. They espoused new values, such as romanticism, and new literary genres, such as Scott's historical novels and the Edinburgh Review.¹⁴

The Edinburgh Review had an astonishing intellectual effect on early nineteenth century Europe and America. In-depth analysis and criticism replaced abstract reviews. Articles covered practical affairs, such as economics and politics, as well as literary efforts.¹⁵ Even Sir Walter Scott, who had disagreements with the Review and its editor Francis Jeffrey, acknowledged that "no genteel family can pretend to be without it, because independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with."¹⁶ William Inglis spared no expense in the education of his children, daughters as well as sons. Some of his children, including

¹³ T.C. Smout, A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830 (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 374-76.

¹⁴ Sher, Church and University, 308 and 317.

¹⁵ Douglas Young, Edinburgh in the Age of Sir Walter Scott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 139.

¹⁶ John Clive. Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802 - 1815 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 135.

Fanny, enjoyed periods of travel in Italy and Fanny also spent time in France and England.¹⁷ Given Fanny's family background and her later accomplishments as a published writer, it is likely she was exposed to the Review and its assessment of politics, practical affairs and literary criticism.

On the other hand, Scott's historical novels and romantic longing also converged on Edinburgh. The Waverly novels emphasized Scottish identity and the continuity of the past and the present.¹⁸ Somehow these two notions, practical and romantic, co-existed and even flourished. Douglas Young observes that "One ought to note the practical bent of most Edinburgh intellectual activity, coupled with considerable powers of innovation and imagination."¹⁹ A similar coexistence of practicality and romanticism exists in Fanny as well, along with some tension between her father's Whig loyalty (and presumably Fanny's) to England and a nagging sense of a particularly Scottish identity, encouraged by reading Scott. There were times in Mexico when Fanny seemed to long for Scotland, and many other times when she exhibited no such outward emotion. The environment, social and intellectual, and the activity around her fostered in Fanny early on a division of

¹⁷ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxiii, xxiv.

¹⁸ John Lauber. Sir Walter Scott (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 15.

¹⁹ Young, Edinburgh in the Age of Scott, 83.

the self: she was drawn equally to both reason and emotion, the practical and the aesthetic.

Years after Fanny left Scotland, her good friend from Boston, historian William Hickling Prescott, referred to a novel she had penned as a teenage girl, about which she was thoroughly embarrassed as an adult and never acknowledged. Prescott believed the novel was entitled The Offended One and thought it had been published in London.²⁰ Despite her later embarrassment, the completion of a novel was an impressive accomplishment for a young woman, reflecting her father's influence and the intellectual environment in which she lived. Fanny, exposed from a young age to the arts, to a classical education including travel, to the social life of elite Scotland and the literary criticism of The Edinburgh Review, developed a formidable intellect, still tinged with the romanticism of Sir Walter Scott and the influence of the romantic poets, especially Lord Byron, whom she quoted extensively in Life in Mexico.

Fanny did not, however, remain securely anchored in her father's world. In early summer of 1828, William Inglis, in bankruptcy as a result of poor investments, and in poor health, retreated to Normandy with his wife and daughters. He died only two years later at La Havre. Howard and Marion Hall Fisher speculate that some members of the family immigrated to Boston

²⁰ Roger Wolcott, ed. The Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott, 1833-1847 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1925), 315.

in a determined effort not to be a burden to their relatives in Scotland and to put past problems behind them.²¹ Certainly they also felt some shame at their bankruptcy, and perhaps were embarrassed to return to Edinburgh. Nine Inglis women, including Fanny, set sail for Boston in autumn of 1831. Fanny would arrive in her new country harboring a practical and self-reliant streak, a Scottish cultural tradition, the self-confidence of her birth and a sense of romantic adventure at starting over in a new place.

II. Boston

Boston, in many respects comparable to Edinburgh, nurtured Fanny's intellectual and cultural growth as well as her independent nature, but it was not the setting for Fanny to put down roots. Fanny, her sisters Richmond, Harriet and Lydia, her mother Jane and Richmond's four daughters came to Boston and promptly established a school on Mt. Vernon Street, which was also their residence.²² The Inglis school apparently enjoyed moderate success as the women enrolled the daughters of affluent and important members of Boston society. As part of the all-female Inglis contingent that immigrated to Boston, Fanny was

²¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxiv.

²² Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxiv, and Boston, MA, City Directory (1834), Massachusetts Historical Society.

confident in her abilities and successful in maintaining the school for girls. She took part in an educational reform movement in the United States which widened educational opportunities for young women. Women like those in the Inglis family operated many of the new schools in the Northeast in the early nineteenth century.²³ The Inglis women, with their educated and cultural background and the traditional strength of the teaching profession in Scotland, were well prepared to teach school in the United States. They quickly settled into their accustomed strata of society and mingled with Boston's elite. It seemed that Fanny would have been quite at home in the intellectual and social climate of Boston, but before too long she would discover that she did not fit neatly into accepted social categories.

The Boston Fanny encountered in the early 1830's enjoyed a stimulating intellectual environment. Van Wyck Brooks compares Boston in its ascendance to Edinburgh in its heyday: "Intellectual life was the fashion there, just as it had been in Edinburgh." Eventually, London overshadowed Edinburgh as New York would overshadow Boston, but "the social world of Scott...of the Waverly novels,...and the great Review, was reproduced...in the northeast capital for a generation."

²³ Nancy Green, "Female Education and School Competition: 1820-50," in Mary Kelley, ed. Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co, 1979), 128.

Harvard professors, men of letters and lawyers, concerned with history and politics, dominated this world.²⁴ No wonder the Inglis women chose to come to Boston when they left Europe. Fanny would have felt right at home in Boston, where intellectual life thrived and romanticism blossomed in a provincial setting. For a time, both Edinburgh and Boston were safely enclosed, at least intellectually, from the outside world.

Having arrived in Boston as a practical, resourceful and independent woman from Scotland, Fanny gained further confidence as a result of her association with intellectuals in Boston -- men such as William Prescott, George Ticknor and Henry Longfellow. She relished in her social connections. The women often visited the Nathan Appletons, a wealthy and successful merchant family, enjoyed the company of the Harrison Gray Otis family, among the wealthiest in Boston, attended parties at the James Lawrences and the John Lothrop Motleys, and corresponded with famous New York playwright John Howard Payne in addition to mixing with professors Longfellow and Ticknor of Harvard and the omnipresent Boston character William Prescott.²⁵ They were

²⁴ Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865 (NY: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1936), 90.

²⁵ Cleveland Amory, The Proper Bostonians (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1947), 92-3, 123; Robert Linscott, State of Mind: A Boston Reader (New York: Farrar, Straus and Co., 1948), 166-8; Frances Erskine Inglis, Boston, to John Howard Payne, New York, 4 June 1833 and [?] July 1833, typed transcript, Broadside

socially active and contributing members of the Boston community. Fanny was successful and self-sufficient. She enjoyed a place in society to which she was accustomed but she soon would betray her confusion about her role in the affluent classes.

In the first week of May, 1833, the ladies of Boston held a Fair in Faneuil Hall for the benefit of the New England Institute for the Education of the Blind. The table of Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis, Jr., wife of the powerful and wealthy merchant, included a painting by Miss Harriet Inglis, Fanny's younger sister.²⁶ The Fair was an important event for the reform-minded leaders of Boston society, who approached it with a distinctly self-important air. One newspaper account of the Fair gushed:

The Ladies' May Fair at Fanueil Hall is a perfect scene of enchantment...the treasures it has created seem to be animated and hold secret converse with visitors; their spell would almost open the eyes of the Blind!²⁷

About a week after the grand Fair, a small pamphlet entitled "Scenes at the Fair" appeared in town. The pamphlet, written in the form of a play, caricatured the Fair and spoofed the self-important members of Boston aristocracy who took part

Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

²⁶ Boston Morning Post (Boston), 13 May 1833, 1.

²⁷ Boston Morning Post (Boston), 1 May 1833, 2.

in the event. The pamphlet portrays, for example, Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis, Jr. as Mrs. Harrowby Grey, who stood watch over a display "covered with showy articles and surrounded by multitudes of persons of all descriptions, whom her marshalls are vainly endeavoring to keep back."²⁸ Fanny was blamed for a part in the writing of this pamphlet that brought a storm of public protest. The pamphlet contains the humor, sarcasm, and wit that characterize her later writing. Did the people of Boston know Fanny well enough to recognize her style, and perhaps her disdain for the attitude of some members of the community already? In any case, the pamphlet was considered an attack and treated as such.

Public rage was swift and severe. The Boston Morning Post tried to make a plea for understanding, commenting that the pamphlet may be "not so contemptible in point of wit and satire as it is represented to be" and that it indeed "contains many vastly clever wits, however mean may have been the motives of the author in publishing it." The Boston paper also ascribed authorship to "a foreigner by the name of Parish who has received most polite intentions from the very individuals he has attempted to hold up to ridicule."²⁹ The foreigner, George

²⁸ George Parish, Jr. "Scenes at the Fair" (Boston: J.B. Dow, 1833), 3,6. Houghton Library, Cambridge. [Authorship has also been ascribed to Frances Erskine Inglis as noted in the National Union Manuscript Catalog and in the Fishers' Introduction.]

²⁹ Boston Morning Post (Boston), 18 May 1833, 2.

Parish, issued a formal letter of apology for the pamphlet on July 24, 1833, maintaining that he alone wrote the pamphlet.³⁰ The Fishers believe Fanny wrote the pamphlet in conjunction with George Parish, "a young man known to admire [Fanny]," and that the Boston community seriously doubted the truth of Parish's confession.³¹ Before Parish's apology appeared in print, Fanny defended herself in private correspondence. In a letter to John Howard Payne, now living in New York having returned from a long sojourn in Europe, she complained, "I should have written to you before now, if I had not been driven nearly distraught by the noise, fury and violence which have been raging in this heretofore peaceable community." To Payne, a playwright who may have appreciated her melodramatic style, Fanny wrote her own drama about the furor over the pamphlet. She termed the French and American revolutions insignificant when compared with the "Battle of the Pamphlet" and the "Siege of the Printing Office" and the "never-to-be-forgotton-ever-to-be-remembered Civil War of Boston." She described, in vivid detail, a battle scene, revealing a lively imagination and knowledge of history:

The advance guard was commanded by Mrs. Otis...the cavalry commanded by Mr. Bates with loud shouts demanded to be led on to the attack. The small army of Mt. Vernon [the

³⁰ See "George Parish's Apology" July 1833, Broadside Collection. Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

³¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxv.

Inglis school and household] remained on the defensive, commanded by Mrs. MacLeod [Fanny's older sister] and prepared like Leonidas and his Spartans to perish fighting bravely.³²

Fanny acknowledged only that the "aggrieved ladies and gentlemen" insisted that she wrote the pamphlet "in conjunction with Mr. Parish. . . ." While she did not directly deny the charge, she mused about "whether after all the crime is of so very heinous a nature."³³ Whether Fanny took part in writing the pamphlet or not, she vividly expressed her rage against former friends.

Even if Fanny was not the author or a co-author of the pamphlet, her own satirical letters to Payne suggest she delighted in the witticisms of "Scenes at the Fair." Fanny may well have compared it to Walter Scott's St. Ronan's Well, published in 1824, which she later quoted in Life in Mexico. Scott biographer John Lauber calls St. Ronan's Well a "satirical portrayal of 'manners' at a semifashionable resort in contemporary Scotland."³⁴ Fanny felt wrongfully attacked and hurt by people she thought to be friends, and clearly revealed her disdain for many of the pretensions of the affluent society.

³² Fanny E. Inglis, Boston, to John Howard Payne, New York, 4 June 1833, typed transcript, Broadside Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lauber, Sir Walter Scott, 100.

As a result of the pamphlet scandal the Inglis women lost many of their former friends, and some ladies, including Mrs. Otis, Mrs. Rice and Mrs. Gilman, took their children out of the Inglis School. At least one of the ladies, Mrs. Rice, engaged in an intensive effort to malign the reputation of the school and to convince other parents to remove their children as well. Fanny insisted that the school still existed in a "tolerably flourishing condition" in spite of the activity against it and the fact that four new ladies' schools had started up in the area.³⁵ The Inglis women must have managed for a while, for they did not leave Boston until two years later when they relocated to Staten Island. The Fishers speculate that it was, indeed, because of lingering resentment about the pamphlet and increased competition that the women "sought a fresh field" in the village of New Brighton on Staten Island.³⁶

Fanny was already cultivating her natural bent toward education and writing before leaving Boston. The never-idle Fanny found time to write an article for publication in the October 1834 edition of the North American Review, which enjoyed a reputation as the most important intellectual magazine in America and the first American magazine to achieve an

³⁵ Fanny E. Inglis, Boston, to John Howard Payne, New York, [July?] 1833, typed transcript, Broadside Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

³⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition.

international reputation. Despite the magazine's desire to encourage American writers, it at first paid its contributors nothing and continued the practice, standard in the early nineteenth century, of anonymity for reviewers long after other magazines had abandoned this practice.³⁷ Possession of well-connected friends in the literary field certainly influenced Fanny to try her hand at writing for publication in Boston. Her motivation for writing, certainly not money or glory, was a natural tendency to be useful, not idle, and to educate and contribute to society.

Fanny's article is entitled "The Italian Drama" and subtitled "Tragedies by Alexander Manzoni of Milan, entitled, the Count of Carmagnola and the Adelchi: to which are added miscellaneous poems, and some remarks by the same author." Like other Review authors, Fanny was far more interested in discussing issues raised by modern drama than the merit of the specific works. She opened with the following paragraph:

The Moderns have separated the useful from the beautiful, and have placed in the class of superfluities many of those enjoyments, which the wisest amongst the ancients considered as essential to the well-being and happiness of mankind. Little of the poetry of life remains to us.³⁸

³⁷ John B. Mason, "The North American Review," in American Literary Magazines: The 18th and 19th Centuries, edited by Edward Chielens (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 289-96.

³⁸ [Frances Erskine Inglis], "Article III - The Italian Drama" The North American Review, (Oct 1834), 329.

Here the cultivated Fanny presented her vision of art: the glorification of ancient Grecian culture. After a lengthy introduction lamenting the current incompatibility of "virtue and pleasure" and that "all which cannot be proved necessary is considered as useless," she turned to a historical summary of Greek theatre, knowledgeably describing the drama of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. She preached to the reader in sections of the paper, perhaps reflecting the school teacher in her, commenting at one point, "The true object of the Drama is public instruction. Our sentiments ought to be more noble, our minds more pure and elevated on leaving than on entering the theatre." She pleaded the necessity of aesthetic, simple, and noble beauty rather than "over-romanticized dreams of chivalry, of stately barons...of love pomp and courtesy." Finally, she praised the subject of her article, the Italian playwright Alexander Manzoni, whom she viewed as standing at the "dawning of a new era" in Italian drama. Manzoni would help convert the Italian drama to the "school of noble and elevated feeling, of honor and virtue," that it should be.³⁹ Art, Fanny felt, should cultivate both pleasure and virtue. The most important point was an aesthetic attraction to the past and that the theatre should be a place of public instruction in noble and elevated feeling.

One of the acquaintances who most encouraged Fanny's

³⁹ Ibid., 329-370.

intellectual growth in Boston was the historian William Hickling Prescott, who also felt the influence of Sir Walter Scott's writing. Prescott, an exuberant younger friend of the respected Harvard Professor of Modern Languages George Ticknor, had been convening a group of friends, all writers in the North American Review, in a literary club, meeting over "merry supper."⁴⁰ Prescott did not become famous, however, until the publication of The Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1837, three years after publication of Fanny's article on Italian Drama, and until then it was not generally known that he had been engaged in any particularly serious task, although he had been quietly working on the project for ten years. The remarkable Prescott has been described as "exuberant, gallant, willful, firm, devoted, far removed from the clerkly sort of scholar."⁴¹ One of Fanny's friends, Fanny Appleton, described Prescott as "a character you could not find in the old world. A compound of scholar, wit and angel and child, as full of simplicity and truth and guilelessness as these last, with an ever-bubbling fountain of playfulness. . . ."⁴²

It was Prescott who first introduced Fanny to Spain and to

⁴⁰ Brooks, The Flowering of New England, 136.

⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

⁴² Edward Wagenknecht, ed. Selected Letters and Journals of Fanny Appleton Longfellow, 1817-1861 (London: Peter Owen, Ltd, 1959), 55.

Hispanic culture. Upon finishing Ferdinand and Isabella Prescott thirsted for another topic and was drawn again to Spain. He felt sure that the conquest of Mexico by Cortes would be a worthy project, but would not undertake the project unless he could be sure of access to proper research materials and archives. It did not take long for the amiable, well connected and well-liked Prescott to amass enough contacts in Spain, including his good friend the Secretary to the American Legation in Madrid Arthur Middleton, who assured him of the availability of material.⁴³ In addition, the Spanish minister to the United States, Angel Calderón de la Barca, was much impressed with Ferdinand and Isabella and took it upon himself to write to Prescott in March 1838, offering his services.⁴⁴ It was unlikely that Fanny had met the Spanish minister who would become her husband at this time since Calderón did not mention her in his letter to Prescott.

Fanny's association with Prescott, Ticknor, Henry Longfellow, who would marry Fanny's friend Fanny Appleton, and others opened up a whole new world -- the new exotic beacon of Spain -- mysterious and unknown, dark, dangerous, Catholic and unenlightened. Boston had confirmed Fanny's intellectual nature, tinged with an appreciation of the aesthetic, but it was

⁴³ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 22-27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24.

also in Boston that she questioned her patrician status and her aristocratic upbringing.

III. New York

Fanny's move to Staten Island, New York sealed her future as she met and married Don Angel Calderón de la Barca. In late 1835 the Inglis women moved to the village of New Brighton on Staten Island where they opened another school at Belmont House.⁴⁵ Again, the women were successful on their own. According to a description of New Brighton in the mid-1830's, the village was blossoming as a "means of withdrawing from the labor and anxiety of commerce" to the "elegant buildings, as well as chaste and simple cottages, hotels and boarding houses" which multiplied every day. The village possessed a "beauty of location, extent of prospect, and salubrity of climate" as well as two steamboats to New York City.⁴⁶ Staten Island provided relief for foreign diplomats escaping from the heat of Washington. For this reason, many diplomats spent as much time

⁴⁵ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxv.

⁴⁶ George C. Ward, Description of New Brighton, on Staten Island opposite the City of New York [classmark AZ], 1836. New York Public Library. New York.

as possible in New York.⁴⁷ Since December 7, 1835, Angel Calderón de la Barca had been serving as his country's minister to the United States. Upon meeting Calderón, as Fanny always referred to her husband, she again moved in exclusive social circles, meeting and mixing with other diplomats such as Alexander de Bodisco, the Russian Minister, and Carlos Maria de Alvear, the minister from Buenos Aries.⁴⁸ By marrying a foreigner Fanny ensured further complications in sorting through her own identity.

Fanny was by this time in her thirties and had shown no prior inclination to marriage. George Parish of the famous pamphlet had figured briefly as a suitor, but to no avail. Fanny's sister, Richmond, had endured an unhappy marriage to a MacLeod and had separated to follow her mother and sisters to the United States.⁴⁹ Fanny and her sisters enjoyed a remarkable amount of independence and Fanny did not appear to feel any desire for marriage, until the older, well-respected, knowledgeable and intelligent Calderón appeared.

Calderón provided a real Spaniard, and a gentlemanly one at that, for Fanny to compare with the dashing variety she knew from Prescott's tales. Soon Fanny learned that this foreigner

⁴⁷ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxv.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 665n3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., xxiv.

was a man of letters himself, well respected in Spain for his views on literary and political subjects and for his ability and willingness to describe Spanish society to Americans.⁵⁰ He often engaged in the translation of books. On board ship to Mexico with Fanny, Calderón would busy himself with a translation into the Castilian of a new book called History of Photogenic Drawing.⁵¹ Born in Buenos Aires in 1790, Calderón had authored several books on agriculture, entered government service and served in assignments to Germany and Russia before coming to the United States.⁵²

The two were married in New York at the Church of the Transfiguration on September 24, 1838 and spent their first winter together in Washington as Calderón finished his tenure as Minister to the United States. By the following summer, they were living with Staten Island relatives and preparing for Calderon's new important assignment as first Spanish representative to independent Mexico.⁵³ In addition to the normal adjustment of a new bride to her husband, Fanny would

⁵⁰ James Cortada, Two Nations over Time: Spain and the U.S., 1776-1977 (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1978), 138.

⁵¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 12.

⁵² Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxv. Penney, C.L., ed. George Ticknor: Letters to Gayangos (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1927), 541. Anna Ticknor, Life, Letters and Journals of George Ticknor, v. II. (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1876), 248.

⁵³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxvi.

have to come to terms with a new culture. She had no national identity, no roots, no common history with her husband. She seemed almost too willing to immerse herself in his culture, but she could not completely escape her birth.

Chapter Two

"...And Wakened in Mexico!" ⁵⁴

Although not readily apparent from the contradictory and ambiguous statements in the text of Life in Mexico, Fanny's experience in Mexico was a great turning point in her life. In Mexico, all the tension in Fanny's identity came into sharp focus. She struggled with the challenges of being either the independent woman or the dutiful wife and "lady," the democrat or the aristocrat, the realist or the romantic, and finally, the Protestant or the Catholic. Fanny's story of Mexico became a struggle to resolve these contradictions and as a consequence, without any plan or forethought, she became the author of a famous book.

I. Independent Woman vs. "Lady"

Fanny struggled consistently with her role as a woman in society, a self-reliant person on one hand and a dutiful wife and lady on the other. Women of Hispanic culture especially challenged her since Fanny initially perceived Mexican women in

⁵⁴ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 62.

a light similar to what Anna Macias observes in a study of women in Mexico:

Undoubtedly machismo (extreme male dominance) and its counterpart, hembrismo (extreme female submission), have been pervasive in Mexico, in part because of the Aztec subordination of women and even more because of the Spanish colonial experience."⁵⁵

Accustomed to relative freedom, Fanny believed, as did most observers of Hispanic culture, she was moving into a culture where women had very restricted influence. What Fanny would observe after spending time in Mexico is that women's roles in Mexico City were changing gradually in the early to mid-nineteenth century. As Silvia Arrom has shown, the expansion of women's options in society, while not always obvious, certainly existed in light of increased educational opportunities, greater legal leverage and changing ideals.⁵⁶ This uncertainty about the role of women in Mexico City made it all the more difficult for Fanny to solidify her own identity as a woman in that society.

Fanny had been married only one year when she sailed for Mexico, by way of Havana, from Staten Island on October 27, 1839. She was unprepared for her role as a diplomat's wife, but

⁵⁵ Anna Macias, Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940 (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1982), 3.

⁵⁶ Silvia Arrom, The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 51. See also this paper Chapter Three, page 76.

tackled the challenge with typical enthusiasm at first, and considerable frustration as time went by. She encountered many times of uncertainty, discomfort and impropriety in her new role. She struggled to mute her natural personality, and her instinctive tendency to speak her mind, laugh enthusiastically and act exuberantly, in the face of her new role as wife.

Raised with the benefits of wealth and status, Fanny nonetheless had become independent when her father died, and remained single into her mid-thirties. She established a role for herself as a teacher and contributing member of Boston society. She had established relationships with the women of Boston, but these relationships were strained by the scandal of the "Scenes at the Fair" pamphlet. Fanny responded with an attack on the ladies, writing, "I should do justice to the gentlemen part of the community. They have behaved very differently from the ladies."⁵⁷ She saw these women as petty and humorless, and resisted identification with "ladies" of this sort.

In Mexico, however, Fanny's activity as a diplomat's wife would undergo a most severe test. Her experience in official diplomatic relations was limited to less than one year in Washington, D.C. As the wife of the Spanish minister, she knew

⁵⁷ Fanny Inglis, Boston, to John Howard Payne, New York, 4 June 1833, Typed Transcript, Broadside Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

presumably only what Calderón had told her about Spanish politics. Calderón's mission as the first Spanish representative in Mexico since Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, was of an important and delicate nature. Calderón himself was well prepared for the diplomatic role. He was a well-liked and experienced diplomat, having already served as minister to Germany and to Russia. His personality suited the nature of his profession. Intelligent, but not brilliant, Calderón exuded gentlemanly manners and a diplomatic air: a "great simplicity of character, as well as abundant sense and good feeling."⁵⁸ William Prescott described Calderón as a man with "real magnanimity in his disposition" who was "just the man to conciliate good will and infuse kind feelings into irritated and irritable bosoms."⁵⁹ When Calderón came to Washington in 1844 to serve again as minister to the United States, George Ticknor observed that Calderón's "relations were always of the kind that are useful alike to the country that sends the mission and the country that receives it."⁶⁰ Fanny had no such reputation. She was the unknown factor, but it was assumed that she was the experienced and dutiful diplomat's wife, and she

⁵⁸ George Ticknor, Life of William Hickling Prescott (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1863), 187.

⁵⁹ Penney, C.L. ed. Prescott: Unpublished Letters to Gayangos (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1927), 97-98.

⁶⁰ Penney, ed. George Ticknor: Letters to Gayangos, 82.

tried to play the part. Yet Fanny's personality decidedly would not be called diplomatic.

Opinionated, fun-loving, sarcastic and witty, Fanny was not the demure and well-mannered wife of a Spanish gentleman. In many ways, her personality simply was not suited to diplomacy. She was an active woman -- independent and fairly adventurous. Yet born into Walter Scott's Edinburgh and nurtured in William Prescott's parlor, the romantic Fanny shared equal time with the fun-loving, down-to-earth Fanny. Due in part to her Scottish heritage and life experience, Fanny was a peculiar mixture of down-to-earth practicality and in-the-clouds romanticism.

At some times Fanny could be the proper hostess and dutiful wife; other times she could not curtail her friskiness. While a guest at the country home of the Escandón family outside of Mexico City, Fanny fell into a fountain while enthusiastically playing an outdoor game. Some of the Mexican ladies found a dress for her to borrow but Fanny's feet were too large to borrow any of their shoes. She boldly appeared at lunch wearing the cumbersome boots of her host, Don Manuel Escandón.⁶¹ A typical observation of Fanny was that she was "lively as

⁶¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 710n2. In May 1949 Doña Dolores Garcia Pimental de Riba, granddaughter of a guest at that same party, related this story to editors Howard and Marion Fisher.

ever."⁶² Conchita Adalid, a close friend and frequent companion of Fanny's in Mexico recalled that the two women laughed together a great deal.⁶³ After a Christmas concert the Spanish newspaper La Hesperia gave a brief account of the affair and mentioned Fanny's attendance. It called her not the formal Doña Francisca, as would be expected, but Doña Fanny.⁶⁴ All accounts point to Fanny's outgoing, informal and relaxed attitude.

Upon arrival in Mexico, the Calderóns immediately began their diplomatic duties: meeting the other diplomats and President Bustamante, receiving invitations to various social events such as a grand costume ball, going to the theatre, attending bullfights, and visiting historical attractions such as the castle of Chapultepec and the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Prescott, with whom they kept in close contact, wrote to an acquaintance that the Calderóns were "living much at their ease in Mexico, where Calderón has been regaled en prince being the first accredited Spanish minister there. . . ."⁶⁵ They did not however, live a life of leisure.

A nineteenth century diplomat needed a woman to help

⁶² Penney, ed. Prescott: Unpublished Letters to Gayangos, 68.

⁶³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 713n12. The Fishers met with a granddaughter of Conchita Adalid who remembered her grandmother saying that she often laughed with Mme Calderón.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 751n2.

⁶⁵ Penney, ed. Prescott: Unpublished Letters to Gayangos, 31.

fulfill his duties -- to act as a hostess and receive visitors, to act as another representative of the mission country in the social arena and to take part in the correct social and charitable occasions. While Calderón busied himself with business (Fanny once remarked that he was "literally up to the ears in piles of papers"⁶⁶), Fanny settled their house and began her duties in society. Upon their arrival, she also served as Calderón's only secretary because the official secretary of the Spanish legation was absent.⁶⁷ Fanny, then, took some part in diplomatic duties, remarking to Prescott on another occasion that "I must proceed to business and to the delivery of Calderón's messages."⁶⁸

By the end of February 1840, they had settled into a large house and a busy schedule. Fanny had much to criticize. She dreaded the oft-asked question from her streams of visitors, "How do you like Mexico, señora?," confiding to her journal that this was a useless question because "what stranger who does not wish to hurt their feelings can tell them the exact truth?"⁶⁹ Fanny was now occupied almost exclusively in returning all the visits made to her. "Some Mexican visits," she wrote, "appear

⁶⁶ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott,

⁶⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 250.

⁶⁹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 148.

to me to surpass in duration all that one can imagine of a visit, rarely lasting less than one hour and sometimes extending over a greater part of the day." According to an irritated Fanny, it mattered not what activity the hostess was engaged in when an unannounced visit would occur.⁷⁰

In the spring, the Calderóns made visits to haciendas in the countryside where they spent time "riding amongst the hills, exploring caves, viewing waterfalls."⁷¹ They visited famous Mexican silver mines where Fanny confessed in her journal that "my attention was frequently attracted from the mines...and the works of man...to the stupendous natural scenery."⁷² Fanny, the dutiful diplomat's wife, although trying to pay attention to the laborious and technical tour of the mines, could not help peeking over the guide's shoulder to admire the scenery and think about reading a book under a tree. Trying to be the interested diplomat's wife, Fanny's mind wandered to other notions.

II. "Civilized" vs "Backward"

Fanny immediately felt the tension between the civilized

⁷⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 65.

⁷¹ Ibid., 172.

⁷² Ibid., 183.

and aristocratic background she left behind and the backward society she stepped into in Mexico. From a family of old money which emphasized social and charitable responsibility, education, and a strong work ethic, Fanny surveyed the world from a lofty perch. Her father's bankruptcy shook, but did not destroy, her social confidence. Events in Boston forced her to re-evaluate her place in society when her "...best friends" became such bitter foes..." after the scandal of the "Scenes at the Fair" pamphlet.⁷³ She rejected their petty values and humorless outlook and remained ever-confident of her natural social niche. When she moved to New York and married, she entered the exclusive social circle of diplomats and assumed more trappings of status than she had as an independent schoolteacher, including the retention of a French "femme de chambre." This young woman, Emilie Martin, came to Fanny the day Fanny was married and was, Fanny noted, the "keeper of everything belonging to me but my conscience."⁷⁴ Emilie's irreverent attitude (Fanny referred to her as the "Dowager Duchess") perhaps appealed to Fanny for she certainly could have found another more suitable femme de chambre. As much as Fanny

⁷³ Fanny E. Inglis, Boston, to John Howard Payne, New York, [?] July 1833, typed transcript, Broadside Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

⁷⁴ Fanny Calderón de la Barca, Mexico, to William Henry Prescott, Boston, 19 Jan 1841, Prescott Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

retained the social consciousness of money and family name, and perhaps because of the confidence she maintained in her heritage, she continually exhibited a tendency to rebel against the stereotypical well-mannered "lady."

In Mexico, Fanny shouldered the same struggle, resenting the "nouveau riche" and preferring the company of the class of old money, but still showing signs of rebellion. Yet she could never rebel completely against "civilization." One moment she expounded on the benefits of Mexican culture and the next she complained about the bad state of the theatre. Upon arrival in Havana, en route to Mexico, Fanny exhibited a typical traveller's feeling of how strange and different everything seemed, but Fanny suffered the additional burden of being watched, in everything she did, as the Spanish minister's wife. She ultimately omitted, for publication, many of her preliminary opinions about Havana, most of which were highly critical, as she tried to adjust to Spanish colonial life. She struggled with homesickness and confided to her journal that she felt as if they had "receded from civilization" and that "I do not think there is anything in this world that could induce me to live here."⁷⁵ Yet she tried to maintain her enthusiasm exclaiming as they approached Mexico City, "I must confess...the impatience

⁷⁵ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 62.

which I felt to see Mexico."⁷⁶ She had a picturesque and romantic picture of what life in Mexico would be like and it did not take her long to realize that reality would be different.

Her notion of Mexico as a backward nation was reinforced when she struggled with the subject of politics. After Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, Spaniards had been expelled from the country, taking with them their wealth and decimating the Mexican aristocracy.⁷⁷ Slowly, the country began to recover from the Wars of Independence but much of the country still lay in ruins. Calderón's arrival represented, at last, acceptance of Mexico's existence as an independent nation. When Fanny and Calderón arrived in Veracruz a very enthusiastic crowd greeted them. Fanny remarked that "a crowd, as far as the eye could reach, of all ages and sexes and kinds of Vera-Cruzians (and a Vera-Curious set they appeared to be) were assembled to witness His Excellency's arrival."⁷⁸ According to Fanny's impression, Calderón was greeted almost as a member of royalty, merely "as a mark of good will towards the first representative of the Spanish monarchy."⁷⁹ She was not impressed with this expression of undemocratic behavior.

⁷⁶ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 60.

⁷⁷ Charles Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-53 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 99-101.

⁷⁸ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 54.

⁷⁹ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 71.

Additionally, Fanny had many thoughts about her visit with former president Antonio López de Santa Anna. The military dominated national politics at this time and although Santa Anna was, for the moment, out of power, Calderón realized the instability of the situation and wished to pay homage to the General in case he regained power. Fanny had to act with great discretion about what she put in her text for publication. She mentioned merely that Santa Anna was the "most interesting person in the group," "agreeable," "quiet and gentlemanlike," and "altogether a more polished hero than I had expected."⁸⁰

In her journal, however, Fanny ruminated at greater length:

It is strange...how frequently this expression of philosophic resignation, if placid sadness, is to be remarked on the countenances of the most cunning, the deepest, most ambitious, most designing and most dangerous statesmen I have seen. [They have] a something that would persuade the multitude that they are above the world and engage in its toils only to benefit others so that one can hardly persuade oneself that these men are not saints.⁸¹

Fanny had to keep these cynical but well-founded opinions to herself, having to sit in the parlor and chat with Calderón, Santa Anna and his wife. She could not release the image of Santa Anna from her mind. She wrote:

...here sat with this air de philosophe

⁸⁰ Ibid., 45-46.

⁸¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 65.

perhaps one of the worst men in the world -- ambitious of power -- greedy of money -- and unprincipled -- having feathered his nest at the expense of the republic -- and waiting in a dignified retreat only till the moment comes for putting himself at the head of another revolution.⁸²

There is no evidence of how Fanny and Calderón felt about each other's politics, but the question is intriguing. When Fanny married Calderón had she thought through the implications of his conservative Spanish political background? Raised in Scotland and the United States, Fanny's democratic background must have clashed at some point with Calderón's outlook. Now she confronted undemocratic men every day.

On July 15, 1840, a federalist uprising broke out in the capital city. Fanny's letters were filled with exciting "play-by-play" descriptions of the drama unfolding around her. "As we are not in the centre of the city," she noted, "Our position for the present is very safe, all the cannon being directed towards the palace."⁸³ She spent her time watching the fighting from her balcony, listening to all the various rumors and setting down, for the record, much of historical interest about the politics behind the revolution, proposals of the federalists, and counter-proposals of the president. The revolution ended

⁸² Ibid., 66.

⁸³ Life in Mexico, 1981, 239.

peacefully twelve days later when the two sides came to an agreement. As the Spanish diplomat's wife, Fanny's personal interpretation was limited to a brief and ambiguous description of the "prime mover of this revolution," Gomez Farias, referring to him as a man of integrity and reform and a visionary inflicting unnecessary civil war and bloodshed.⁸⁴ This characterization reflected Fanny's conflicted political notions for Calderón certainly would have opposed Farias, but Fanny perhaps was more impressed with the liberal cause.

In early spring, 1841, there already were rumors of Calderón's imminent recall as minister. Prescott wrote to Fanny in March about the folly of recalling Calderón, experienced diplomat that he was, but added that he supposed the recall "would not break your heart."⁸⁵ He assured Fanny that she should have the satisfaction of having "done something towards introducing a better taste among [Mexico's] fair inhabitants."⁸⁶ Fanny no doubt relished the role of civilizer in which Prescott placed her. When the recall became official, Fanny and Calderón moved to a country house to await the best time to travel back to the United States. They lived a quiet life -- taking the occasional short ride in the evening, visiting neighboring

⁸⁴ Ibid., 244.

⁸⁵ Wolcott, 216-17.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

villages, receiving visitors from the capital on Sundays, reading, writing and occasionally playing billiards. Fanny seemed to enjoy being away from the harried life of the city and the duties of diplomat's wife. When the new minister and his wife arrived, the Calderóns acted as host and hostess. Fanny noticed that the new minister asked Calderón about everything while she spent a week showing the minister's wife around, introducing her to all the ladies of the diplomats. She commented, "As yet people insist on not liking them, but from no personal feeling -- merely because they are angry at Calderón's recall."⁸⁷ In this setting, Fanny was the expert, a role she enjoyed, and with the arrival of the new minister, Fanny's duties effectively ended.

III. Protestant vs Catholic

Fanny's most personal and important struggle with identity in Mexico formed over the question of religion. At the outset, she was firmly Protestant, but drawn to the romanticism of the Catholic Church. Then, while in Mexico, she began also to see some practical good in the Catholic religion. At the same time, however, some of the actions of the Church appalled her. The highly personal nature of her religious experience made it

⁸⁷ Ibid., 253.

impossible for Fanny to observe the Church objectively. Although not obsessed with religion, when she arrived in Mexico she exhibited more than a cautious curiosity in matters of religion. For instance she stated in one of her letters that, "You will think I pass my time in convents, but I find no other places half so interesting, and you know I always had a fancy that way."⁸⁸ Fanny was, according to her great-nephew Calderón Carlisle, "deeply religious by nature."⁸⁹ Events of her life encouraged her natural inclination toward a religious experience.

Although deeply rooted in Protestantism, the romantic Fanny found the historical and aesthetic Roman Catholic Church somewhat fascinating. Her interest in Spanish culture, awakened in Boston, nurtured this interest. The Catholicism of important people in her life made a greater understanding of the Catholic Church not only appealing but necessary. Finally, Fanny's experience in Mexico immersed her in the Church. The romantic-minded Protestant Fanny responded with accolades for the picturesque beauty of the church and predictable criticisms of the Catholic faith and ritual.

Fanny's background in Scotland in a strongly Protestant family would have deeply ingrained upon her the notion of the

⁸⁸ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 284.

⁸⁹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 724n3.

separation of church and state, an idea also strongly nurtured in the United States and vastly different from what she encountered in the Mexican religious environment. Upon immigrating to Boston in 1831, Fanny encountered a city with a large immigrant Catholic population, but among members of her class, "the proper Bostonian woman...whether Episcopalian or Unitarian...barely recognize[d] catholicism." Among her friends were some, like the Appleton's, who were followers of the intellectual leader of the Unitarian Church, William Ellery Channing.⁹⁰ The rational outlook of liberal Christianity was a far cry from the mystical and ritualistic bent of the Spanish Catholic Church.

Although she was deeply rooted in her Protestantism, the romantic blossoming of culture and thought in Edinburgh also influenced Fanny. Her knowledge of the Catholic Church may have been limited to history books and hearsay, but anything so deeply rooted in history, ancient, mysterious, exotic and aesthetically ritualistic as the Catholic Church would have piqued her interest. In Boston, Fanny experienced the beginning of the Transcendentalist revolt against the rationalism of a Unitarian background. A movement influenced by European romanticism, the Transcendentalists turned against materialistic

⁹⁰ Amory, Proper Bostonians, 107, and Wagenknecht, Journal of Fanny Appleton, 55.

civilization and the "Protestant ethic."⁹¹ The romanticism of the Transcendentalists, however, required too much commitment and too great a denial of Fanny beliefs, like her Christianity, her heritage and her work ethic. She retained the influence of Prescott and Ticknor and their romantic excursions into Spanish culture and history, but these were, after all, practical men and men who were, as a whole, "invincibly opposed to the new school, the Transcendentalists and all their works."⁹² Fanny, even though of a romantic nature, presumably was unimpressed or uninfluenced by the transcendental movement.

In the course of her introduction to Spanish culture while in Boston in the company of Prescott and Ticknor, Fanny made an acquaintance with the Spanish religion. Fanny's interest, however, turned more urgent when she married Calderón.⁹³ Father Felix Varela y Morales, a Cuban-born catholic priest, married the couple at the Church of the Transfiguration in New York City. Father Varela was well-suited to the task of answering whatever questions Fanny had about the new state she was entering. His missionary efforts in New York customarily engaged him in logical and intellectual but restrained dialogue

⁹¹ Perry Miller, ed. The American Transcendentalists: Their Prose and Poetry (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957), ix.

⁹² Van Wyck Brooks, The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865, (New York: E.P.Dutton & Co., Inc., 1936), 179.

⁹³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxv.

with Protestant clergymen. In deciding matters when answering Protestant assaults on the Catholic Church, he stressed the similarities of Christian religions and the sovereignty of God.¹⁴ Father Varela knew well how to give a sense of legitimacy to the Catholic Church.

Upon marrying Calderón, Fanny was educated in Catholic doctrine, perhaps by Father Varela himself. She knew the terminology, memorized the prayers and attended Catholic mass in the United States. In preparation for her journey to Mexico, she read the history of the Church in Latin America and saw pictures of the splendid cathedrals. After all, she knew that she would be expected to "act Catholic" for diplomatic reasons. Among the histories she consulted, Fanny relied heavily on Historia Antigua de Mexico by the Mexican Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavigero. Clavigero had been forced to leave his country with the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spanish colonies in 1767 and wrote his histories from exile in Italy.¹⁵ The heavy theological underpinnings of Catholicism in his writing of history would have appealed to Fanny. No amount of preparation, however, could transform her naive, romantic and aesthetic view of the Church into the real Church she encountered in Mexico.

¹⁴ Carlos Cortes, ed. Nineteenth Century Latin Americans in the United States (NY: Arno Press, 1980), 381-87.

¹⁵ Charles E. Ronan, S.J. Francisco Javier Clavigero, Figure of the Mexican Enlightenment: His Life and Works (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1977), 344-45.

In addition to marrying a Catholic, Fanny was preoccupied with the conversion of a family member. Fanny's sister Jane, older by fourteen months, became a Catholic [date unknown] and was, perhaps by the time Fanny went to Mexico, a nun in France. The Fishers state that very little is known about this sister, but speculate quite reasonably that Jane's "desertion" from this strongly Protestant family must have been quite a shock.⁹⁶ So we have, perhaps, a bit more of an explanation of Fanny's psychological state -- why her religious struggle in Mexico was so personal.

IV. Resolution?

Fanny made attempts, with differing degrees of success, to resolve the conflicts of her Mexican experience. She acclimated herself to the role of a diplomat's wife, took a great interest in Spanish culture, learned all that she could about the Catholic religion and left some matters unchallenged. In Mexico, Fanny was perceived as a representative of Spain. Her knowledge of Spain, however, was limited to what Calderón and, earlier, Prescott had told her, and to what she knew from books. She had never been to Spain, and was still learning the Spanish

⁹⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 713n6.

language.⁹⁷ She seemed to be curious about the Hispanic culture, but she was forced into a position where she was assumed to be something she was not. She compensated by turning to her intellectual capabilities.

Fanny read all the available Spanish histories and devoured as much Spanish literature as she could, for instance the "Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón, or Moratin" that she suggested should be available on the packet ship from the United States to Havana for the reading pleasure of Spanish passengers.⁹⁸ In Fanny's official capacity as a Spanish representative, she would have been expected to exhibit some knowledge of the history of the Conquest and the history of the Spanish people in Mexico. She felt the need to legitimize her position. She took much of her historical information from Clavigero, who wrote "enlightened" presentations of pre-hispanic civilization that targeted European critics of the New World.⁹⁹ Thus we have a basic source for many of Fanny's laudatory musings on ancient Mexican civilization.

While she also depended on Alexander von Humboldt's works

⁹⁷ Diligent as always, Fanny became fluent enough in the Spanish language to fool her husband at a masquerade ball near the end of their stay in Mexico. See Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 683n16.

⁹⁸ Life in Mexico, 1981, 15.

⁹⁹ Charles E. Ronan. Francisco Javier Clavigero, figure of the Mexican Enlightenment: His Life and Works (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1977). 345-6.

and even read the work of liberal historians naturally discredited by the Spanish, such as Lorenzo de Zavala, the fact remains that Fanny did not have, and never would have, Hispanic roots. While still in Veracruz at the beginning of her journey she confided to her journal that she could never think of living in Mexico:

To live amongst people, however kind, with whom you have not one thought in common must be melancholy. To a person brought up in England and accustomed to European society, a place where the trace of a book is not to be seen -- where the women spend their time in perfect idleness...[arouses] an aridness of feelings...¹⁰⁰

This sort of feeling was only natural, especially at the beginning of a journey into a foreign land. Fanny tried valiantly to love and respect Spanish culture, but could not consistently do so.

Fanny softened many of her criticisms as she began to understand cultural differences and experienced true kindness and friendship. She wrote, "In Europe the minds are more cultivated, but in Mexico the hearts are more amiable."¹⁰¹ On Christmas day in 1841, as Fanny observed her one year anniversary in Mexico, she exclaimed, "What a different aspect everything has assumed to us in one year!...Now we are

¹⁰⁰ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 62.

¹⁰¹ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 234.

surrounded by familiar sights and sounds, and above all by friendly faces."¹⁰² Very appreciative of the friends she had made, Fanny felt better about being in Mexico.

The Calderóns finally left Mexico on January 2, 1842, on their way to Havana and then the United States. Near the end of her chronicle Fanny wrote that "It is only the prospect of returning to our family, which can counterbalance the unfeigned regret we feel at leaving our friends in Mexico."¹⁰³ Her transformation was not yet complete. She did not solve the problems she has with issues of race, class, politics, women, religion -- she merely allowed them exist in contradiction.

¹⁰² Ibid., 303.

¹⁰³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 526.

PART II -- THE BOOK

Chapter Three

**"[I] Keep Almost Entirely
To Mexican Society." ¹⁰⁴**

In her book Life in Mexico the picture Fanny presents to the public is not neatly packaged and altogether clear. It reflects the highly personal nature of her experience in Mexican society. She was not merely an observer, but was engaged in a search for her own identity as she struggled with her place in relation to the foreign races she encountered, the class structure of Mexican society and the women with which she interacted. Her relationship to all three groups ultimately affected her emerging identity as a Spanish woman.

I. Spaniards, Blacks and Indians

Fanny's struggle with the issue of race during her trip to Mexico involved her contact with three groups, Spaniards, Blacks and Indians, all new to her experience. Each presented a

¹⁰⁴ Wolcott, Correspondence, 128.

slightly different problem. Since she was unsure of her own identity Fanny was unclear about the attitude she should have toward each of these foreign groups. She had just married a Spaniard, but other Spaniards soon challenged her romantic vision of Spanish gentlemen. Blacks remained picturesque to Fanny because she never had any real contact with them and native Mexicans presented a contradictory picture to Fanny that she was unable to reconcile.

In the sheltered atmosphere of her childhood in Scotland, Fanny had interacted exclusively with other Europeans. Later when she immigrated to Boston, she mixed with Americans of the proper social caste, the next best thing to Europeans. The Spain she learned about in Boston under the tutelage of Prescott and his peers was technically a part of Europe, but maintained the image of an unchanging and exotic society, and remained the most foreign and least understood of the European countries, seen mostly through the eyes and pens of romantic literary travelers.¹⁰⁵ Fanny was intrigued and then fascinated with Spanish culture. Upon marrying Calderón and learning of his appointment to Mexico, Fanny developed a scholarly interest in the exotic and mysterious indigenous people of Mexico. When read Alexander von Humboldt's Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain, she found much factual and technical data and an in-

¹⁰⁵ Raymond Carr, Spain, 1808 - 1975, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1.

depth discussion of the races of Mexico based on Humboldt's five year expedition to Mexico at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ Fanny's enlightened nature, combined with her scholarship, did not, however, prepare her for immersion in foreign culture. Because her own identity was so unstable, she was uncertain what her role would be in relation to these new races.

Fanny had been enchanted upon meeting her future husband, the personification of the dashing and romantic Spanish figure that William Prescott had painted for Fanny. The multi-lingual and well-dressed Calderón, with his immaculate manners and reserved diplomatic air was the perfect "manly caballero" [gentleman] that Prescott said he was upon first making his acquaintance.¹⁰⁷ As Fanny sailed on the packet ship to Havana, the first leg of her journey to Mexico, she quickly discovered that she was less than enchanted with many of her fellow passengers, also Spaniards. They, in contrast to Calderón, were fat, ugly and offensive. She was astonished and disappointed that they challenged her romantic and picturesque vision of Spaniards.

Fanny complained in her published text about the dirty and

¹⁰⁶ Alexander von Humboldt, Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain, Mary Maples Dunn, ed. (NY: Knopf, 1972). See chapters IV and V for discussion of the races of Mexico.

¹⁰⁷ Ticknor, Life of Prescott, 153.

smelly ship, but to her journal she confided the additional complaint that the ship was "full of vulgar Spaniards who smoke and spit."¹⁰⁸ On one particular morning, as Fanny sat on deck to write in her journal, a Spaniard drew a chair beside her and began to comb his hair, clean his nails, lather his face and shave before Fanny left her chair and retreated below deck. In her journal she wrote, "Methinks no Yankee, however vulgar, would have so coolly taken the opportunity of coming to dress and clean himself before a lady."¹⁰⁹ A bit intimidated by the challenge of the journey and trying hard, at this early stage, to project herself as the reserved wife, Fanny was taken aback by the actions, manners and appearances of the Spaniards on the ship, especially their manners to a lady such as herself. They presented a stark contrast to her impeccable husband, with whom they shared a common heritage.

A few vulgar Spaniards on a ship would not daunt Fanny's vision, however. She venerated the memory of Spaniards in history, such as Columbus and Cortes. Among her many references to him throughout Life in Mexico she wrote, "let the memory of Cortes be sacred."¹¹⁰ Fanny was writing about Cortes' civilizing efforts to stop the human sacrifices of the pagan

¹⁰⁸ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9-10.

¹¹⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 73.

religion and his founding of a "cathedral on the ruins of the temple which had so often resounded with human groans."¹¹¹ Much later in her journal, however, in a section deleted from her published text, she speculated on the actions of Cortes, the civilizer, and the conquest itself. "What wonder if in the enthusiasm of the moment he should unintentionally have exaggerated on some occasion?" she asked. "He is blamed for cruelty," she continued,

but the first cruelty...consisted in his entering these unknown lands and disturbing an inoffensive people. Once considering it his duty to God and to his King to subdue them, where was his alternative?"¹¹²

Having read Humboldt and Clavigero, Fanny could appreciate arguments for the basic injustice and cruelty of the conquest, but influenced by the Spanish point of view she somewhat reluctantly agreed that Cortes had no choice. She was torn between her emerging loyalty to Spain and her emotive feeling for the Indians. Although she had some lingering doubts about the Conquest, she concluded that it was for the best. Fanny moved toward the adoption of a Spanish identity although she questioned her transformation at almost every step.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 73.

¹¹² Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 88. See also 681. The Fishers note that this portion of the journal, taken from volume three, was not a chronological record, but a collection of thoughts and anecdotes about her Mexican experiences. It indicates a starting time around the spring of 1841.

Fanny next observed how the Spanish treated the dark-skinned people they lived with. Having never been exposed to Blacks, Fanny had to develop the attitude she would have toward this race and her relationship to them. At first, these people were completely foreign, mysterious, exotic and picturesque beings. Most likely Fanny never encountered Blacks before coming to the United States. There were few Blacks in the northeastern United States, and Fanny likely was exposed to abolitionist currents while living in Boston. Having read her Humboldt, Fanny knew that there were few Blacks in Mexico and many in Havana, where slaves were necessary for sugar cultivation. She also would have recognized that "the families reputed to have the least mixture of Negro or mulatto [offspring of a white and a black] blood are also naturally the most honored."¹¹³ Her abstract experiences with Blacks allowed her to look with moderate disfavor upon the institution of slavery, but still quite naturally place Blacks at the bottom of the social scale.

The closer Fanny got to Cuba the more dark-skins she encountered, still from afar. She noticed, as they passed by the Berry Islands before reaching Havana, one island that belonged to a "coloured man," who had purchased it for fifty dollars. Fanny remarked that "He, his wife and children, with

¹¹³ Humboldt, Political Essay, 87.

their negro slaves ! live there and cultivate vegetables to sell at New York."¹¹⁴ Aware that this situation could never occur in the United States, Fanny presumably attributed this freedom to the good will that Hispanic culture held toward the Blacks.

When the Calderóns arrived at Havana, the profusion of all shades of color on human skin fascinated Fanny, and she thought it all very picturesque. As they rode through the darkened streets, Fanny could not see much except that "the streets were narrow, the houses irregular, most people black."¹¹⁵ At the theatre she noticed that "The orchestra is excellent and strange to say is composed of blacks and whites, mingled in harmonious confusion like the notes of a piano."¹¹⁶ She was pleased with the effect, and made no judgments although understandably surprised that blacks and whites mingled so freely. The whole picture appealed to her artistic and aesthetic nature. At one point she broke down completely with the beauty of it all and exclaimed, "The sudden transition from Yankee land to this military Spanish negro-land is dreamy."¹¹⁷ Blacks added easily to her foreign and romantic picture, made all the better by the fact that they seemed to enjoy such relative freedom in this

¹¹⁴ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 18.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 22.

¹¹⁷ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 24.

Spanish colony.

Fanny noted in her journal that her hostess in Havana had a grandmother who was a "woolly-headed negress" and that in Havana there were few families without a tinge of African blood. It was not considered, she continued, "as in the Unites States, any disgrace."¹¹⁸ Franklin Knight asserts that the absolute racial mixture in Cuba was not as important as the "caste-like group" to which one belonged.¹¹⁹ In other words, unlike in the Unites States, a Black ancestor in the family tree would not prevent one from enjoying the privileges of class. She also noted with amusement that after a dinner given for her and Calderón, the "negroes and negresses" were eating all the food left on the table and uncorking new bottles of wine with abandon. They had no concern for their master and behaved, "like a multitude of spoilt children, who are sure of meeting with indulgence, and presume upon it."¹²⁰ Here was simply more proof that the Spanish colony was more lenient in its treatment of slaves and in their overall attitude toward the dark-skinned people. Fanny affirmed the myth that, as Knight calls it, "Cubans were humane to their slaves," because of their "Iberian

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁹ Franklin Knight, Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 85.

¹²⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 28.

heritage and Roman Catholic Religious tradition."¹²¹

Blacks never challenged Fanny because they kept their distance. They remained safely picturesque and safely foreign. Her observations of them also strengthened her Spanish identity because, as she viewed them from a safe distance, they appeared to enjoy rights, privileges and humane treatment in the Spanish colony that they did not enjoy elsewhere. From Blacks in Cuba, however, Fanny next encountered Indians in Mexico, where again she searched for a safe point of view to have about the Indians, and she found herself often at odds with the prevailing Spanish point of view.

In the huge crowd that greeted the Calderóns on their arrival in Veracruz Fanny noticed "every tinge of dark complexion, from the pure Indian upwards."¹²² Typically and without thinking, with only the absence of black faces, she placed the Indian at the bottom of the social and evolutionary ladder. Fanny knew from Humboldt that she should not expect to find many Negroes in Mexico.¹²³ Africans had arrived in Mexico in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to provide labor during the post-Conquest decline of the Indian population. When the native population recovered, however, the slave trade

¹²¹ Knight, Slave Society, 83.

¹²² Ibid., 38.

¹²³ Humboldt, Political Essay, 84-5.

which had been expensive and inconvenient, dwindled sharply.¹²⁴ As the Calderóns travelled through the country on their way to Mexico City, they passed through several Indian villages and Fanny found the scenery, which often included "Indian women with their long black hair standing at the doors with their half naked children," very "picturesque and striking."¹²⁵ Initially, the Indians were a romantic asset to the countryside, as the Blacks had been in Cuba.

On her first morning in Mexico, Fanny marveled, as she looked through her window, at the "picturesque groups of figures...men bronze-colour, with nothing but a piece of blanket thrown round them. . . ."¹²⁶ They were very exotic -- as long as she kept her distance. Even the leperos formed a pretty picture from afar "with their ragged blankets and wild eyes that gleamed in the light of the torches."¹²⁷ But when she encountered the leperos from too close a distance, she found them miserable and dirty. One horrible lepero with a deformed foot actually found his way into Fanny's house after watching her from the ground floor window. As picturesque as they might be at times, Fanny reminded herself that they supposedly were

¹²⁴ Knight, Slave Society, 187.

¹²⁵ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 44.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

savage. During a trip to the country in an isolated area there were Indians "certainly as much in a state of savage nature as the lower class of Mexicans were when Cortes first traversed these plains."¹²⁸ Here again was Fanny's notion of the great Cortes as a Spanish civilizer of the savages.

Yet, Fanny stubbornly admired many of the Indians she observed, particularly the women, from afar. "Occasionally," she wrote, "in the lower classes, one meets with an Indian woman and sees a face and form so beautiful that we might suppose such another was the Doña Marina who enchanted Cortes."¹²⁹ Her admiration of the Indians often came in exasperated contrast to the Spanish Señoras of her own class. During Lent, for instance, it seemed apparent to Fanny that the Indian women "with their flower garlands and guitars, lying in their canoes, and dancing and singing," knew better how to celebrate than "the ladies, who shut up in their close carriages, promenade along in full dress and silence..."¹³⁰ Fanny's initial disdain for the pretension of many of the Señoras allowed her to praise diligent Indians.

But many of the lower classes of Indians simply could not live up to Fanny's lofty vision. She called some of the lower

¹²⁸ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 161.

¹²⁹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 155.

¹³⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 122.

classes of Mexico a people

gentle, superstitious and lazy...not troubling their heads with politics...chiefly contented to lie basking in the sun, eating tortillas, getting drunk upon pulque and in the evening...strumming on a guitar, cramming themselves with poppies, and making love to the bronze-coloured beauties of their own class.¹³¹

Fanny's criticisms chiefly concerned the lack of fruitful activity. When she complimented Indians of the countryside, she noted their industriousness, as well as their picturesque appearance. She found, for instance, the small village of San Bartolo remarkable for "the good looks and cleanness of the Indian women."¹³² Fanny may identify somewhat with the hardworking Indian women of the countryside. Besides being picturesque, they were independent and strong. Fanny was unable, then, to conform entirely to the Spanish attitude toward the Indians.

The adventurous Fanny encountered many different people on her journey. Already accustomed to Spaniards, she thought, she developed an immediate distaste for some of her husband's countrymen but quickly overcame this challenge to her vision of Spain, the vision that would, ultimately, give Fanny her own national identity. After this minor crisis she encountered, for

¹³¹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 164.

¹³² Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 377.

the first time, people who really looked different. She never came close enough to the Negroes in Havana to have her picturesque notions of them challenged. The Indians of Mexico, however, occupied her thoughts often. Many of her observations were admiring, but just as many were critical. She could not reconcile her two notions of the Indian: unquestionably of the lower class, but possessing some admirable attributes as well.

II. Class

Fanny never lost the class consciousness and prestige of her heritage, but she resented the social pretension and haughtiness of the Mexican aristocracy. Her intellectual and cultural nature had been evident since her youth in Scotland. Carefully cultivated in Boston, her romantic nature also blossomed. All these attitudes accompanied her to Mexico. She was a student for life of art, literature and music as a result of her a classical education, as evident from the article she wrote for the North American Review, which she called the "fruits of idleness in the holidays."¹³³ She played at least

¹³³ Inglis, letter to Payne, [?] July 1833.

two instruments, the harp and the piano.¹³⁴ She had worked long and hard to learn Spanish.¹³⁵ She was cultivated, extremely literate, talented and accomplished woman.

Fanny noticed as soon as she arrived in Mexico that the "nouveaux riches" of Mexico were ostentatious in dress, manners and customs. Although they tried, they did not yet possess the qualities of European culture. In Veracruz, Fanny noticed a painting of a "very lovely Madonna, which hung unvalued and ill-framed, in one corner of the apartment."¹³⁶ In Mexico, upon returning the visit of a Countess Cortina, whom she admired very much, Fanny still noticed, with a very discerning eye, that although there were many fine things in her home, "Our European eyes are struck with numerous inconsistencies in dress, servants, etc. . . ."¹³⁷ At the hacienda of some friends, Fanny was impressed with the "unostentatious hospitality which exists in this and some other of the old families. . . ." Here, finally, was a pleasant reminder of "Spanish manners and habits,

¹³⁴ Fanny Inglis, Boston to John Howard Payne, New York, 4 June 1833, typed transcript, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; Harp sent to her in Havana, Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 25. Other references to her playing the piano throughout Life in Mexico.

¹³⁵ See for example Victor Von Hagen, Maya Explorer (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), 200.

¹³⁶ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 39.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 76.

now falling into disuse and succeeded by more pretension to refinement, and less of either real wealth or sociability."¹³⁸ Fanny resented Mexican pretenders to wealth and status, preferring instead the real class of old money.

Upon making some of her first acquaintances in Mexico, Fanny was pleased, but cautious. The Dowager and young Countess of Cortina paid their respects to Fanny early. The Dowager, Fanny remarked, was "one of the true ladies of the old school, of whom not many specimens now remain in Mexico. . . ." Although Fanny was impressed with these two women she remarked, "I hope I am not seeing the cream before the milk!"¹³⁹ As her visitors continued to stream in, Fanny also was taken with the Marquesa de San Roman, whom she described as a "lady who has travelled a great deal in Europe, and is very distinguished for talents and information." From Fanny's obvious admiration of this woman and everything she stands for we may assume that this is what Fanny aspires to -- at least in part. Here was a woman of status, respected for her views. Ironically, or not, Fanny also ended her life as a legitimate Marquesa in her own right. Fanny continued to rave about the Marquesa and her kind:

She and her contemporaries are fast fading away, the last record of the days of viceroyalty. In their place a new race have started up, whose manners and appearance have

¹³⁸ Ibid., 166.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

little of the *vieille cour* about them; chiefly, it is said, wives of military men, sprung from the hotbeds of revolution, ignorant and full of pretensions, as parvenus who have risen by chance and not by merit must be.¹⁴⁰

These are the remnants of aristocracy with which Fanny, with her patrician background, could identify.

From all appearances Fanny should have been able to fit rather neatly in the proper social niche. Her birth and upbringing, her intelligence and cultural refinement, would seem to combine to make her easily labled. With her criticisms in Mexico of the lower classes and of the "nouveau riche," the pretenders to wealth and status, and her disappointment in Mexico at times that she definitely belongs in the company of the "real" ladies of old wealth. She has lingering doubts, however, for she does not see herself in the role of the idle rich.

William Inglis' financial troubles at the end of his life left a lingering trace on Fanny. For as much as she espoused the traditions of class and wealth, she remained ever frugal. She complained about Mexican tradesmen who, she was sure, charged Calderón more for their work because he was a foreigner and diplomat.¹⁴¹ In addition, Calderón had unspecified troubles

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 102.

with the United States Bank and apparently lost a sum of money. William Prescott wrote to Calderón on one occasion: "I was grieved to learn you had embarked so much of your property in this bad concern."¹⁴² Fanny also learned that she should not mix with the common people. In one instance Fanny found out that a theatre they had almost attended the previous evening had been filled with "the common people, who were drinking brandy and smoking; so it was fortunate that we had not shown our faces there."¹⁴³ There were certain rules of society and etiquette to which she must adhere. There was a clear demarcation among the classes. The common people and lower classes would be viewed from afar. But even these revelations in her text reveal a certain naivete: she did not know that common people would be in the theatre; she did not know that women of her stature should not go to the cathedral in the middle of the day, and so on. But she seemed to view all this with a somewhat lighthearted manner, as if she was really not all that concerned with the mistakes she made, perhaps indicating a wish to break the rules or to stir up some trouble.

¹⁴² Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 113.

¹⁴³ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 59.

III. A Woman's Role?

Since Fanny often expressed disdain for the Señoras of Mexico, this attitude reflects Fanny's gender as well as her class consciousness. As explored in Chapter Two, Fanny was unsure about her place as a woman in society, falling somewhere between an independent woman and a dutiful wife and "lady." As with the issue of class, Fanny often was irreverent -- not acting much like a "lady" should. Much like the strength and pervasiveness of the Catholic Church, the role of women in Latin American and Hispanic culture especially challenged Fanny.

With her marriage in 1838, Fanny's career ended. Within one year, she was whisked off to Mexico, still adjusting to married life. Fanny had to adjust immediately to wifely and diplomatic duties. She maintained her independent and adventurous nature in conjunction with her identity as a woman. In Mexico, she described in great detail matters of shopping, fashion, jewelry, manners, and etiquette, but there was a part of her that still rebelled. When she went shopping in Havana, for instance, she insisted on entering the shops, instead of waiting for the shopkeepers to bring their goods out to the carriages, as the Havana ladies did.¹⁴⁴ In Mexico, then, Fanny's independent and adventurous nature clashed with her

¹⁴⁴ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 27.

wifely and diplomatic duties. She gained a well-deserved reputation for being rather adventurous. One British reviewer of Life in Mexico, a woman, remarked that there was nothing domestic about Fanny's book and that it was disgraceful that such a book, with descriptions of unsavory events such as cockfights, would have been written by a woman.¹⁴⁵ The editors of the Edinburgh Review expressed amazement at the author's "feats of unusual strength."¹⁴⁶ Certainly Fanny, an avid and skilled equestrienne, raised some eyebrows when she was persuaded to ride "small, ugly, yellow-coloured bull, which they call tame."¹⁴⁷

For a great costume ball that was to be given for the benefit of the poor, Calderón wished Fanny to wear a Poblana peasant or Mexican dress as a compliment to the Mexicans.¹⁴⁸ When this news spread, all the heads of state appeared at Fanny's hacienda to implore her not to wear the costume. They assured Fanny that "all Poblana were femmes de rien." Fanny confided to her Journal, "...now this is what I call a sweeping clause on the part of the ministry..." She attempted to change

¹⁴⁵ From British Quarterly Review June 1845. As quoted in Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 633.

¹⁴⁶ From Edinburgh Review July 1843, as quoted in Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 632.

¹⁴⁷ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 515.

¹⁴⁸ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 112.

their minds by showing the length and decency of the dress, but to no avail. "It had become a matter of state," she lamented, and "in short I was obliged to yield..."¹⁴⁹ In her text, she was more demure, stating only that "I yielded with good grace and thanked the cabinet council for their timely warning."¹⁵⁰ Fanny resented being told what to wear and resented the Ministry's sweeping condemnation of the Poblana she had admired. But she expressed her anger only in a private letter to Prescott in which she called the President and his Cabinet "a set of amiable old women."¹⁵¹ A few months later, when Fanny noticed a woman who wore a Poblana dress at a country fair she wrote with sarcasm, "She looks beautiful in this dress which will not be objected to in the country, though it might not suit a fancy ball in Mexico."¹⁵²

Fanny also made many observations about the Mexican women she encountered. These observations were unavoidably tainted by her own experiences as a woman in Mexico -- the struggle over how to act. As she had with the church, Fanny at first had many criticisms of the Señoras, especially their lack of activity and education. Gradually, however, she began to see the women in a

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 89.

¹⁵¹ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 131.

¹⁵² Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 222.

more favorable light, complimenting their manners and their latin good nature. She saw the good and the bad and eventually came to see how many women did lead meaningful and useful lives. Her struggle was forward moving as she began to understand the particular role of women in Mexico City.

Early in her Mexican experience, Fanny confided to her journal that Mexican ladies "are decidedly neither pretty nor graceful, and their dress is awful." She compared the ladies unfavorably with ladies of the Unites States.¹⁵³ Fanny equated "good looks" with the European and American faces and figures to which she was accustomed. All the European ladies she knew looked a certain way, much like Fanny herself looked, and starkly different from the Mexican ladies. Hispanic features and small statures were simply too different. When she admired the good looks of Indians, it was usually in response to their cleanliness, which would not ruin a picture. She observed, for example, "There is much more beauty among the lower classes, only they are too dirty to admire very close."¹⁵⁴

Fanny exhibited scorn for the Señoras who would not deign to walk along the beautiful Alameda as she did because "after all, everyone has feet, but ladies alone have carriages."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 133.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 116.

She wondered in her journal, what the Mexican ladies actually did with their time:

They do not read - they do not write - they do not go into society. For the most part they do not play - they do not draw - they do not go to the theatre - nor have they balls, or parties, or concerts - nor do they lounge in the shops of a morning, or promenade in the streets - nor do they ride on horseback. What they do not do is clear, but what do they do?¹⁵⁶

This lack of activity and usefulness clearly offended the industrious Fanny. She would not want to be put into the same class as these ladies. As Silvia Arrom noted, it is only after Fanny began to realize the role that women played in Mexican society, not evident at first, that she revised her opinion of Mexican ladies and edited the passage quoted above out of her text.¹⁵⁷

During a visit to the Colegio Vizcaino which provided for the education of the children of Spaniards, and also the children of the poor in another separate part of the building, Fanny tried to come to terms with her role as a wife. She was pleased to see that there were "female teachers in all the necessary branches, such as reading, writing, sewing, arithmetic, etc."¹⁵⁸ She also remarked that "the girls are

¹⁵⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 156.

¹⁵⁷ Arrom, Women of Mexico City, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 119.

taught to cook and iron, and make themselves generally useful, thus being fitted to become excellent wives to respectable men in their own rank of life."¹⁵⁹ She acknowledged some exceptions, more every day, but on the whole remarked that the "Mexican Señoras and Señoritas" possessed only a basic literacy and compared their education to that in Spain, but not at all to that of the United States or Great Britain.¹⁶⁰ It was not that Fanny necessarily wanted women to break out of their established roles, but merely to live useful and not idle lives. Behind her concern with what she initially perceived as idleness lay her discomfort with her own role.

Gradually, Fanny began to appreciate the particular manner of Mexican women. After criticizing their outward appearance, as noted above, she was quick to point out that "In point of amiability and warmth of manner, I have met with no women who can possibly compete with those in Mexico, and it appears to me that women of all other countries will appear cold and stiff by comparison."¹⁶¹ "Here nature surpasses art," she continued, "...And what shall I say of their souls? I shall say that in Europe the minds are more cultivated, but in Mexico the hearts

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁶⁰ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 232.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 110.

are more amiable."¹⁶² Near the end of her experience in Mexico, she made adjustments in her characterization of women, placing them in a more genteel light. She also saw changes in a more practical realm. She acknowledged that the women who seemed so idle actually devote considerable time to charitable organizations, spent a great deal of time in devotional exercises and see to their homes and families. So, she concluded, "It cannot be said that the life of a Mexican Señora is an idle one...nor can it be considered a useless one."¹⁶³

¹⁶² Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 234.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 457.

Chapter Four

"In the Midst of Prayer and Church-going." ¹⁶⁴

As has become evident from exploring Fanny's struggles with race, class and gender, she had a very personal interest in Mexican society and culture. Her experience with religion overshadowed all others. Fanny arrived in Mexico as a confirmed Protestant with a naive, picturesque but often critical vision of the Roman Catholic Church. While in Mexico, however, she became a resilient and insistent romantic in her support of the Church, even in the face of repeated challenges. Her journal reflects increasingly complex ideas about the religion she observed and a tempering of her critical remarks over time. Additionally, Fanny edited out of her published text many of the criticisms that appeared early in her journal. Fanny was both attracted to and repulsed by the Church in Mexico, but she had begun to undergo the transformation that would culminate in a conversion to Catholicism in 1847.

¹⁶⁴ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 122.

I. The Romantic Protestant

Fanny's background and her marriage to a Catholic fostered more than a passing interest in the Catholic Church before she arrived in Mexico and although she appreciated the beauty of the Church, she initially was firm in her Protestant observations. Fanny first observed the Catholic religion as an outsider with a preconceived notion of what the Church should look like and what it should represent. In Mexico, the Church's influence was pervasive -- she was immersed in a country strongly defined by its Catholicism. She was the outsider in the uncomfortable position of posing as a Catholic -- concealing her Protestantism for the sake of her husband's role as the Spanish minister to Mexico. Her position in society as a diplomat's wife made her privy to an insider's view of the Church.

During the early part of her sojourn in Mexico, Fanny expressed some prevailing criticisms of the Church, mingled with her own romantic and picturesque expectations. In Havana, she observed as she attended mass that

There were a few people in church, but the grouping was picturesque. The black faces of the negresses, with their white mantillas... and the black lace mantillas of the Havana ladies with their white faces and black eyes - all were very effective.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.

The artistic scene fit into a pleasing picture Fanny had fashioned in her mind. Her status as an outsider allowed her to imagine a pretty scene with no real spiritual content. The important thing was the view -- the picture. She edited out anything that would have been offensive to Protestant sensibility, for instance: "As for the devotion, there was a good deal of crossing, much ringing of bells and much low muttering in Latin on the part of the priest."¹⁶⁶ Though she was impressed with the outside appearance of the church, the service itself evoked a critical response, alluding to a Protestant criticism of Catholic ritual -- the Latin, the bells, and constant crossing of oneself. For publication, however, she kept the picture as pretty as possible. Initially the Church was everything Fanny imagined it would be.

When Fanny arrived in the capital city she was eager to make her "debut" at mass in a great cathedral. She viewed this as the opportune moment to present herself to Mexican society. Clearly she expected great ceremony and people of her own kind and class. The scene was picturesque as her carriage pulled up to the front of the Cathedral. Before she entered, however, Fanny enhanced the picture by reflecting upon the Aztec temple that once stood on the same site. She described the ruins of the great temple where victims were sacrificed as "a strange

¹⁶⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 27.

mixture of the beautiful and the horrible."¹⁶⁷ Fanny knew about the Aztec Empire and the practices of the Indian religion and exhibited a morbid curiosity about the pagan religion, although she acknowledged the good that Cortes had rendered by bringing civilized religion to the country. In her vivid imagination, influenced by the writing of Clavigero, she connected the catholic cathedral and the Aztec temple. In lending the pagan religion some credibility by acknowledging the presence of a Holy Virgin figure in their mythology she revealed a capacity for tolerance and understanding of the past that would not be found in a devout Catholic. Her vision, a romantic fascination with the past, was not clouded by unquestioning faith in Catholicism.

Finally, Fanny entered the cathedral which was "of the Gothic form, with two lofty ornamental towers" and "still immensely rich in gold, silver and jewels," only to be disgusted by a dirty floor and miserable leperos, the beggars of the street and typically meztizo [Spanish and Indian mixture], who gathered in the church.¹⁶⁸ She left out the observation that she thought the church a "very handsome building, though it had been added to in very bad taste."¹⁶⁹ She did not want to imply

¹⁶⁷ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 72-73.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶⁹ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 104.

bad taste on the part of her host country, while the problems of dirty leperos were beyond control. The Fishers speculate also that her opinion of bad taste in architecture had changed by the time she readied her text for publication, and that the Cathedral was not truly Gothic in architecture, lending even greater credibility to the notion of Fanny's romantic vision -- that anything old and great must be "gothic" and therefore romantic.¹⁷⁰ The reality of filth shattered her romantic vision of past and current greatness, but after the initial shock, she composed herself and mused, "I shall learn these particulars in time."¹⁷¹ She realized that there were certain times for ladies of her stature to attend mass at the Cathedral, and she must respect tradition and proper Mexican etiquette. This was her mistake -- not the fault of the Church.

On another occasion, Fanny and Calderón went to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, one of the most important Catholic shrines in Mexico.¹⁷² Fanny struck from her text the admission that upon entering the cathedral, "before the high altar, Paulita immediately dropped down upon her knees, crossing herself, I followed her example. . . ."¹⁷³ Fanny was unsure how

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 685n7.

¹⁷¹ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 74.

¹⁷² Michael Meyer and William Sherman, The Course of Mexican History, 4th ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 186.

¹⁷³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 121.

to act and merely imitated her friend. There was considerable pressure on Fanny to act like a practicing Catholic, since she was the wife of the Spanish minister. In a sense, Fanny played the role of a Catholic, which may have appealed to her sense of the adventurous and theatrical.

The Calderóns then called upon the bishop, who recounted to them the history of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe to an Indian named Juan Diego. Fanny stated in her text merely that the bishop "was sincere in his assertions, there could be no doubt."¹⁷⁴ To her journal, however, she confided lengthy and detailed skepticism and critical observations. "It was a curious thing to hear in this nineteenth century," she wrote, "a bishop with the utmost seriousness recounting a tissue of the greatest absurdities."¹⁷⁵ She was adamantly opposed to believing in the miraculous appearance of the Virgin. At this point, Fanny was still firmly critical in many of her views of the Church, allowing only that it was aesthetic and picturesque, as in a funeral mass she attended where "the whole service, the chanting, the solemn music, and the prayers were very impressive..."¹⁷⁶ Her immersion in the religion, however, opened the door to her

¹⁷⁴ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 87.

¹⁷⁵ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 123.

¹⁷⁶ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 111.

personal struggles.

II. The Diligent Sociologist

After living in Mexico for a while, Fanny's firmly Protestant, if slightly romantic, view of the Church began to waver. More and more, she found herself studying the Church and especially the effect that the Church had on the people. Her efforts led her to see good in the church in more than just a romantic and picturesque way. Soon after the visit to the bishop at Guadalupe, Fanny encountered a Jesuit "whose face, besides being handsome, looks the very personification of all that is good and mild and holy."¹⁷⁷ In her journal she added the scathing criticism that if only "there were many such, instead of the hundreds of narrow-minded, intolerant bigots ... who fill the pulpits and the convents, the converts to the Catholic faith would be more numerous even than they are."¹⁷⁸ Fanny perhaps subconsciously anticipated her own conversion, seven years later. Although the tone of her comment was critical, that narrow-minded bigots filled the Catholic pulpits, she could see the attractions of the religion and how people

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 115.

¹⁷⁸ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 163-4.

would be tempted to convert.

Fanny found it strange that "in this age, when all old things seem done away, the old religion is assuming more power daily."¹⁷⁹ Yet here was one reason why the church appealed to Fanny -- all other old institutions were fading away. She attributed the "innumerable sects of Protestantism, and the intolerance of each towards the other" as a main cause of the growing power of Catholicism. Although she criticized the "spirit of mystery and despotism as inconsistent with that of republicanism," she insisted that the "Catholic religion is the sole curb which prevents the most frightful excesses both in rich and poor." "Mexico," after all, was "a republic only in name - a land of monks, marquises and military."¹⁸⁰ She was qualifying and explaining her criticism, much as would a "sociologist" studying a new culture.

As Fanny became more acquainted with religious customs in Mexico, she became less naive and judgemental but still exhibited great fascination with the church. She tempered her vivid imagination and her criticisms. During Lent, "in the midst of prayer, church-going and fasting," she modified her romantic vision to account for some dirty leperos.¹⁸¹ She

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸¹ Life in Mexico, 1981 edition, 122.

wrote:

...and could you only shut your eyes to the one disagreeable feature in the picture, the number of leperos busy in the exercise of their vocation, you would believe that Mexico must be the most flourishing, most enjoyable and most peaceful place in the world.¹⁸²

Before she confronted the reality of the Church, she did not realize that there would be leperos in the churches. Now she acknowledged their existence in order to hold on to a romantic view of Mexico and the Church, a view that ultimately denied reality.

Following Lent, Fanny experienced her first Holy Week in Mexico. From this period on, her text is mostly unchanged for publication, suggesting that she had become accustomed to some of the things that seemed so strange at first and felt less inclined to criticize. She had painted, with great anticipation, a lovely picture of this holiest time of the year. She wrote, "On Holy Thursday nothing can be more picturesque than the whole appearance of Mexico."¹⁸³ She recounted the numerous churches she visited, the splendor of the processions and the religious pageants. She commented on how the mixture of the lower classes and the Indians with the fine ladies and gentlemen added to the overall effect of the scene. Her

¹⁸² Ibid., 123.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 139.

romantic view of religion now included the lower classes -- they even added to the picture! She was impressed with their piety and devotion, which she could not duplicate, but the ritualistic and rote nature of Catholic worship left her uninspired. "We reached home hardly able to stand," she sighed, "I never felt more dazzled, bewildered and sleepy. . . ." ¹⁸⁴ Although touched by the devotion she observed, she felt little herself.

Because of the devotion that the Church elicited from the lower classes, Fanny saw the Church, and the great religious festivals, as a benefit to society. It was important to the people for it joined them together and gave them the means to believe in and participate in their one true religion. She wrote:

However childish and superstitious all this may seem, I doubt whether it be not as well thus to impress certain religious truths on the minds of a people too ignorant to understand them by any other means. ¹⁸⁵

On the one hand, Fanny was moved by a maternalistic sense of duty which justified the Church in terms of its social function. She, as a responsible member of the upper class, should support the Catholic Church because the customs and practices of the Church maintain the subordination of the people. On the other hand, Fanny remained fascinated by the church. At one point

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 144.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 142.

Fanny compared herself and her companions to a group of nuns who were "veiled figures," shrouded in mystery while Fanny and her companions wore "worldly dresses and colored ribbons." In her contact with the nuns Fanny "felt transported back three centuries, and half afraid that the whole [experience] would prove a mere vision."¹⁸⁶ Again she exhibited a fascination with the past. If she was the proper Victorian lady who would support the Church because it kept the masses in their proper place, she was also a spiritual woman drawn to the past, the roots and the identity of the Church.

While Fanny was being pulled to the Church in many ways, she still was repulsed by it in other ways. Fanny's growing devotion to the Church sustained its most legitimate challenge when she watched young girls "take the veil" to become novices in the convent. These experiences more than any other caused her to question the Church and remained unedited for publication. She was horrified by the ceremony itself: "I have now seen three nuns take the veil; and, next to death, consider it the saddest event that can occur in this nether sphere."¹⁸⁷ She addressed the popularity of the sisterhood for young women who had no access to education or a social life, but still was overwhelmed by the frightfulness of the sacrifice. A young girl

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 154.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 199.

became the "Bride of Christ" at the expense of freedom and youth. She expressed "horror at the sacrifice of a girl so young, that she could not possibly have known her own mind."¹⁸⁸ In the end Fanny resigned, "...so it was."¹⁸⁹ She could not change the situation, but neither did the Mexicans. The ceremony was an accepted and longstanding part of the Mexican religious tradition. Likewise, she had been unable to prevent her sister Jane, also a young woman full of life and promise, from taking the veil and leaving her real sisters to live in seclusion with her new sisters.

This experience troubled Fanny greatly, and although she could not reject the Church, considering all the benefits it provided to society, she also did not solve the problems caused by her disturbing experiences. She had invested too much, personally, in her struggle to understand religion to drop Catholicism completely by this time.

"Mexico," Fanny wrote, "owes so much of its peculiar beauty to the religious or superstitious feelings of its inhabitants."¹⁹⁰ Fanny challenged any one to compare, for effect, the "four new churches, proclaiming four different sects; religion suited to all customers," of a New England

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 210.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 205.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 364.

village to the "ruined arch and cross...the church, gray and ancient, but strong as if designed for eternity," of the Mexican countryside.¹⁹¹ How could each religion have meaning if there is a religion to suit everyone? Everything in New England, she complained, "proclaims prosperity, equality, consistency; the past forgotten." The people had no binding identity. In Mexico, by contrast, "everything reminds us of the past, of the conquering Spaniards...of the triumph of Catholicism."¹⁹² Catholicism, Fanny believed, gave the people a great sense of belonging and of community that is lacking in New England, and it certainly presented a better picture.

If she retained the proper distance, her picture remained solid. As the Spanish diplomat's wife Fanny was not exposed, if at all possible, to social conflict. She perceived the Church as "the greatest source of delight for the people."¹⁹³ She admired the monks that first civilized the Indians, she admired the charity of the catholic upper class, she envied the importance of the family in Mexico, probably because she had no children of her own and remained so close to her own family in the United States. She attributed to Mexicans a sense of community and belonging that she felt came from their Church.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 365.

¹⁹² Ibid., 365-66.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 378.

If she wondered about her own purpose in life, such a vision exercised a powerful appeal to her condition as an outsider. In Fanny's eyes, the good that the Church did far outweighed the negative, which she could brush off as a product of her own personal weakness.

III. The Convert

Fanny did not convert to Catholicism until 1847, five years after returning from Mexico. With this knowledge, however, it is impossible to read the letters from Life in Mexico without becoming acutely aware of the personal struggle she was going through. Although her published text reflects only negligible changes in her journal account of the experience of watching the novitiates, some of the comments Fanny made about that experience apparently were among those that she would have changed for a new edition of Life in Mexico after her conversion in 1847.¹⁹⁴ The Fishers discovered an edition of Life in Mexico in the possession of a descendent that contains handwritten notes made by Fanny while visiting her family in 1848. The notes simply tempered the critical nature of the chapter, in light of her conversion to the Catholic faith. Fanny's younger sister Lydia, who also became Catholic, wanted to bring out a

¹⁹⁴ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 723n3.

new edition of the book after Fanny's death.¹⁹⁵ She asked Fanny's nephew to write a preface explaining that certain changes were made in this edition. According to the Fishers, the rough notes of this preface indicate that Fanny would not have authorized a second edition without the revision of certain portions of the text "as with the sensitiveness of a convert she magnified the importance of certain words and phrases."¹⁹⁶

In Mexico, Fanny's weakness for romantic visions had opened the door to Catholicism, connecting the Church to a great past, and to the identities of her husband and her sister. When challenged, Fanny did not reject the Church, but allowed herself to study the religion, to see good in the Church where other foreigners saw evil, suffering and oppression. She left strong challenges unresolved, unable to satisfactorily solve some of the problems she faced in Mexico.

Not only did Fanny fondly remember her years in Mexico pretending to be a Catholic, but she finally took the ultimate step and converted to Catholicism at Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown on May 10, 1847. When Fanny readied her notes and letters for publication she had not yet converted, but she had become a much more resilient defender of Catholicism. Her

¹⁹⁵ This edition never appeared, although another edition of Life in Mexico was published in 1852 without any changes to the text and therefore presumably without Fanny's permission. See Life in Mexico 1966 edition, 635.

¹⁹⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 723-4n3.

"softness" on the issue of Catholicism did not go unnoticed by reviewers. One British reviewer, a woman, insisted that Fanny had made it perfectly clear that she had already become a Catholic.¹⁹⁷ Mexicans also were not impressed with Fanny's treatment of their society and presumably, then, their religious habits. They had opened their homes and customs to her and felt betrayed that she treated them with nothing but criticism and satire.¹⁹⁸ Both Protestants and Catholics who read her book found observations and interpretations to criticize.

After her return from Mexico, Fanny's allegiance to Catholicism was more easily identifiable as she staunchly supported her adopted religion. She became a reader of Orestes Brownson, the transcendentalist-turned-Catholic and editor of Brownson's Quarterly Review. By the late 1840's, Catholicism had gained a greater number of converts resulting in more national attention and growing opposition movements such as the Know-Nothing Party. In his Review, Brownson addressed controversial issues. For instance he demonstrated that Catholicism was compatible with republican government because Catholics owed their allegiance to the Pope as a head of the

¹⁹⁷ British Quarterly Review, June 1845 as quoted in Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, 633.

¹⁹⁸ Costeloe, "Prescott's History of the Conquest and Calderón de la Barca's Life in Mexico," 344-45.

Church, not as a head of state.¹⁹⁹ Logical and intellectual arguments such as Brownson's appealed to Fanny.

In correspondence with Orestes Brownson in the early 1850's Fanny wrote, "As a Catholic and a convert, I feel a daily increasing interest in the welfare of my adopted country, the most Catholic country on the face of the globe. . . ." She recognized that the recent Mexican war and the recent invasion of Cuba by an American expedition were popular with most Americans and that this popularity was "mixed [with] a vague antipathy to the Catholic religion." She recognized that many non-Catholics believed that "Catholicism and liberty are incompatible" and that there was a "lurking notion of the riches to be found in the churches and religious houses."²⁰⁰ So, Fanny was well aware of the predominate prejudices against Catholicism, presumably because she once harbored many of these doubts herself. Obviously her transformation to Catholicism had progressed since she was in Mexico when, however much she admired the Church, she still had doubts over the compatibility of Catholicism and government.

That she became a devout convert, there is little doubt. Fanny spent the rest of her life, after leaving Washington in 1853, in Spain. She undertook a translation of Italian historian

¹⁹⁹ Mason, in American Literary Magazines, 86-88.

²⁰⁰ Brownson, Brownson's Middle Life, 314.

Daniello Bartoli's biography of St. Ignatius Loyola, first published in Rome in 1650 -- a book which had heralded a new era in Ignatian biography.²⁰¹ She adopted her new religion wholeheartedly and without evident reservation.

When Fanny had first arrived in Mexico, she had voiced prevailing Protestant criticisms of the Catholic Church, although she was not the typical North American Protestant because of her romantic fascination with the Church, her personal need to understand the religion of her husband and of her sister and the fact that she was required to pretend to be a practicing Catholic while in Mexico. After living in Mexico for a while, however, her criticisms of the Church mellowed. Although several incidents disturbed her, such as watching the novitiates, she insisted on maintaining a romantic vision of the Church when she easily could have continued to confide critical remarks to her private journal. Eventually Fanny succumbed to that most romantic of all religions, Catholicism. After her conversion, she strongly defended her adopted religion to the end of her life.

²⁰¹ Mary Purcell, The First Jesuit: St. Ignatius Loyola (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1956).

EPILOGUE

Chapter Five

"We are Now Quite at Home in Madrid"²⁰²

Fanny's adventure in Mexico was a turning point in her life. Her struggle with the challenges of Mexican society translated into an acclaimed book. She furthered the tentative attempts at resolution of her conflicts, begun in Mexico, as she finally settled into an identity as wife, author, Catholic, and Spanish. Fanny began to adopt this identity after her husband's recall from Mexico, when his professional future was uncertain. Finally, the Spanish government appointed Calderón minister to the United States again. When the Calderóns returned to the United States, Fanny fulfilled her role as diplomat's wife well, and dutifully espoused the cause of Spain, her "adopted country," more fervently than ever.²⁰³ When they returned to Spain after nine years in Washington, a confident Fanny, fulfilled as an author, was ready to settle into her adopted Spanish identity.

²⁰² Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 430.

²⁰³ Brownson, Brownson's Middle Life, 314.

I. Fanny, the Author

Fanny became an author by accident, as the result of her personal struggle for identity in Mexico, and she reaped the reward of fulfillment for the rest of her life. When Fanny and Calderón returned from Havana, they spent most of the remainder of 1842 living with the Inglis family, back in Boston and operating a school at No. 5 Chestnut Street. It was during this period that Fanny readied Life in Mexico for publication.²⁰⁴ It is unclear how enthusiastic Fanny was over the prospect of publishing her letters, but her correspondence clearly fascinated William Prescott and he insisted that the letters be made available to the American public.²⁰⁵ Prescott admitted that Fanny compiled her letters at least "partly by my advice," because her descriptions "of that picturesque country and society are so spirited, and she had such numerous opportunities for observation, that I urged her to collect her scattered letters and print them."²⁰⁶

Fanny had worked on the manuscript for Life in Mexico

²⁰⁴ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxvi and Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 379n1.

²⁰⁵ Stanley Williams, The Spanish Background of American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 89, and others.

²⁰⁶ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 315.

between May and August of 1842, and when at least a portion of the manuscript was complete she turned to Prescott who easily arranged for the publication of an American edition by his own publishers, Little and Brown.²⁰⁷ The American edition appeared in December 1842, although the date of publication on the book reads 1843. Fanny had sent the last portion of the manuscript to Little and Brown, containing a glossary of Spanish terms suggested by George Ticknor, in early December 1842.²⁰⁸ In order to arrange publication overseas, Prescott enlisted the support of Charles Dickens, whom Prescott had met in early 1842 during Dickens' visit to America. At the end of August, 1842, Prescott asked Dickens to read Fanny's manuscript and, if it were at all possible, offer it to a responsible London publisher.²⁰⁹ Dickens wrote to his publisher, Edward Chapman of Chapman and Hall, about Fanny's manuscript in September, 1842. He explained, "I think it probable that a book of which [Prescott] speaks so highly, is likely to be a creditable work.

²⁰⁷ Costeloe, "Prescott's History of the Conquest and Calderón de la Barca's Life in Mexico," 343, and C. Harvey Gardiner, Literary Memoranda of William Hickling Prescott (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1961), v.II, 94.

²⁰⁸ Frances Calderón de la Barca, Boston, to Messrs Little and Brown, Boston, 8 Dec 1842, Ford Collection, New York Public Library, New York.

²⁰⁹ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 315-16.

What do you say to it?"²¹⁰ The editors of Dickens' letters state that it was rare for Dickens to recommend a book to his publishers but that "he was naturally anxious to preserve the goodwill of an American he respected."²¹¹ Fanny seems to have stayed out of these negotiations entirely.

Dickens wrote back to Prescott in October saying that Chapman and Hall would be "happy to republish that book of which you speak requiring no better commendation of it, than your description of its merits." He then stated how anxious the publishers were to acquire Prescott's new book.²¹² In his correspondence, Dickens gives the impression that he never read the manuscript. He never commented on the book itself or included any specifics. He was only too happy to recommend publication merely on Prescott's word. Fanny at this point had no reputation of her own and was entirely dependent on Prescott. Chapman and Hall published the book in England in two parts, on January 21 and February 4, 1843. The book appeared by Madame C - de la B - , and with a preface by Prescott himself. Prescott explained that Calderón feared that for an ambassador's wife to write such a book would be a breach of "diplomatic etiquette"

²¹⁰ Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, eds. The Letters of Charles Dickens, 1842-43, v. 3, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 324.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 347.

and especially feared that "it might not be approved in Spain." So Prescott consented to write a short Preface "stating that the letters are printed on my recommendation..."²¹³ Fanny's name was given in full, however, in the advertisements by Chapman and Hall. Overall, reviews were favorable and the book sold well in England and in the United States.²¹⁴

Calderón's fears about the publication of Life in Mexico proved to be well founded when the book reached Mexico. On April 28, 1843, the Mexican newspaper El Siglo Diez y Nueve first mentioned the book and began to publish excerpts in Spanish. On April 30 the government supported newspaper Diario de Gobierno criticized the "unjust, passionate, virulent diatribes" of Señora Calderón who had betrayed the hospitality she and her husband had been shown in Mexico. As might be expected, some Spanish residents in Mexico defended their former ambassador and his wife. But the Diario editors simply accused the Spanish residents of "secretly rejoicing at the way in which 'the Scottish traveller' had insulted Mexicans of all classes." The charges of impropriety were made not simply against Fanny, but against her husband who, it was assumed, bore full responsibility for his wife's actions.²¹⁵ Again, Fanny did not

²¹³ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 323.

²¹⁴ House, ed. The Letters of Charles Dickens, 456n1, and Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 329.

²¹⁵ Costeloe, 344-45, and Life in Mexico 1966 edition, 633-34.

seem to have been aware of the great controversy, according to her letters to Prescott in the summer of 1843 while she was travelling in Scotland.²¹⁶

After Mexico, buoyed by the success of Life in Mexico, Fanny received the accolades of critics and friends alike. Her new found reputation now preceeded her. She was no longer the wife of the Spanish minister (or former Spanish minister) but now was the celebrated author and authority on Mexico. The Unites States' Minister in Madrid, Washington Irving, wrote of her to his niece, "She recently wrote a very lively work on a residence in Mexico; which I recommend to your perusal...She is intelligent, sprightly and full of agreeable talent."²¹⁷

Fanny undoubtedly enjoyed this reputation -- a reputation gained without foresight or planning -- and she attempted to duplicate her Mexican success almost immediately. The Calderóns spent a good part of 1843 travelling and settled temporarily in Madrid in the Fall of 1843, in a time of great political unrest, and with Calderón's future remaining uncertain. While in Madrid Fanny began to gather data and material and make observations about life in Madrid. Irving remarked that "her position in political and social society here give her admirable

²¹⁶ See Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, letters from Fanny during 1843-1844.

²¹⁷ Ralph Aderman, ed. Washington Irving: Letters, 1839-1845., 633.

opportunities."²¹⁸ They did not remain long enough in Madrid, however, for Fanny to continue. She was trying too hard here to follow up on her Mexican success.

II. Fanny, the Wife

Although it is not apparent from reading Life in Mexico, Fanny was devoted to her husband, enjoyed his company and never expressed any regret over her marriage. As she once wrote to Prescott while travelling, "Calderón and I are still separated, and get on as badly as a divided pair of scissors."²¹⁹ During the uncertain period before they moved back to Washington, she expressed concern for him and his involvement in the turbulent politics of Madrid.²²⁰ Fanny was just as devoted to her family. She wished that Calderón would be appointed the Minister to the United States again, but did not want to speculate on the odds of that possibility, so she would not unduly raise the hopes of her mother back in the United States.²²¹ After the difficult years of adjustment in Mexico, Fanny became more attuned to domestic life and to life as a career diplomat's wife.

²¹⁸ Aderman, ed. Washington Irving: Letters 1839-45, 645.

²¹⁹ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 368.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 409.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 391, 434.

Irving, who was "highly pleased" with Fanny and spoke of her intelligence and talent, believed Calderón would likely be appointed to a new diplomatic post before long.²²² He was correct. By early in 1844, Calderón had again been appointed as Spanish Minister to the United States and he and Fanny prepared to move to Washington. They spent the next nine years in Washington, with frequent trips north to see the family and friends. While Fanny had been in Mexico, a scandal on Staten Island had forced the Inglis women to move again. The widower of Fanny's oldest sister Catherine Inglis visited the Inglises on Staten Island and eloped with a fifteen year old student who was the heiress to a notable fortune. The school was shut down but the Inglises apparently had many friends still in Boston for they returned to Boston and opened another school for young ladies on Chestnut Street.²²³

The Calderóns remained close with Prescott, although they did not see him as often. By 1849, Prescott was complaining that the Calderóns never came north to visit now that their family has left.²²⁴ Presumably the family had moved to Baltimore where they opened yet another school. The family also

²²² Aderman, ed. Washington Irving: Letters, 1839-45, 633.

²²³ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxvi.

²²⁴ C.L. Penney, ed. Prescott: Unpublished Letters to Gayangos (New York: Printed by Order of the Trustees of the Hispanic Society of America, 1927), 87.

came often to Washington to visit. Fanny and Calderón had no children, but she treated her nieces as her own. Many of her sister's children travelled abroad with her, especially Richmond's daughter Kate. As the wife of the Spanish minister in the United States, Fanny became a staunch defender of Spain in various diplomatic controversies surrounding the United States and Cuba in the early 1850's.²²⁵ While maintaining her fun-loving personality, Fanny nevertheless settled comfortably into her role as a wife.

III. Fanny, the Señora

In fulfilling the role of the proper diplomat's wife, Fanny began to fulfill her own search for a nationality. She also, while in Washington, settled her questions about religion when she Fanny converted. Finally, the Calderóns would settle in Madrid, where Fanny settled the ambiguity of her class consciousness and reaffirmed her decisions on nationality and religion.

Calderón's second tenure as Spanish Minister to the United States ended on August 2, 1853 when the Spanish government appointed him the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This government fell in July 1854 and angry mobs cried out for the arrest of

²²⁵ Brownson, Brownson's Middle Life, 310-314.

fallen ministers. Calderón escaped the country in disguise and Fanny, also under an assumed identity, soon followed. They spent two years in exile living in the small village of Neuilly outside of Paris.²²⁶ At this time, Fanny published the translation of a life of St. Ignatius Loyola and in 1856 she published, as had been suggested by Prescott thirteen years earlier upon the occasion of her first short stay in Madrid, an account of the turbulent time they had just spent in Madrid, entitled The Attaché in Madrid. For this work, Fanny remained effectively anonymous for many years. It appeared as the English translation of an unnamed young German diplomat.²²⁷ She did not require acclaim for this work, and was more than willing to conceal her identity for the sake of diplomatic propriety this time.

They were able to return to Spain in 1856 and Calderón effectively retired from public life. Nearing seventy years old, he died in 1861. Fanny chose to remain in Madrid. Soon after Calderón's death, Fanny received a message from the Queen, asking her to undertake the education of the ten year old Infanta Isabel. Therefore Fanny returned to the realm of teaching after an absence of many years. In the summer of 1868, Fanny visited the United States and missed an ensuing revolution

²²⁶ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxvi,xxvii.

²²⁷ Wolcott, Correspondence of Prescott, 406n1.

in Spain. She then joined her former pupil Isabel in exile and finally returned to Madrid in 1874 when the exiled Queen abdicated her throne in favor of her only son Alfonso. On September 18, 1876, in recognition of her and her husband's services, she was given the title of Marquesa de Calderón de la Barca. She spent the following years living in the palace with some members of her family close by and died peacefully on February 6, 1882.²²⁸ She was firm in her social milieu, a marquesa living in the royal palace, firm in her loyalty to Spain and firm in her identity.

By living out the rest of her life in Spain, Fanny in effect adopted a Spanish identity. She had become a devout and faithful Catholic. She had become a Marquesa in her own right, settling into a social caste close to royalty. She had fulfilled her role as wife, and after Calderón died, as a teacher to Spanish royalty. She enjoyed her faded reputation as author, but did not seek new acclaim. Fanny had finally settled the questions and contradictions in her life. Mexico, then, was a turning point in her life although she did not realize it at the time. She did not simply decide to end the ambiguity in her life -- it was a gradual process that went through stages of questioning and acceptance. Mexico was the defining stage. In Mexico Fanny had pretended to be Spanish, Catholic, the proper

²²⁸ Life in Mexico, 1966 edition, xxvii, xxviii, xxix.

wife, of a high social caste, but she struggled with these roles. In Madrid, she found acceptance and confidence and settled in these identities, her struggle ended.

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