

Cosmopolitan Designs and Twentieth-Century Literary
Culture: "Colección Los Presentes"
and the Emergence of the Professional Writer

by

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ABSTRACT

Cosmopolitan Designs and Twentieth-Century Literary Culture: "Colección Los Presentes" and the Emergence of the Professional Writer
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Literary cosmopolitanism, an esthetic mode whose proponents defined themselves oppositionally to regional, provincial, and revolutionary narratives, achieved a prominent position in Mexican letters at midcentury. One of the institutions most responsible for the new literary mode was a series of texts known as the "Los Presentes" collection. Beginning in the latter months of 1954, Juan José Arreola directed the publication of Carlos Fuentes's first collection of short stories, Los días enmascarados; Elena Poniatowska's first novel, Lilus Kikus; and Tomás Segovia's first novel, Primavera muda. In addition to these three titles, Arreola published his own drama, La hora de todos, and the first installment of Alfonso Reyes's extensive autobiographical project, Parentalia. This study examines the role of Los Presentes in the struggle to establish cosmopolitanism as the dominant literary style of the period.

The first chapter traces the general outlines of the cultural-literary field in Mexico at midcentury and provides an institutional history of Los Presentes. Chapter 2 begins with a close reading of the first three

books published by Arreola and finishes with an examination of the subversive positions they take with respect to traditional formulations of the notion of mestizaje. In the third chapter, an analysis of Arreola's own drama and Reyes's autobiography illuminate the complex web of alliances and compromises that undergirded the editorial strategy of the series. Chapter 4 places the first Los Presentes texts into a broader context through an examination of two other novels written in 1954, Magdalena Mondragón's Tenemos sed and Ramón Rubín's La bruma lo vuelve azul. The fourth chapter concludes with a reading of critical reviews and essays by Los Presentes writers concerning other novels and the esthetic positions of the era.

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Introduction

Literary criticism, at times, has erected strict boundaries between text and context. In past decades, under the influence of new criticism and structuralism, "textual analysis" restricted the study of literature to autonomous esthetic objects and frequently relegated discussions of politics, economics, and history to the periphery. In recent years, however, Mexican literary studies have seen the introduction of new approaches that attempt to understand more fully the imbrication of textual objects and their contextual setting. To expand on this newer mode of literary analysis, I have chosen to structure my study of midcentury Mexican literature around the complex relationships between text, writer, and publisher. Rather than proceeding from the presumption that literary texts function autonomously of social actors, institutions, and their attendant ideological positions, my analysis of the success of cosmopolitanism in midcentury Mexican letters begins with the assumption that literature is inextricably connected to the cultural milieu of the historical moment of its production. This concentration on the connections between literary works and the cultural/historical moment of their creation also bypasses a style of analysis long

associated with Hispanic literary studies: the categorization of writers into arbitrary generational niches.

The effort to define specific generations of writers presents special difficulties. Literary critics and historians of Spanish and Spanish American literature, proceeding from José Ortega y Gasset and Julián Marías, have often sought to describe generations of writers in chronological terms. Many of these categorizations are genre specific and frequently neglect interdisciplinary relationships. Assigning writers to unique generational moments decontextualizes their work and subordinates it to broadly synchronic analytical paradigms. Rather than categorize the writers whose works first began to appear in the mid-fifties by the relatively arbitrary fact of their chronological proximity, I examine the case of a publishing venture, the collection of titles known as *Los Presentes*, to study the relationship between literary institutions and esthetics. In doing so I construct a provisional selection of writers and texts, a "generation," constituted, not through chronological or generic, but rather institutional proximity.

The dense field of relationships that constituted the Mexican literary-cultural field at midcentury turned on the struggle to make literary cosmopolitanism the

dominant esthetic. The young writers associated with Los Presentes sought, not only to establish themselves as professional writers, but to redefine the nature of Mexican literature as well. Their strategy included the formation of alliances, both explicit and implicit, with writers and esthetic modes of previous decades. Los Presentes looked back to the cosmopolitanism of early twentieth-century thinkers (the Ateneo circle) and to the vanguard writers of the twenties and early thirties. Their innovative reworking of earlier cosmopolitan modes also depended on an oppositional stance toward other esthetic discourses contending for dominance at midcentury. These other literary fashions included the more mimetically oriented efforts of regionalism, indigenism, social realism, and the literature of the revolution. Disdainful of chauvinistic, provincially concerned literature that defined Mexican identity in nationalistic terms, the Los Presentes writers sought, in their own words, a more "universal" mode of expression. The product of their effort was a redefinition of Mexican literary cosmopolitanism, an esthetic that embraced European philosophic and literary styles, emphasized urban locales, and relied on experimental narrative techniques. Ironically, the simple duality of national versus universal values collapses under scrutiny as many

Los Presentes texts exhibit national concerns, while novels on the other side of the discursive fence, Magdalena Mondragón's Tenemos sed (1954) and Ramón Rubín's La bruma lo vuelve azul (1954), seek to universalize the Mexican experience.

At the forefront of Mexican midcentury cosmopolitan, Juan José Arreola founded the Los Presentes collection in 1954 and began to edit books by himself and other young authors. As a group they eschewed the rhetoric of national novels of previous years. Rather than examine the Mexican literary-cultural field in its entirety (an impossible project at best), I focus my efforts on the first five books published by Arreola. Beginning with these texts, I proceed outward to provide an in-depth-view--what Clifford Geertz might have called a "thick description"--of the literary field in Mexico in late 1954. In the last months of that year, Arreola published Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, Primavera muda, and La hora de todos. These titles were the first story collections and novels ever published in book form by Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowska, and Tomás Segovia. The fourth title was Arreola's first published drama. In addition, Arreola's series edited Parentalia, the first installment of Alfonso Reyes's autobiography. Although I limit myself to the first texts of a single publishing

venture, my approach provides the analytical leverage to move beyond a simple decontextualized reading and illuminate the complex ideological commitments that provoked a return to cosmopolitan literary values.

To view the relationship between Los Presentes, the writers who began their careers with the series, and the literary values they promoted, I divide my study into three stages. The first level is an examination of the moment, of the structure of the literary-cultural field in Mexico at midcentury. In the first chapter I give a brief history of Los Presentes and reconstruct some of the particulars of the cultural debates of the period. These debates tended to center on issues of national versus universal literary themes. The question of mestizaje or national and ethnic identity was hotly debated in the fifties and Los Presentes writers engaged these themes in their texts. The roots of midcentury cosmopolitanism extend back to the twenties and before, and chapter one briefly accounts for the relationship between the nascent cosmopolitanism of the Ateneo writers of the teens, the vanguard writers of the twenties, and the actively emergent cosmopolitanism of Los Presentes writers. I also examine the state of Mexican publishing at midcentury to show that Arreola purposefully sought to position Los Presentes as the preeminent publisher of

modern, cosmopolitan literature and as a major player in Mexican literary circles.

In the second level of my study I move from an overview of the literary-cultural field to an analysis of the texts published by Arreola. Each displays elements of cosmopolitanism and, with the exception of Reyes's Parentalia, avoids regional, provincial, or rural concerns, elements that had been the hallmarks of the literature of earlier decades. In the second chapter I elaborate a close reading of Fuentes's short stories and Poniatowska's and Segovia's novels to show how each text illustrates the fragmentary nature of identity in the face of advancing modernity. While the thematic content of their texts is different, all three writers show a heightened interest in experimental narrative techniques: a discursive mode associated with literary modernity.

In chapter three I study the last two texts that Los Presentes published in 1954: Reyes's Parentalia and Arreola's La hora de todos. Reyes's association with and patronage of Los Presentes constituted a critical element in Arreola's strategy to position the venture vis-à-vis the literary-cultural field. To contextualize Reyes's contribution, I examine his efforts to institutionalize Mexican culture and arts.

After studying the moment of the production of Los Presentes texts as well as the initial works themselves, I open my analysis to the reception of other works published in 1954. Magdalena Mondragón wrote her novel Tenemos sed and Ramón Rubín published his novel La bruma lo vuelve azul in the same year that Arreola began Los Presentes. Writers and critics associated with Los Presentes commented on these two books and compared them with their own to effect a redefinition of literary esthetics. In chapter four, I examine both novels and the reviews and commentaries proffered by the Los Presentes circle to illustrate the nature of this debate.

Many writers whose careers began at midcentury became, in later years, members of the now famous (or infamous) Boom generation. The cosmopolitan predilections of these writers came to dominate in the sixties and beyond. In structuring my study around the relationship between a publishing institution and the writers it promoted, I seek to historicize their texts. Cosmopolitanism emerged as a literary mode at the turn of the century many years before Arreola began his publishing career. Los Presentes, however, helped establish it as the newly dominant mode at midcentury and launched the careers of a new group of authors who saw

writing not only as an avocation, but also as a professional activity.

To aid non-Spanish speakers, I have provided translations for longer quotations. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. In addition, I include an appendix to the study listing the entire production run of the Los Presentes series and other pertinent information.

Chapter One:

Los Presentes and the Mexican Literary-Cultural Field at Midcentury

Literary histories dedicated to Mexican narrative often observe a convenient formula: they follow writers. Frequently the result is an inventory of names, a chronological register of men (and occasionally women) whose texts define a particular period or esthetic. Political and social history commonly take a back seat to personalities and examinations of "individual genius." This formula presents special problems for students of Mexican narrative at midcentury. Many writers who began their literary careers during this period have since gained international reputations that now obscure the historical circumstances from which they emerged. To expand on the author/personality-oriented analyses that provide much of our current framework for understanding Mexican and Latin American writing and literary culture, I direct my attention instead to the complex interaction between writers, their publishers, and those readers empowered to consecrate texts or relegate them to obscurity.

One publisher in particular exerted a unique influence on Mexican midcentury narrative. Colección Los Presentes, a series of ninety-six texts published in the fifties, provided the institutional platform from which now famous authors like Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowska, Emilio Carballido and others launched their careers. It also gave newly established writers like Juan José Arreola (the founder of the series) and José Revueltas the opportunity to develop a greater audience for their work. While the series primarily published novels, it also produced abundant examples of poetry, theatre, and essay. In centering my study on the texts first published in "Los Presentes" rather than focusing on the corpus of a particular writer, I work to understand the network of relations and commitments that encouraged an emerging esthetic in Mexico at midcentury.

This emergent discourse fostered narratives that eschewed provincialism, regionalism, rural sentimentality, and above all, conspicuous political commitment. The Los Presentes series featured narratives set in anonymous, impersonal, modern, urban centers. Los Presentes texts were, in a word, cosmopolitan.

While this network of affinities and antagonisms furnishes a useful optic for bringing into clearer relief changes in midcentury narrative, it is a provisional tool at best. After a brief discussion of Mexican cultural life at midcentury, I situate "Los Presentes" vis-à-vis the economic, political and esthetic trends that shaped the literary landscape. The cosmopolitan esthetic that Los Presentes writers embraced has its antecedents in the post-revolutionary intellectual movements that, as a loose colectivity, constitute the Mexican vanguardia or avant-garde. My discussion of the fifties must, therefore, begin with a brief exploration of the cosmopolitan stance of Mexican vanguardism. I conclude with an examination of the contingent nature of any reconstruction of the cultural field in the fifties and borrow from Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus and field, describing their unique capacity for characterizing the complex interactions among writers, publishers and politics.

Mexico at midcentury

Mexico was changing in the fifties. The Second World War had only recently ended leaving Mexico

transformed, more open to international commerce and influence, and poised to participate in the enormous growth necessary of Western postwar economies.

Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Mexico had often looked to Europe (and France in particular) for social, cultural and esthetic models, but World War II motivated both a political and economic alliance of convenience with the United States (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 195). While the consequences of these economic changes are varied and complex, their most significant effect was the explosive growth of a more urban, nationalistic working class: a working class more closely tuned to North American cultural modes than the preceding generation.

Héctor Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer call this demographic and economic shift at midcentury, "the big turn" and point to the city as the privileged site for cultural interaction: "The ranks of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, and the middle class grew and filled the cities, their natural environment" (192). Mexico was, in fact, on the brink of another revolution. This new revolution, as efficient a reorganizer of social structure as the series of political conflagrations

collectively known as the revolution of 1910, might be called variously, "Alemanism" (after President Alemán), "civilianism" (after the emergence of a new form of civil society) or most tellingly, "modernization."

José Agustín describes Miguel Alemán, the president whose administration (1946-52) coincides with the early years of the decade, as a leader committed to modernizing, urbanizing, and industrializing Mexico's agrarian economy in contrast to the military generals who had directed the nation since the nineteenth century:

Miguel Alemán was the first civilian president and converted "civilianism" into an identifying trait of his administration along with his "youthfulness," which symbolized a youthful Mexico that, sure of itself, grew rapidly and yearned to join the major leagues. (75)

Miguel Alemán fue el primer presidente civil y convirtió al "civilismo" en seña de identidad del gobierno, al igual que su "juventud," la cual simbolizaba al joven México que, seguro de sí mismo, crecía de prisa y con muchas ganas de ingresar en las ligas mayores.

But a more modern, "major league" Mexico was not necessarily a more democratic and just Mexico. Alemán's economic policies favored big business, often international (especially United States) companies (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 195). Working men and women's access to economic opportunity was limited and toward the end of the forties Alemán found himself embroiled in an extraordinary series of labor crises. A steady devaluation of the peso further fueled popular discontent in late 1947 and into 1948 (Agustín 82).

The Alemán administration battled the effects of popular dissatisfaction and social malaise on several fronts: armed police broke up union demonstrations and threatened the editors of opposition magazines like Presente (Agustín 85-86). Yet its most lasting legacy was, perhaps, an ideological reworking of the definition of the revolution of 1910 itself. Simply put, official discourse transformed the revolution from a particular historical moment of radical change into an ongoing, never quite realized political and social program (Aguilar Camín and Meyer 195). By the early fifties, the revolution had been infused with a teleology and a distinctive eschatology.

Emergent Cosmopolitanism

These changes in post-revolutionary Mexico set the stage for what would become the dominant cultural debate of the fifties in (at least) three ways. First, The period of capital growth now commonly known as the "Mexican miracle" was orienting the country's economy and demographics along urban lines. Mexico City, long the political, economic and cultural capital of the country, began its now famous explosive expansion as workers and their families from the provinces flooded it in search of jobs and prosperity. Second, the official definition of the country's most significant political moment, the Mexican revolution, was in flux. And finally, Mexican society had, after its long introversion provoked by the events of 1910-21, begun to look outward, especially to the United States for cultural and political paradigms. It is not coincidental that the Mexican leaders born during this period were often educated in elite, United States graduate schools.

One of the principal controversies that these changes engendered revolved around the conflict between proponents of autochthonous literature and those writers who were more open to European, cosmopolitan influences.

Jesús Silva Hérzog's article, "La Revolución mexicana en crisis," and Daniel Cosío Villegas's, "La crisis de México," both published in Cuadernos Americanos in the mid-forties represent, perhaps, the earliest manifestos of this cultural debate.¹ Cosío Villegas summed up this early intellectual critique of Mexico's status when he wrote:

Of course, let's put forth the following affirmation: all the men of the Mexican revolution, without exception, have turned out to be inferior to its demands. (33)

Desde luego, echemos por delante esta afirmación: todos los hombres de la Revolución Mexicana, sin exceptuar a ninguno, han resultado inferiores a las exigencias de ella.

Silva Hérzog's earlier article also focused attention inward on the failings of Mexican political and social leaders. But both writers turned outward for a more theoretical explanation of Mexico's midcentury crisis.

For both, the ultimate problem lay not just in Mexico and its leaders's failure to live up to the

demands of the revolution but with the crisis of Western modernity in general. Hérzog announced that:

Humanity finds itself disoriented and self-absorbed, lost in its own abyss, without direction and only a nebulous hope of salvation. Mankind now no longer believes as in the past in the paths discovered by science to achieve its fulfillment, now no longer has faith like the optimistic generation of the last century in the unlimited horizon of progress, and has become cynical, reactionary, pessimistic or simply amoral. (48)

La humanidad se encuentra desorientada y absorta, perdida en su propio abismo, sin rumbo y sólo con una esperanza nebulosa de salvación. El hombre ya no cree como antaño en las (sic) caminos descubiertos por la ciencia para alcanzar su felicidad, ya no tiene fe como la generación optimista de fines del pasado siglo en un progreso de horizontes ilimitados. Ahora, ante la presión de la catástrofe, se ha vuelto cínico o reaccionario, pesimista o simplemente amoral.

It is with these political, demographic, and cultural changes in mind, linked in intellectual discourse to the failure of modernity to provide transcendent meaning, that I initiate my discussion of Mexican narrative and esthetics at midcentury.

John Brushwood points out in Mexico in its Novel (1966) that one of the principal debates in twentieth-century Mexican literature has been what he calls the "nativist-universalist argument": the debate between proponents of autochthonous literature and the Mexican avant-garde (11). He tracks the early outlines of that debate by describing the position of an influential group of writers and the journal from which they took their name: Contemporáneos (1928-1931). The writers who associated themselves with the journal were upper middle-class authors who, with excellent educations and experience abroad, were aware of avant-garde literary trends in Europe in the late twenties and thirties. Vicky Unruh also locates the Contemporáneos on the universalist side of the debate and suggests that "[they] came to avoid the kind of polemical cultural nationalism that characterized much Mexican intellectual life of their time" (Vanguards 16).

Their position was contested by another group that organized itself around the journal Crisol and who, rejecting avant-garde cosmopolitanism, promoted a more essentially "Mexican" literature that would build a national identity after the trauma of the revolution ("Contemporáneos" 128).² The cosmopolitan esthetics of the Contemporáneos found a parallel in another Mexican avant-garde movement of the period: estridentismo. Two members of the movement, Xavier Icaza and Arqueles Vela, published novels in the late twenties, Panchito Chapopote (1928) and El café de nadie (1926). According to Unruh, Vela's novel, set in a modern cafe, the prototypically cosmopolitan locale, displays the estridentistas's preoccupation with urban environments (15). El café de nadie, in particular, anticipates the cosmopolitanism of Los Presentes writers.³

Brushwood, careful to note that the debate is complex enough to defy simple binaries, points out that the Contemporáneos's cosmopolitanism coincided with a greater degree of "interiorization" in their writing than the Crisol writers (132). They introduced early twentieth-century European esthetics to Mexican literature by representing internal psychological states

(as did writers such as Woolf, Eliot, Huxley, Joyce, and Proust) rather than painting documentary, realistic, narratively-linear portraits. Gustavo Pérez Firmat, in his book Idle Fictions, also describes the complex relationship between the European avant-garde and Latin American vanguardism. Firmat describes a series of Latin American novels published in the late twenties as "the second moment of vanguard fiction" (20). He includes many Contemporáneos in his list: Jaime Torres Bodet's Margarita de niebla (1927), Xavier Villaurrutia's Dama de corazones (1928), and Gilberto Owen's Novela como nube (1928). To this list one might add Xavier Icaza's estridentista novel, Panchito Chapopote, published the same year. The kind of elaborate, avant-garde narrative of the Contemporáneos and estridentistas stands in stark contrast to the innumerable "novels of the revolution" that provide austere, realistic, testimonial portraits of the conflict.⁴

This is not to say that the Mexican vanguards emphasized an international esthetic at the expense of Mexican literature. Rather, they saw Mexican culture through the optic of European modernism. In Narrative

Innovation and Political Change in Mexico (1989),

Brushwood writes:

Whatever the true inclination of Contemporáneos, it was involved in the cosmopolitan/nationalism dispute on two different levels. . . . As a representative of cosmopolitanism, it was defended or attacked because of that position. On another level, the magazine involved itself, internally, in the consideration of how the reality of being Mexican was related to the position of Mexico in an international context. (25)

This conflicted (but not necessarily polar) relationship between cosmopolitanism (or an internationalist perspective) on the one hand and questions of Mexican identity explored and expressed in narrative on the other can be brought into greater relief by Raymond Williams's comments on concurrent and competing esthetics and ideologies. In Marxism and Literature (1977) Williams recognizes that, at a given moment, disparate, even competing ideologies and the esthetic modes associated with them exist side by side, often in the same text. He describes the necessary coexistence of "emergent," "dominant," and "residual" cultural processes and implies

that they derive their respective identities through relations of difference. Instead of seeing the cosmopolitan-nationalist argument as a debate between mutually exclusive terms, it is more revealing to describe them as competing, mutually defining nodes in the cultural field.

Alfonso Ruiz Soto, in his article "Revolución en letras," undermines the strict polarity of the cosmopolitan-nationalist dichotomy. Ruiz Soto illustrates his point with a discussion of the "discovery" of Mariano Azuela's novel of the revolution, Los de abajo, in the mid-twenties. Azuela had written his novelistic account of the revolution in 1915 and published it in installments in an El Paso newspaper (Mexico 178-81). Los de abajo presaged the cosmopolitan esthetic at midcentury because it broke with the dominant realist esthetic and took advantage of experimental techniques (fragmented chronologies and the absence of an intrusive, authoritative narrative voice) to explore themes associated with the revolution. This combination of an avant-garde-like narrative with Mexican themes (the emergent and dominant narrative discourses of the era) was still arousing debate in the fifties and provoked

author and critic Andrés Henestrosa to declare that the book "is not a novel of the revolution" (29). Azuela's work bothered Henestrosa because, while it describes revolutionary conflict, the novel's avant-garde structure does not explicitly endow it with transcendental meaning.

Los de abajo was practically ignored after its publication in 1915 until it became a useful tool in later polemics. A debate carried out on the editorial pages of the Mexico City newspaper El Universal referred to Los de abajo to prove that Mexican literature was "virile" and "manly," not "feminine" and "weak" (Ruiz Soto 482).⁵ This appropriation of the novel by proponents of the "nationalist" side of the dialectic is ironic. Here was a novel, used as a foil against the cosmopolitan esthetic, that took advantage of avant-garde techniques and eschewed the realist style more closely associated with "virile" literature. As such, Los de abajo anticipates the complex esthetics of Mexican vanguardism and its appropriation of both the dominant and emergent narrative discourses permitted critics on both sides of the nativist-universalist debate to claim it as their own.

The polyglot nature of vanguard writing aside, most early critics chose to see their novels as examples of an emergent, competing discourse. The Contemporáneos, for their insistence on avant-garde techniques and interest in European literature, cosmopolitan settings, and upper-class manners, were seen to be advocating a "weak" and "feminized" literature unfit for the project of building a strong national identity. Ruiz Soto writes:

And so, not only was "bad literature" feminine and "good literature" virile, but the latter was "realist" and the former not. The documentary aspect was everything. Good, virile literature was postulated as a "reflection of the bonfire of our last revolutions."

De modo que no sólo la "mala literatura" era femenina y la "buena literatura" viril, sino que la segunda era "realista" y la primera no. El aspecto documental resultaba prioritario. La buena literatura, la viril, se postulaba como un "reflejo de la hoguera de nuestras últimas revoluciones."

This articulation of the debate between European-influenced, experimental writing versus nationalist, realist-style novels helped shape the literary field for the next twenty years. Both modes of discourse tended to be seen as mutually exclusive and by the thirties, the texts of the Mexican vanguard did not correspond well with the masculine project of nation building. According to Brushwood, novels in a more or less realist and documentary mode eclipsed emergent cosmopolitanism in the thirties. These texts, instances of the dominant discourse, fell generally into three (often overlapping) categories: novels that treated the revolution, novels that described the oppression of indigenous peoples, and criollista novels that described regional customs and attitudes (México 205-34).⁶ The tendency that Brushwood describes demonstrates the degree to which "nativism" became fixed as the dominant discursive mode at the expense of the polyvocal, cosmopolitan texts of the vanguards.

The next important break in the realist mode, after Los de abajo and the vanguard texts of the twenties, came in 1947 with appearance of Agustín Yáñez's novel, Al filo de agua.⁷ Yáñez's novel was unique and almost

universally praised by both critics and writers. Stella Clark writes that Yáñez successfully combined realistic description and character development with essentially avant-garde narrative techniques (162-64). John Brushwood's analysis of Al filo de agua is even more telling and signals the degree to which the novel represented a radical change in Mexican narrative.

Brushwood's literary history, Mexico in its Novel, is unlike most histories of literature in that it does not locate the "origins" of the Mexican novel in the colonial past and then gradually work its way to the present.⁸ The book begins with an analysis of Al filo de agua, describes Mexican novels up to the early thirties, and then shifts focus to the colonial era. The effect of this organization is that Al filo de agua and the break with realist esthetics that it signaled functions, in Brushwood's analysis, as the ontological origin of the contemporary Mexican novel.⁹

Yáñez's willingness to combine an avant-garde, almost Proustian conflation of time and interior psychological states (seen earlier in the novels of the Mexican vanguard) with the most Mexican of themes, the revolution, compelled Brushwood to describe it as "the

best Mexican novel to date, whether judged purely on the basis of its artistic worth, or on that basis combined with its merit as the expression of the nation" (Mexico 10-11). While this analysis serves to explain what the novel is and what it is doing in terms of narrative technique, it does not resolve the larger issue of context. What was it about Mexico in the late forties and early fifties that encouraged the writing and reception of such a book? What cultural antagonisms (to borrow a phrase from Ernesto LaClau and Chantal Mouffe) does Al filo de agua articulate?

Sara Sefchovich, in her sociological analysis of Mexican culture and arts, México: país de ideas, país de novelas, characterizes Al filo de agua and speaks to the question of its cultural context by quoting Mexican critic Rafael Solana's statement that it is the novel, "that initiates the modernization of Mexican letters and provides closure to the novel of the revolution" (122). While Sefchovich does not use LaClau and Mouffe to explain the importance of Al filo de agua to its time, she does imply that Yáñez was articulating an ideological shift or "difference" being felt more acutely in the late forties and fifties. Yáñez wrote a novel about a

specific region in Mexico on the eve of the revolution, but he wrote this provincially oriented novel for an urban, college-educated readership for whom the revolution was losing its luster.

Sefchovich titles her chapter dealing with Mexico in the forties and fifties, "El triunfo de los catrines" [The Triumph of the "city-slicker"] and here portrays a new upper-middle class who, after gaining power during the revolution, profited by betraying its fundamental ideals (103-104). José Agustín implicitly corroborates Sefchovich's thesis in Tragicomedia mexicana (1990) where he explores this fundamental change in post-revolutionary Mexico to World War II.

Agustín explains that Mexican president Miguel Avila Camacho and Miguel Alemán after him took advantage of opportunities to attract foreign capital to Mexico during the war by feeding the United States's demand for raw materials to support the war effort (37). This new influx of capital, concentrated in the hands of a few ex-generals and officials of the revolution and its analog, the Party of the Mexican revolution (PRM) (forerunner of the PRI), exacerbated the same income-distribution crisis that had sparked the revolution in the first place. By

the time Yáñez published his novel in 1947, there was a growing awareness that the revolution, and the political organs that it had generated were failing to bring about promised economic prosperity. The promises of a new, modern Mexico had begun to ring as hollow as Porfirio Díaz's similar program of reform in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Yáñez's novel is, in some sense, a metaphor for the Mexican political and social scene of the late forties. The novel also reintroduces the experimental mode of the vanguards: an esthetic that was less representational and more narratively complex than the novels of the thirties.

This esthetic position was intimately linked to European notions of "modernism," a reaction at once opposed to and disciplined by the ideologies and technologies collectively designated by the term "modernity."

Moreover, by 1947 Yáñez's novel could address a working, lower middle class whose sense of identity (or, to borrow from Benedict Anderson, "imagined community") had only recently begun to coalesce around the idea of an economically, politically, and culturally "modern" Mexico.

To recapitulate, by the fifties cosmopolitanism, once an emergent esthetic mode associated with the literary vanguard of the late twenties, became the dominant narrative discourse. With the publication and reception of Al filo de agua, the nativist-universalist debate was subsumed in a novel that was both narratively experimental and committed to an exploration of Mexican society and culture. The texts edited by the Los Presentes series in the next decade responded to changes in the cultural field and helped fix cosmopolitanism as the dominant esthetic of the decade.

International critics began taking notice of their work in the late fifties and early sixties, along with the work of other Latin American writers of the same period, and endowed them with the moniker "the generation of 'the Boom.'" The works of Carlos Fuentes and José Revueltas, along with their Latin American contemporaries, found their way onto college reading lists and into popular anthologies. The technically experimental and challenging novels of Carlos Fuentes, the most famous of the three, appeared alongside those of Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa on United States's bookstore and even supermarket shelves.

The consequences of this reification of Latin American literature are numerous. They include the development of a professional class of authors more able to support themselves, to live by their writing, than perhaps any generation that preceded them. It also kindled an extraordinary "boom" in the Mexican publishing industry. Also, a new, parallel generation of United States's critics sprang up establishing a kind of symbiotic relationship with "boom" writers.¹⁰ Still, the most notable consequence has been a gradual yet inexorable separation of these writers in the critical literature from the historical moment of their early careers.

The first sentence of the entry on Fuentes in the encyclopedic reference book, Hispanic Literature: Criticism, typifies the effects of this separation. The anonymous article writer reverently asserts, "Fuentes is widely regarded as Mexico's foremost contemporary novelist" (586). The article ends with a lavish celebration of Fuentes's genius: "Fuentes's works evince the kind of thematic, philosophical, and psychological universality . . . that is the distinctive element of all great literature" (587). The accretion of these generous

pronouncements obscures Fuentes's work by mythologizing and ahistoricizing him. Viewed from the lofty perspective of these declarations, their work appears distant and estranged from the material conditions of its writing, publication and reception and from the cultural debates in which they took part.

The challenge I undertake in this study lies in developing the critical tools to excavate the work of midcentury writers from underneath the layers of critical pronouncements that conceal the material circumstances of its production, severing their texts from a meaningful historical context. In short, my project is to historicize these novelists' writing and rediscover the social conditions that facilitated its reception. My purpose is not so much to demythologize Fuentes, Poniatowska, and other writers whose careers began in the fifties, as it is to respond to Raymond Williams's admonition that literary critics couple studies of literature with analyses of the sociohistorical contexts in which they are embedded (Marxism and Literature 140).

Text and Context: Toward an Historicized Approach

In his insistence on keeping both the material sources of literary production and a post-structural conception of language in mind, Raymond Williams suggests a theoretical framework for recontextualizing midcentury writing. This critical orientation is summed up in his chapter "The Sociology of Literature" and involves an amplification of traditional "close readings" to include analyses of institutions and ideologies as well. In Marxism and Literature, Williams insists that analyses of literature that remain "text centered" are necessarily inadequate:

The more significant Marxist position is a recognition of the radical and inevitable connection between a writer's real social relations (considered not only "individually" but in terms of the general social relations of "writing" in a specific society and period, and within these social relations embodied in particular kinds of writing) and the "style" or "forms" or "content" of a work, now considered not abstractly but as expressions of these relations. (204)

Williams not only urges literary critics to locate texts within their sociocultural framework, but suggests that not doing so engenders parochial analyses. For Williams, there are tangible relationships between texts and society that can be mapped out by studying not only the content, style, and form of a work, but also the "real social relations" from which it emerged.

The kinds of critical projects implicit in Williams's paradigm are those that focus on the material processes that engender a particular esthetic or dominant mode. Williams advocates a union of text-centered literary studies and sociological approaches. He says (perhaps over enthusiastically), "everything can be known about the reading public. . . . Meanwhile, but elsewhere, everything can be known about books" (140). Williams's position is that, "It is this division [between sociology and literary studies] . . . which a sociology of culture has to overcome and supersede, insisting on what is always a whole and connected social, material process" (140). While I take issue with William's inisistance that "everything can be known" about books and their readers, his invitation to link texts to the historical and social processes that

produced them represents an important starting place for my analysis of the Los Presentes publishing venture.

There are many text-centered analyses of Mexican literature that describe narrative efforts in the fifties, five of the more prominent being, Manuel Pedro González's Trayectoria de la novela mexicana (1951), Fernando Alegría's Breve historia de la novela hispanoamericana (1959), Brushwood's Mexico in its Novel (1966), Joseph Sommers's After the Storm: Landmarks of the Modern Mexican Novel (1968), and Emmanuel Carballo's Protagonistas de la literatura mexicana (1958). These landmark studies use, to varying degrees, close readings of specific texts to describe and then chronologically categorize the most influential writers and their works.

In addition to these traditional studies, recent criticism including Brushwood's Narrative Innovation and Political Change in Mexico (1989), Sara Sefchovich's México: país de ideas, país de novelas (1987), and to a lesser extent, Adolfo Castañón's Arbitrario de literatura mexicana (1993) and Poniatowska's ¡Ay vida, no me mereces! (1985) work to situate midcentury Mexican literature in its social context.

Cultural and literary critics, such as those mentioned above, describe the consolidation of a cosmopolitan esthetic during this period. The two preceding dominant esthetics, the high-modern vanguard inclination whose roots lie in the creative effort of literary groups such as the Contemporáneos and estridentistas, and the more provincial, popular criollista mode began to coalesce in the late forties with novels such as Yáñez's Al filo de agua. The early fifties in Mexico saw the inaugural work of writers who would become the standard bearers of a novelistic mode that interrogates the notion of national and personal identity through the optic of cosmopolitanism. Significantly, Fuentes, Poniatowska, and other novelists who debuted in the early to a mid-fifties share even more than an interest in a more cosmopolitan narrative esthetic. They also initiated their careers with Colección Los Presentes.

Colección Los Presentes: the New and the Consecrated

In 1954 the Mexican writer Juan José Arreola established a publishing concern called Colección Los Presentes that rapidly became one of the principal

editorial platforms for aspiring young writers. In 1957, the series had become successful enough to attract the attention of Pedro F. De Andrea, an important Mexico City editor whose publishing house, Ediciones de Andrea, contributed to Mexican scholarship on a range of subjects. De Andrea purchased the collection, retained Arreola as its editor, and continued to publish some of the most important novels of the fifties and early sixties. Many authors published in the Los Presentes series remain the most highly regarded writers in Mexico today: Poniatowska, Fuentes, Carballido, Revueltas, José de la Colina, José Mancisidor, and Tomás Segovia among others.

Between 1954 and 1963, Los Presentes published a total of ninety-six books.¹¹ Elena Poniatowska started her literary career with Lilus Kikus (September 1954). Carlos Fuentes, initiated his with a book of short stories, Los días enmascarados (November 1954), two months later. Tomás Segovia published his first work of fiction, Primavera muda (November 1954) a week later. The series then shifted gears somewhat and published two better know writers. The fourth book of the series was Arreola's own La hora de todas (November 1954), his first

work of theatre. This was closely followed (three days later) by Alfonso Reyes's Parentalia. While Arreola had begun to establish a reputation for himself as a highly inventive writer and theatre personality, Reyes was, perhaps, the best known and most respected Mexican writer and thinker of the period.

In later years, the series continued to publish the work of writers whose careers would flourish and who would garner international reputations. The prominent Argentine writer Julio Cortázar's Final del juego (1956), his first book to be published in Mexico, was issued by Los Presentes. Mexico's influential political novelist, José Revueltas, published En algún valle de lágrimas the same year. These and many other books published in Los Presentes display a decided shift toward cosmopolitan themes and give voice to the principal cultural debates of midcentury that linked questions of Mexican national identity to critiques of Western modernity and its corollary: the promise of unlimited material progress.

An examination of the collection affords the opportunity to analyze the relationship between this change in narrative esthetic and one of the institutions at the epicenter of the shift. Los Presentes promoted

young writers, authors who were in some sense responding to the critique of Mexico and the revolution embodied in the writings of intellectuals like Cosío Villegas and Silva Hérzog (the generation of Cuadernos Americanos). While younger writers responded to the debate initiated in the preceding decade, their novels were more critical of the possibility of a "revolutionary eschatology" and the possibility of imbuing the revolution of 1910 with a transcendent metaphysics. For these new writers, meaning and identity was to be more closely tied to location (the increasingly cosmopolitan city) and the individual than to a transcendent past, and more dependent on a chaotic history than a strict revolutionary teleology aligned with notions of "modern progress."

An analysis of Arreola's and later, Pedro F. De Andrea's strategy of giving voice to this new generation is a key element in my discussion of midcentury change in Mexican letters. The question is important if one first decides that young writers in the mid-fifties, while responding to the cultural debates of the previous decade, were elaborating their own approaches and ideas.

In some sense, the situation resembles the classic problem of how a younger generation displaces its

predecessor. De Andrea's own description of the series in his catalog provides an important suggestion about his and Arreola's tactic for promoting young writers: "Los Presentes" (1954-). Founder, Juan José Arreola. This series gathers together novels, short stories, theatre and poetry of both consecrated and new authors" (3). Arreola and De Andrea after him consciously placed the work of newer, less tested writers alongside that of the "consecrated" novelists of the period. In fact, the authors of the first five books in the collection illustrate the tactic: three relatively uncelebrated writers, Poniatowska, Fuentes, and Tomás Segovia appeared alongside a "consecrated" novelist, Alfonso Reyes, and Arreola himself (whose star was on the rise in the early fifties). This strategy of legitimizing "autores nóveles" by publishing them alongside "autores consagrados" is a tactic described and theorized by the sociologist and cultural critic Pierre Bourdieu in his analysis of the nineteenth-century French literary establishment.

The Literary-Cultural Field

Bourdieu's work is a useful theoretical model for describing the relationship between dominant and emerging esthetic positions in midcentury Mexico because he refutes the notion of intrinsic artistic worth or quality and describes, instead, the social processes (the "literary-cultural field") that naturalize such perceptions. Such an approach suspends implicit value judgments and ideological dichotomies when describing a period of generational transition. Bourdieu justifies this departure from traditional criticism because to do so

. . . enables us to make a radical break with the substantialist mode of thought which tends to foreground the individual . . . at the expense of the structural relations--invisible, or visible through their effects--between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups, or institutions. (29)

Bourdieu's project in The Field of Cultural Production is to demystify the production and reception of literature. For Bourdieu, actors ("social agents") stake out

specific positions within the web of interests, the "field of forces" that determine the literary landscape, through the acquisition and expenditure of "cultural capital" (43). While Bourdieu, in The Field of Cultural Production, is most concerned with elucidating the literary-cultural field of nineteenth-century France, his methodology is relevant for midcentury Mexico. Mexican literary criticism regarding Fuentes often invokes substantialist modes by "foregrounding the individual" at the expense of the structural relations that permitted certain "position takings" or movement within the field ("Fuentes's works evince the kind of thematic, philosophical, and psychological universality . . . that is the distinctive element of all great literature").

In his introduction to The Field of Cultural Production, Randal Johnson distinguishes Bourdieu's methodology from modern (ie., New Critical) modes of analysis. Bourdieu's formulation of the cultural field argues against Kantian notions of the universality or self-evident transcendental quality of the esthetic on the one hand and against an absolutely externally determined esthetic on the other (2-3). In fact, Johnson sees Bourdieu's interpretative practice navigating

between the two theoretical extremes without purposefully dismantling either. On the one hand, Johnson's Bourdieu rejects the modernist attitude that a text or work of art can contain or be made to exhibit self-evident, essential, transcendent meaning or esthetic quality (10).

Bourdieu, however, in his rejection of self-evident esthetic quality does not simply buy into the opposite position advocated by certain "Marxist-economic determinist" thinkers. Johnson's Bourdieu does not accept an absolutely externally determined esthetic as an antidote to New Critical methods (12-13).

Johnson seems to claim that Bourdieu is neither fish nor fowl, but something altogether different. Bourdieu is, in fact, difficult to classify. He is "postmodern" or "post-structuralist" in the very strict sense because he does not see art as being capable of generating self-sufficient, transcendental meaning. Texts do not, in his interpretive schema, produce meaning: a position central to modern esthetics. On the other hand, Bourdieu rejects the shared determinism of Marxist, structuralist, and Lacanian approaches. Rather, he theorizes a kind of agency for the subject in the conjunction of habitus and separate but interrelated fields. To understand

Bourdieu's position on the relationship between text, society, and the individual, one must first appreciate the conflicted relationship between the terms "modernity" and "modernism."

Art Berman, in a manner similar to François Lyotard, describes modernity as an ideological movement (whose epistemological corollary is empiricism) rooted in the Renaissance. Modernism, in turn, is a twentieth-century esthetic response to the incursions of modernity. For Berman, modernity, an emerging ideology in the Renaissance, begins to dominate in the seventeenth century during the Enlightenment (4-5). This paradigm of modernity, according to Berman, is founded on a particularly optimistic telos called "progress." "Progress" comes to signify an emerging new world, better, fairer, more prosperous, and freer than what preceded it (4-5). It encourages a new way of knowing the self and the world, a way of knowing that privileges human rationality over superstition and that understands the world without the aid of divine revelation. Empiricism, modernity's dominant philosophical mode, regards the mind as wholly sufficient to comprehend

reality (10-17). The consequence of this world view is the gradual but definitive banishment of metaphysics.

While the historical, political, and economic repercussions of the growing dominance of modernity have been studied and debated, Berman observes that art and esthetic theory have long stood in a conflicted relationship with it. Hispanists have also noted and analyzed this relationship, especially as it concerns Hispanic "modernismo," a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary precursor to the avant-garde.

Both Aníbal González's La novela modernista hispanoamericana (1987) and Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot's Modernismo (1988), for example, chart the degree to which Hispanic "modernism" reacted against the advance of modernity, its belief system, economics, and technologies.

Berman's scope of analysis is broader than González's or Gutiérrez Girardot's and he detects at least one common denominator in artistic reactions to the advance of modernity. He observes that artists, while adapting (sometimes well, other times not) to capitalism's market-oriented economics and while occasionally embracing technology (i.e., Italian and

Russian futurist movements) and empiricism (i.e., the naturalist novels of Zolá), they have generally distrusted modernity (23-26).

Modernity and empiricism, its privileged mode of enquiry, are, for modern artists and critics, incapable of providing transcendent, real, fixed meaning. Nineteenth-century Romanticism's anxiousness on this front provoked a privileging of artistic genius (20). If art was incapable of revealing a singular divine, Christian truth, than it could at least allow both creator and recipient access to a plurality of universal truths and permit a kind of ". . . union of the world soul or spirit with the individual soul" (20). Modernism carries on the Romantic esthetic project with an important change. As early twentieth-century political conflict and violence dispelled Romantic idealism, the locus of meaning shifted from the artist and his or her world to the work of art itself (61).

Modernism is, then, the esthetics of a transcendental realism--although this apothegmatic term binds irreconcilables. Here is the source of the central tenet of the modernist theory of poetry

and art: the union of irreconcilables is a principal aesthetic goal [i.e., New Criticism] (23).

Art itself comes to be seen as capable of generating unique meaning in the face of the inexorable attack of empiricism on metaphysics.

Berman's model holds true, to a certain degree, with regard to the Mexican experience. Mexico's experiment with modernity during the lengthy Porfirio Díaz administration (1876-1911) and the dominance of positivism and optimistic faith in capitalist progress were interrupted by the revolution of 1910. The interruption was brief and by the forties, as Cosío Villegas's and Hérzog Silva's articles in Cuadernos Americanos confirm, modern economics, science, and culture again dominated during the administrations of Avila Camacho and Alemán.

Bourdieu, of course, rejects the notion that the text is uniquely capable of producing transcendent meaning and experience. Nevertheless, he also moves beyond structuralist critiques of the ubiquity of text and discourse. Bourdieu's response to this modernist-structuralist dichotomy is not to offer yet another position (which would simply establish a new binary

opposition) but rather he subsumes both and ameliorates the polarity. He accomplishes this by introducing two terms, habitus and "field" to the debate. These two terms not only provide an effective response to positions that reify midcentury writers by focusing on their "individual genius" or specifying the "universal" quality of their work, but also, working in tandem, they disarm the subjectivist-objectivist dichotomy.

Habitus is, for Bourdieu, a term that describes the social agent working or operating within a particular cultural context. Habitus is typically described as "a feel for the game," "a practical sense" of what is expected in a particular context (The Field 5). The idea of an agent operating in society with a unique habitus is different from Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation (170-177). While Bourdieu would agree with Althusser that ideology (through technology and discourse) structures the subject's reactions and choices, he would argue that it does not do so absolutely.¹² Bourdieu can state that "There is nothing mechanical [and therefore absolutely determining] about the relationship between the field and the habitus" (The Field 65) because he does

not theorize a single, static base, but rather a series of fields that are at once interrelated and autonomous.

This conception of a multiplicity of fields is most useful to a description of the relationship between midcentury Mexican writers, the publishing houses that edited their works, and the dominant cultural debates of the period. Such an understanding of Bourdieu's notion of field contrasts with a more "purely" Marxist conception. Rather than a single monolithic economic field, or "economic base" that generates a corresponding (and necessary) "superstructure," Bourdieu sees a multiplicity of competing dynamic fields that produce a corresponding set of unique habitus.

An important consequence of Bourdieu's notion of field is that capital is transferable. For example, a text that has value in the cultural field (bestowing on its author and publisher symbolic capital) may also have value in the economic field (so that a publisher can exchange it for economic capital, literally sell it). Fuentes's first book, Los días enmascarados occupied a position in at least three separate fields. It elevated his "worth" in the cultural field garnering him fame and attention, it sold well enough to merit three separate

publications (first in Los Presentes in 1954, then by Novaro in 1966, and finally by Era in 1982), and it staked out a position in the political field vis-à-vis the struggle over the definition of the continuing role of the revolution, Mexico's indigenous past, and national identity.

Finally, the third element of Bourdieu's definition (and the one that distinguishes his position from more purely Marxist notions) is that the field is dynamic, changing its complexion when agents stake out different positions within it. This third element helps conceptualize the relationship between midcentury writers and the generation that preceded them. The new cosmopolitan esthetic evident in their novels and short stories altered the landscape of the field, pushing some older writers into obscurity and elevating others to the status of "classic."

A dynamic set of changing positions cannot be studied synchronically because what is valued at one moment may change as agents compete for new positions. Bourdieu's notion of field obliges us to consider midcentury Mexican writers not in absolutely synchronic terms, but rather in the light of the ongoing struggle

for a dominant or at least more powerful and persuasive position. It compels us to reconstruct the relationship between a given text and the historical moment of its creation rather than obscuring it by mythologizing the individual genius of writers like Fuentes, Poniatowska, Revueltas and others.

Esthetic Change at Midcentury

Los Presentes occupied an important, new position in the cultural field. Although source material on the Mexican publishing industry is slim at best, certain key factors can be established. It is, for example, generally conceded that the Mexican cultural field at midcentury was experiencing a radical realignment. While not presented in "Bourdieuian" terms, these changes have been documented in studies ranging from Jean Franco's classic, Spanish-American Literature (1968) to recent studies such as Danny Anderson's, "Subjetividad y lectura: Ideología de la técnica en El Luto Humano y el cambio narrativo a medio siglo."¹³

Franco characterizes this change in terms of modulations in narrative techniques. She tracks a general break with realism and a greater tendency toward

narrative experimentation: stream of consciousness, shifting focalizers or multiple viewpoint, and increased reliance on symbolism, all evident in Fuentes' early work (347-48). In her discussion of Fuentes she breaks with the standard modes of narrative analysis to include the following sociologically-oriented comment: ". . . it is the middle class that Carlos Fuentes is most interested in. They are the new men, the leaders who have betrayed the revolution, and whose selfish ambitions are no more laudable than those of the landed aristocracy they have replaced" (351). This recognition that Fuentes is more interested in the concerns, deficiencies, and fate of the new (or newly powerful) Mexican middle class is critical to my understanding of the larger field of which his Los días enmascarados and other "Los Presentes" texts are a component. Franco's study alerts students of midcentury Mexican writers to the fact that these texts were both innovative and aware of the larger culture debates mentioned previously.

Franco's portrayal of midcentury Mexican literature is complemented by a number of studies of Mexican readership and publishing in the fifties. In an examination of Mexican readership sponsored by the

Colegio de México and published as an anthology of articles entitled, Historia de la lectura en México (1988), Valentina Torres Septián describes changes in midcentury readership by pointing out the effects of a growing middle class. She writes:

The internal and external peace that the country experienced enabled questioning, reflection, and self-knowledge, and the development of a "cultural nationalism" that became obvious in publishing. The conditions of the country made possible the rise of a bourgeois middle class that sought to open itself to the exterior and was avid to know the world around it. (295-96)

La paz interna y externa que experimentó el país se volvió propicia para el cuestionamiento, para la reflexión y el autoconocimiento y para el desarrollo de un "nacionalismo cultural" que hará patente en las publicaciones. Las condiciones del país hicieron posible el surgimiento de una clase media, burguesa, que buscaba abrirse paso hacia el exterior y estaba ávida por conocer el mundo que la rodeaba.

This dual compulsion on the part of the middle class to gain access to exterior cultural modes and a parallel drive to define a national culture provided, according to Torres Septién, the economic motivation for the foundation of several institutions (not the least of which is the Colegio de México, founded in 1939, which published the study). These academies, which included research institutes and colleges as well as literary journals and publishing houses, gave rise to, in her words, a "cultural elite" whose existence was predicated on this newly powerful middle class and the conditions that permitted its growth.

According to Boyd Carter, one of the most important of these new institutions was a literary journal called Revista Mexicana de Literatura (founded in 1955) (154). It should not come as a surprise that Carlos Fuentes and another young writer and critic, Emmanuel Carballo, were co-founders of the journal in 1955, a year after the publication of Los días enmascarados (Fuentes) and Gran estorbo la esperanza (Carballo). Carter reports that the publication was based on the format of French literary journals of the epoch and cites La Nouvelle Revue Française as a specific example (154). He alludes to the

dual compulsion of being open to extra-Mexican cultural influences and the drive to find an autochthonous voice when he writes:

Among the most important successes of this journal that must be counted, with its doors open to the new alongside consecrated values, is not only its work to valorize and make national literature accessible, but also to show the latest examples of various foreign literatures. (155)

Entre los éxitos más destacados de esta revista, con puertas abiertas tanto a los jóvenes como a los valores ya consagrados, se cuentan no sólo su obra de divulgación y de valoración de la literatura nacional, sino también la de dar a conocer las últimas promociones de varias literaturas extranjeras.

It was common for a single issue of the journal to contain original material from young Mexican writers alongside translations of North American, French, German, even Japanese texts.

The publishing industry overall experienced rapid growth in the late fifties. Whereas conservative

publishers such as Editorial Diana, Navaro, and Jus increased their publication of canonized Mexican writers such as Sor Juana, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, and Alfonso Reyes, the need for institutions that would give access to young writers allowed many new publishing concerns to find an audience.

Critic and author Héctor Salmerón Roiz reports that in 1958 only two publishing houses consistently produced the work of younger more cosmopolitan writers: Arreola's *Los Presentes* and *Letras Mexicanas* of Fondo de la Cultura Económica (a government institution) (8). Salmerón Roiz further reports that due to the commercial success of the young author Luis Spota's Casi el paraíso and the critical success of Juan Rulfo and Juan José Arreola, by the early sixties four other publishing houses sprang up to feed the increasing demand for more contemporary, cosmopolitan-oriented novels: *Ficción* (an organ of the University of Vera Cruz, Joaquín Mortiz, Ediciones ERA, and, a little later, Sigo XXI (8-9).

While it is difficult to generalize about Mexican readership in the fifties and early sixties (data of this kind is nearly nonexistent), it seems a reasonable inference that the success of these new publishing

concerns may have been due to an expanding middle class.

This hypothesis is supported by the journal Diálogos which devoted an entire issue in 1984 to the topic of Mexican publishing (43-118) and by Torres Septién's study in Historia de la lectura en México. Diálogos reports that while, until 1939, only nine new publishing concerns had begun operations, the thirties and forties saw the initiation of twenty publishers: more than double the number in half the time. Septién corroborates the Diálogos data and shows that of the titles published between 1957-60, Mexican novels far exceed any other category.¹⁴

What kinds of general conclusions can be drawn from this data about the state of the literary field into which the first Los Presentes books emerged? In the first place, the mid to late fifties were a period of growth in the publishing industry, and one of the principal areas of growth was that of young writers more open to international influences but who were concerned with finding ways of expressing a national Mexican culture. It is in this climate that Los Presentes began providing young authors a vehicle to see their works into publication.

Although conditions supported growth in the publishing industry overall, Los Presentes was unique in its commitment to aspiring writers. While Fondo de Cultura Económica was publishing young writers through its line Letras Mexicanas, sociology, political science, philosophy, and history texts dominated its catalog.¹⁵ Their differences aside, there is a connection between the two publishers. When, in 1954, Juan José Arreola established Los Presentes, he had previously published with and worked as an editorial assistant for Fondo de Cultura Económica, the most powerful Mexican literary and scholarly publishing house in the fifties.

His relationship with the publishing house appears to have provided the boost, the cultural capital, he needed to start his own venture. Although the exact business details are unclear, Fondo de Cultura Económica apparently provided editorial support for Arreola's undertaking.¹⁶ Arreola was, in Bourdieu's terms, apparently able to exploit the cultural capital he had accumulated at the publisher and also through his own publications (he was a respected short story writer himself in 1954) to create Los Presentes. But these previous connections, necessary as they may have been to

initiate the series, were certainly not enough to guarantee its continued success. In fact, the influential position of Los Presentes in the literary field at midcentury was also the consequence of three other separate but interrelated factors.

The first of these factors is the way in which the particular novels, collections of short stories and poetry took part in the cosmopolitan-nationalist debate previously described. Chapter two will address the first five books published in Los Presentes in some detail and describe specific strategies employed by their authors to take a position in the cultural field. Fuentes's Los días enmascarados, Poniatowska's Lilus Kikus, and Segovia's Primavera muda alongside Arreola's own La hora de todas and Alfonso Reyes's memoir, Parentalia, when viewed, not as unrelated texts, but as the initial offering of the series in 1954, demonstrate the consolidation of the cosmopolitan esthetic as the dominant cultural mode at midcentury. Here I investigate why Poniatowska's, Fuentes's, Segovia's, and Reyes's writings made them conspicuous choices for Arreola's endeavor.

It seems a reasonable assumption that these texts were doing "something," realizing some kind of cultural work. Arreola's decision to publish them must have been based, to some extent, on the premise that doing so would help situate his publishing concern in specific ways vis-à-vis other positions in the cultural field. I do not mean to suggest that Arreola was consciously invoking Bourdieu's model of fields and practice (which of course had yet to be developed in 1954), but rather that Arreola's behavior, his habitus (or dispositions toward certain kinds of choices) is explainable in "Bourdieuian" terms.

If the first factor of the successful position taken by Los Presentes can be described through an analysis, a "close reading" of the first five texts, the second factor relates to the relationship between the newly dominant esthetic and the residual, but still robust nationalist-realist impulse: the relationship between two generations of writers. In chapter three I deal with the internal workings of Los Presentes and its strategy of placing consecrated authors alongside uncelebrated younger talents. Such a discussion will help paint a picture of the strategies of position-taking that first

Arreola and then De Andrea used to carve a niche for the collection and then retain and bolster its reputation. It will also permit me to define a kind of habitus for Arreola and De Andrea, a set of "dispositions," to use Bourdieu's terminology, that shaped decisions and judgments about the publishing concern.

The third factor in the success of Los Presentes's is less concrete and more diffuse than the previous two.

Chapters two and three describe discrete objects, texts published by the series and evidence of the internal decision making process employed by the publisher. In chapter four I will be constructing a provisional object of study. This segment of my argument involves mapping out the extended relationships, the movement in the cultural field provoked by Arreola and De Andrea's position-taking. By analyzing book reviews and commentaries of books published in the Los Presentes series and by studying the reviews that Los Presentes writers published of their contemporaries, I will assess the reception of the cosmopolitan esthetic it advanced.

By reconstructing the Mexican literary field at midcentury and describing its relationship to the political and economic fields, inferring the implicit

strategy for selecting texts and analyzing the works themselves that appeared in *Los Presentes*, I conclude with a discussion of Mexican modernism: the esthetic reaction to the rhetoric of progress and the assumption that Mexico was on the verge of "growing up," of entering the "major leagues" of Western industrialized nations. The texts that appeared in "*Colección Los Presentes*" function as a case study, revealing the antagonisms that public culture sought to resolve: Mexico's problematic relationship to Europe and the United States, new political institutions seeking to consolidate power after the revolution, the antithetical poles of urban versus rural culture, the uneasy amalgam of Western modernism and Mexican tradition, and the issue of mestizaje.

Most of these issues were old dilemmas now recycled and rethought in a postwar context. Public culture in the fifties may be seen as part of Mexico's ongoing attempt to embrace modernity while seeking to modify and resist its incursions. Romanticism and its metaphysics of the individual, of the spirit (as opposed to the material) had proved to be futile reactions to nineteenth-century positivism (Porfirio Díaz's científicos), and by midcentury an esthetic establishing

a metaphysics of race and nationality. The discursive of icon of mestizaje, the raza cósmica, was both modern and progressive as well as traditional and spiritual: a perfect blend of Europe and indigenous America.

But, as both W.B. Yeats predicted and Chinua Achebe documented concerning Western modernism, "things fall apart." Things fell apart in Mexico in 1968 when government forces massacred demonstrating students at Tlatelolco. While the roots of the antagonisms that erupted violently in 1968 stretch back much further than the fifties, it was at midcentury that they were rebaptized in modern form. Los Presentes stands squarely in the middle of this effort to constitute a modern, twentieth-century Mexican cultural identity.

Notes

¹ For a more complete discussion of the Mexican intellectual reaction to the modernization programs of the Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-1946) and Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) administrations and the subsequent redefinition of the Revolution of 1910, see Charles A. Hale's article "The Liberal Impulse: Daniel Cosío Villegas and the Historia moderna de México" (1974). Hale's term "liberal impulse" roughly corresponds to my description of the intellectual/esthetic reaction, consolidated in the fifties, to the philosophical, political, and cultural incursions of "modernity." The term "liberal" is problematic and I avoid it because of one of its connotations in the Mexican context is the "Porfiriato," the interminable administration of Porfirio Díaz that privileged modern "liberal," secular, positivistic, views over "conservative," Catholic, traditional positions. Hale himself notes that Mexico "after 1940 had reverted to the priorities and many of the characteristics of the regime of Porfirio Díaz and even labels this period the 'Neo-Porfiriato'" (482).

² There is an extensive bibliography on Contemporáneos, the writers associated with the journal, and their influence on Mexican literature. Studies that

speak to the influence Contemporáneos had on writers from the forties and fifties include Miguel Capistrán's "Notas para un posible estudio de las relaciones entre Alfonso Reyes y los Contemporáneos: El caso de don Alfonso y Novo" (1989), Sergio Fernández's anthology Multiplicación de los contemporáneos: Ensayos sobre la generación (1988), Samuel Gordon's "Modernidad y vanguardia en la literatura mexicana: Estridentistas y contemporáneos" (1989), and Anthony Stanton's "Octavio Paz y los contemporáneos: La historia de una relación" (1992).

³ The "cafe" as a cosmopolitan locale is an important image in Carlos Fuentes's short story, "Chac Mool" and Tomás Segovia's novel, Primavera de nadie, both published in the first wave of Los Presentes editions in late 1954.

⁴ Of the two movements, the estridentistas are often described as more politically committed than the Contemporáneos (Unruh 15). For more on Latin American Vanguardism, see Gustavo Pérez Firmat's Idle Fictions (1982), Merlin H. Forster and K. David Jackson's Vanguardism in Latin American Literature: An Annotated Bibliographical Guide (1990), and Vicky Unruh's Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters (1994).

⁵ In addition to more recent studies, Víctor Díaz Arciniega's Querrela por la cultura "revolucionaria" (1925) and John E. Englekirk's article, "El 'descubrimiento' de la novela mexicana Los de abajo," (1935) point to the cultural and political debates surrounding the "discovery" of the novel more than 10 years after its publication.

⁶ One might add to this list colonialista novels of the teens and twenties: those novels that, in a more or less realist style, described incidents and personalities from the Mexican colonial period, and often imitating eighteenth-century vocabulary and syntax (Narrative Innovation 3).

⁷ José Revueltas's El luto humano (1943) also breaks with the traditional realist mode by uniting experimental technique with questions of nation and identity. Al filo de agua was, however, more widely read and arguably more influential in the decade before Arreola's series. Al filo de agua is also one of the most studied Mexican novels of the century. Major studies of this novel include Eileen Connolly's "La centralidad del protagonista en Al filo de agua" in Revista Iberoamericana, John Brushwood's several articles on the novel, especially "La arquitectura de las novelas

de Agustín Yáñez, John Flasher's México contemporáneo en las novelas de Agustín Yáñez (1969), Walter Langford's "Agustín Yáñez: A Quantum leap for the Mexican Novel" in his book The Mexican Novel Comes of Age (1971), and Joseph Sommers's After the Storm: Landmarks of the Modern Mexican Novel (1968)

⁸ Brushwood comments on the political and cultural debates that inform attempts to divide up Mexican literature into different periods and generations in "Literary Periods in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Transformation of Reality" (1976). His comments on the efforts to privilege either José Revueltas's El luto humano, Agustín Yáñez's Al filo de agua, or Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo as the starting point for the Mexican "new" novel reveal the degree to which these debates center on individual personalities rather than changes in the cultural field.

⁹ If, as Jurgen Habermas alludes in Post Metaphysical Thinking, all modern notions of ontology and metaphysics are contingent, the chronological and ontological starting point of a given narrative (a narrative like the story of development of the Mexican novel) need not be identical. Brushwood is, therefore, consistent when he separates the two in Mexico in its

Novel.

¹⁰ The newly published encyclopedic Literatura mexicana del siglo XX (1995) states: "Hace veinte años que Gabriel Zaid advertía, en la atmósfera del boom latinoamericano, que la invasión de investigadores norteamericanos, prestos a tomar la literatura mexicana, era un hecho que había que afrontar. No se puede negar que desde las universalidades de Estados Unidos, investigadores de origen diverso, como José Rojas Garcidueñas, Luis Leal, Manuel Durán, Seymour Menton o John Brushwood realizaron tareas pioneras en momentos donde en el país se les concedía escasa importancia. . . . Pero la proliferación de los mexicanistas en los departamentos de lengua española de Estados Unidos ha provocado la producción en masa de monografías anodinas, asombrosas por su aldeanismo y notables por su desconocimiento de la cultura universal, hispánica y mexicana. . ." (Martínez 269).

¹¹ Colección Los Presentes was a series of 96 texts that can be categorized in the following way: 28 collections of short stories (29% of the collection), 25 novels and novelas (26%), 13 collections of poetry (14%), 12 dramas (or collections of drama) (13%), and 8 collections of essay, biography, autobiography, or travel

logs (8%). The extraordinary number of short story collections relative to other genres is probably a reflection of Arreola's and then Pedro F. De Andrea's goal of providing a vehicle for young and developing writers. Narrative dominates, especially in the early years: an interesting fact given that Emmanuel Carballo wrote in 1957 that Mexico's best writing at midcentury was its poetry ("Las letras" 144-45). The collection, which began as a platform for Mexican writers, gradually came to include works by, among others, Julio Cortázar (Argentina), José Luis González (Puerto Rico), Mario Puga (Peru), and Othón Castillo (Ecuador). A number of Spanish expatriates also published in "Colección Los Presentes" including, Camilo José Cela, Ramón Sender, and Francisco Fe Alvarez.

¹² For a more detailed description and critique of the deterministic consequences of Althusser's notion of interpellation, see Frederic Jameson's The Political Unconscious. Jameson, interested in theorizing movement and radical change, attempts to rescue Althusser from the determinist consequences of his structuralist application of Marxism, is, in some sense, responding to the same subjectivist-objectivist dichotomy that motivates Bourdieu.

¹³ Other key examples of studies that point to changes in midcentury narrative include, José Agustín's Tragicomedia Mexicana 1: La vida en México de 1940 a 1970 (1990), Steven Bell's long article "Mexico," in Handbook of Latin American Literature (1992), John S. Brushwood's Mexico in its Novel (1966) and Narrative Innovation and Political Change in Mexico (1989), Carlos Fuentes's La nueva novela hispanoamericana (1969), and José Luis Martínez and Christopher Domínguez Michael's La literatura mexicana del siglo XX (1995).

¹⁴ There are a number of articles and book-length studies that examine the publishing industry in Mexico and Latin America. Of these, Víctor Díaz Arciniega's Historia de la Casa: Fondo de Cultura Económica (1934-1994) (1994) and Milagros Maga Gil's El pregón mercadero: Relaciones entre crítica literaria y mercado editorial en América Latina (1995) are particularly useful: the first for its comprehensive review of the activities of Fondo de Cultura Económica and the second for its broad look at Latin American Publishing in general. Clara Lida and José A. Matesanz's details the history of another important Mexico City publisher of the epoch in El Colegio de México: una hazaña cultural (1940-1962). In addition, "Colegio de México" published a collection of

essays on the question of readership in Mexico entitled Historia de la lectura en México (1988). Valentina Torres Septián's useful study, "La lectura, 1940-1960" appears here.

There are also several articles that examine the history and influence of major Mexican publishing houses including Elda Peralta's "Grijalbo: El libro extramuros," an interview with Spanish expatriate and book publisher Juan Grijalbo in Plural (124 1982), Arturo Serranos's study of university presses in Mexico, "El libro universitario: semblanza y perspectiva," in Palabra y el Hombre (1982), Elías Trabulse's "Crónica bibliográfica," a history of the publisher "El Colegio de México" in Historia Mexicana (1976). Danny J. Anderson's article, "Creating Cultural Prestige: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz" examines the history of this important publishing house founded in 1962 through the optic of Pierre Bourdieu.

In addition to these articles and books that examine individual publishers, there are a number of studies that describe Mexican book publication in general. Among these are Antonio Flores Carrillo's "El estado y la industria editorial con referencia especial a México" (1972), Francisco Hinojosa's "Las editoriales marginales en México" (1978), Arturo Serrano's "El libro

universitario: semblanza y perspectiva" (1982), and Hans-Otto Dill's "Problemas de la producción distribución y recepción de la literatura latinoamericana contemporánea" (1990). As yet, no study has been devoted exclusively to the question of Los Presentes or to its place in the changing literary landscape of Mexico at midcentury.

¹⁵ Letras Mexicanas tended to play it safe by publishing wide ranging compilations or writers who had proven "salability." In the fifties "Letras" published Mariano Azuela's Obras completas (1958), Antonio Castro Leal's anthology La poesía mexicana moderna (1953), Alí Chumacero's poetry Palabras en reposo (1956), the two volumes of Teatro mexicano del siglo XX. (1956) edited by Antonio Magaña Esquivel, El ensayo mexicano moderno (1958) edited by José Luis Martínez, Glosas décimas de México (1957) containing Mexican sayings and popular wisdom, Salvador Novo's Las aves en la poesía castellana (1953), Octavio Paz's La estación violenta (1958), Alfonso Reyes's first volume of Obras completas (1955), Ramón Rubín's La burma lo vuelve azul (1954), Jaime Torres Bodet's autobiography Tiempo de arena (1955), and Xavier Villaurrutia's Obras (1953) and Poesía y teatro completos (1953). Lesser known writers (at the time) published in the series included novelist Ermilo Abreu

Gómez's Tata lobo (1952), Guadalupe Amor's Galería de títeres (1959, short stories) and Yo soy mi casa (1957, novel), novelist Alberto Bonifaz Nuño's La cruz del sureste (1954), Sergio Galindo's La justicia de enero (1959), Gastón García Cantú's stories Los falsos rumores (1955), Sara García Iglesias' Exilio (1957), Jaime García Terrés's poetry Las provincias del aire (1956), Enrique González Martínez's El nuevo Narciso y otros poemas (1952), Miguel Lira's novel Una mujer en soledad (1956), Jorge López Páez's novel El solitario atlántico (1958), José Mancisidor's Frontera junto al mar (1953), Alberto Monterde's stories Calavera y Jueves Santo (1957), Marco Antonio Montes de Oca's Delante la luz cantan pájaros (1959), Raúl Prieto's stories Hueso y carne (1956), Rafael Solana's novel El sol de octubre (1959), Luis Spota's novel La sangre enemiga (1959), Artemio de Valle-Arizpe's compilation Anecdotario de Manuel José Othón (1958). In terms of sheer numbers and the ratio of young writers to consecrated writers, Los Presentes stood out as a publishing house singularly dedicated to young artists. The majority of these younger writers were published in Letras Mexicanas in the mid- to late fifties, after Los Presentes had already established the viability of younger talents. In

addition, Letras Mexicanas represents a small section of the entire Fondo de Cultura Económica catalog, perhaps less than ten percent in all.

¹⁶ This information was provided to me in an interview I conducted in 1995 with Francisco De Andrea, the only son of Pedro F. De Andrea, Mexico City publisher and literary scholar whose publishing concern Ediciones De Andrea purchased Colección Los Presentes from Arreola in 1957.

Chapter Two:
The New Cosmopolitan Esthetic

The first three authors published in the Los Presentes series in late 1954 are an apparently heterogenous group. Carlos Fuentes, after the publication of his collection of short stories, Los días enmascarados (1954) would become recognized not only as Mexico's preeminent novelist of the later half of the twentieth century, but as a powerful international presence as well. Elena Poniatowska later established herself as Mexico's foremost writer of the testimonial novel and her book on the student massacre in 1968, La noche de Tlatelolco (1971), has become the most acclaimed treatment of the tragedy. Her work differs significantly from Fuentes's because of its insistence on examining Mexico's present and exploring subaltern voices. Tomás Segovia, an aspiring poet, joined with Fuentes to direct La Revista Mexicana de Literatura in the late fifties, and his current reputation rests not only on his poetry, but also on his essays and literary criticism.

Their first books, Los días enmascarados (Fuentes), Lilus Kikus (Poniatowska) and Primavera muda (Segovia), while exhibiting many of the unique characteristics that would reappear in their later work, share an increased interest in the concerns and pressures facing Mexico's

rising middle class. When placed alongside the two other major novels published in 1954, Magdalena Mondragón's Tenemos sed and Ramón Rubín's La bruma lo vuelve azul (neither of which are widely read today), their work signals a significant departure from the rural and social themes that had preoccupied more established writers. Mondragón, known for her novels that declaim the deplorable economic status of Mexico's urban and rural poor, fashioned a book whose characters are worlds removed from the educated, upwardly mobile protagonists in the works by Fuentes, Poniatowska and Segovia. Rubín's La bruma lo vuelve azul demonstrates his continued dedication to the plight of indigenous people in post-revolutionary Mexico.

To make the nature of these literary changes clear, I examine the details of the cosmopolitan orientation of the early Los Presentes publications, a trend related to the esthetic program of the preceding generation, and then turn to an analysis of the texts themselves. Carlos Fuentes's Los días enmascarados, while commonly seen as a fictional enactment of the theme of Mexican subjectivity described in Paz's El laberinto de la soledad, also articulates more radical and antithetical propositions: it actively rejects the possibility of a stable conception of identity. Elena Poniatowska's short novel

Lilus Kikus avoids direct engagement on the same issue by circumventing images and motifs that would identify it as uniquely "Mexican" or even "Latin American." Her protagonist is too concerned with the immediate problems of vacations, school mates, family, and gender roles to be bothered with the difficulty of a national identity crisis. Tomás Segovia's Primavera muda bypasses the issue even further by making no direct reference to Mexico at all. The Los Presentes writers's avoidance of explicitly Mexican themes constitutes an anomalous situation when contrasted with the work of more established writers of the period who make the issue of Mexican history and identity central to their literary projects.

The Rupture

The appearance of Los Presentes on the Mexican literary scene in the mid-fifties fueled the ambitions of aspiring younger authors and presaged new possibilities for the establishment of a class of professional writers.

For many of the prominent authors of preceding generations, writing was something beyond a mere avocation while not yet an actual livelihood. Agustín Yáñez and Juan Rulfo, following in the footsteps of luminaries such as Alfonso Reyes, Salvador Novo, and

Jaime Torres Bodet, supported themselves, not only with book royalties, but as government functionaries, teachers, politicians, and diplomats.

Cultural critic Roger Bartra describes the effect of the revolution on Mexican culture noting that writers during the first decades of the century, those associated with the Ateneo de la Juventud (a group of young writers and thinkers who, in the early decades of the century, sought to reform Mexican culture and education) and Contemporáneos (a group of writers associated with the Mexican vanguard), often saw themselves as the intellectual wing of the new government and viewed their work as part of the larger project of inventing a new national culture (Jaula 19-20). In the absence of a highly developed publishing industry and its attendant market of middle-class readers, Mexican writers were often patronized by the state and rewarded with important positions in the political bureaucracy.

In Mexico, the modernist project of criticizing bourgeois culture turned, in the first decades after the revolution, to critiques of late nineteenth-century positivism and the culture of the Porfiriato. As noted in the previous chapter, sustained criticism of Mexican post-revolutionary culture would not appear until the forties and it would not be until the fifties that the

Mexican publishing industry and critical infrastructure would offer authors the hope of living solely from their writing. This gradual shift, from the writer as government functionary to writer as bourgeois professional, coincides with the appearance of texts that, while not openly hostile of the discourse of la mexicanidad, nevertheless pursue its contradictions and inconsistencies.

Carlos Fuentes reports that the news of Arreola's plan to launch a venue specifically devoted to young writers was enthusiastically received and "all of us with an itch started to write like mad for the publishing house [Los Presentes]. I sat down and got the book out in a month . . ." (Harss 284). While "all of us" may have written like mad, only three aspiring writers, Fuentes, Poniatowska, and Segovia had books published in the first months of Arreola's tenure at Los Presentes. Arreola's own drama, La hora de todos and Alfonso Reyes's biographical essay Parentalia rounded out the first five of the series.

Why, then, did Arreola, among the many choices he had, decide to publish Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, and Primavera muda alongside his own work and that of Alfonso Reyes, arguably the most established and respected literary figure of the era? The first books

published would set the tone for those that followed and, in doing so, mark out a specific position for the series within the literary field. As different as the three young writers's texts were (one collection of short stories and two novels), they all heralded a more cosmopolitan esthetic eschewing, in Fuentes's own estimation, the localism, picturesqueness, chauvinism, and parochialism of the literature that preceded them (Harss 309). The threads of this esthetic are brought into clearer relief by analyzing the cultural codes the books refer to and by observing their unique articulations of the cultural debates of the era. Viewed from the perspective of the literary field, Fuentes's, Poniatowska's, and Segovia's writings stake out unique positions on the issues of national identity (mexicanidad), bourgeois culture, capitalism, alienation, and the narrative of unlimited economic and social progress promoted by post-Cardenista administrations.

Their books, while retaining the linguistic adventurousness of works by Contemporáneos, estridentistas, and the earliest of the "new novelists," were a radical departure even from the rurally situated novels of Yáñez, Revueltas, and Rulfo. Instead of painting regional scenes, documenting revolutionary conflict, and assuming at least the possibility if not

the actuality of a coherent and singular national identity, the first works of the three aspiring writers turn their attention to cityscapes and the plight of the new urban middle class. They situate their narratives in urban areas, refer obliquely (if at all) to the revolution, and, distanced from the mythical possibilities inherent in revolutionary battle scenes and rural landscapes, begin to question the possibility of a transcendent, synchronic, national subject.

The decision to publish these three books must have been based, to some extent, on the premise that doing so would help position Los Presentes uniquely in the literary field. I do not suggest that Arreola was consciously invoking Bourdieu's model of fields and practice, but rather that Arreola's behavior, his "habitus" is explainable in Bourdieuan terms. Fuentes's, Poniatowska's, and Segovia's works mark out distinct positions in the field by activating certain cultural codes and circumventing others. Their texts appropriate many of the symbols and "vocabulary" of dominant themes of the period, turning them to their own uses: Aztec/Spanish syncretism, a mythical and transcendent precolombian past, revolutionary eschatology, and the telos of unlimited economic progress.

In Telling Stories, Steven Cohan and Linda Shires provide a succinct definition of codes (relying heavily on Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis of a Balzac story, S/Z). They write, "Codes set forth (codify) terms by which one sign stands in for (encodes) another, the substitution occurring as soon as the relationship of signs is recognized (decoded)" (114). Literary codes are the unwritten rules that guide signification, that encourage certain connotations and discourage others.¹ In the constellation of all possible meanings for a given symbol, literary codes function to privilege some "meanings" over others, to enforce a particular topography upon the field of signification. Fuentes's Los días enmascarados, in particular, reveals the increasingly tenuous hold that post-revolutionary discourse exercised over the field of signification during the early fifties. Even as his stories freely appropriate symbols of Aztec/Spanish syncretism and an irresistible national subject, they subtly undermine the official narrative of an unbroken, transcendent continuity between Mexico's mythical origins and its certain mestizo destiny.

Masked Days: The Reluctant Labyrinth

The enormous corpus of criticism written about Fuentes's fiction in general and that which relates to Los días enmascarados in particular, often places the binary past/present at or near the center of analytic focus. Anthony Julio Ciccone's study, "The Supernatural Persistence of the Past in Los días enmascarados," Luis Leal's "History and Myth in the Narrative of Carlos Fuentes," and Francisco Javier Ordiz's El mito en la obra narrativa de Carlos Fuentes, concur in their estimation of the high degree of historical consciousness present in Fuentes's earliest narratives and his continued evocation of Mexico's mythical past (pre-Colombian, colonial and revolutionary). John Brushwood sums up much of what has been written about Fuentes's narrative in general and Días in particular when he writes, "[Los días enmascarados] combines the author's predilection for fantasy and his interest in joining two periods of time-- or better, showing how the past continues to be a vital factor in the present" ("Los días enmascarados" 19).²

Octavio Paz also comments on Fuentes's blending of mythical past and present in Los días enmascaraços when he describes the source of the title:

Carlos Fuentes's first book was a thin volume of stories: Los días enmascarados (1954). The title prefigures the direction of his later

work. It alludes to the last five days of Aztec calendar, the nemontani: "Five masked / with maguey whips," Tablada the poet had said.

Five days without name, empty days during which all activity was suspended --a fragile bridge between the end of the one year and the beginning of another--. In the spirit of Fuentes, without doubt, the expression also has a sense of interrogation and derision: what is behind the masks? The goblet of blood of prehispanic sacrifice, the taste of dust, the firing squad at dawn, the black lair of sex, the bald spiders of fear, the boisterous laughter of the basement and the latrine. ("La máscara" 17)

El primer libro de Carlos Fuentes fue un delgado volumen de cuentos: Los días enmascarados (1954). El título prefigura la dirección de su obra posterior. Alude a los cinco días finales del año azteca, los nemontani: "Cinco enmascarados / con pencas de maguey," había dicho el poeta Tablada. Cinco días sin nombre, días vacíos durante los cuales

se suspendía toda actividad--frágil puente entre el final de un año y el comienzo de otro--. En el espíritu de Fuentes, sin duda, la expresión tiene además un sentido de interrogación y de escarnio: ¿Qué hay detrás de las máscaras? El vaso de sangre del sacrificio prehispánico, el sabor de la pólvora, la madrugada del fusilamiento, el agujero negro del sexo, las arañas peludas del miedo, las risotadas del sótano y la letrina.

This often cited judgment of Paz consecrates Fuentes. For Paz, Fuentes rescues Mexico's Aztec past and mines from it an essential understanding of national identity.

At the same time, as a gadfly of the national conscience, Fuentes reminds his readers of the dangers of burying their past and thereby alienating itself from their future. Paz's description of Los días enmascarados also complements his theory of Mexican subjectivity outlined in El laberinto de la soledad (1950).

Fuentes himself has described the book in terms that roughly parallel Paz's comments. In an interview with Emmanuel Carballo he describes the story "Chac Mool" as an investigation of "the extent to which the cosmological forms of a forever lost Mexico live on, refusing to die

and manifesting themselves every so often through a mystery, an apparition, a reflection" (Protagonistas 535). And yet at best, this assessment can only be a partial vision of the project of the stories in Los días enmascarados. If the book attempts to unearth the mythical foundation of Mexico City, a strong counter-discursive element seeks to demystify as well. Carballo, Fuentes's friend and contemporary, describes the book in terms that contrast sharply with Paz's: "Los días enmascarados is the first attempt by Fuentes to demythologize the world in which he lives, the first experiment to convert reason into a weapon that demolishes prejudices and annihilates the political and social conceptions that disturb the author" (Cuento mexicano 23). Carballo here reveals a central tension of the post-revolutionary preoccupation with Mexican identity. For Carballo, the modern writer must adhere to the tenets of "reason," to an empirical world view. The Mexican writer at midcentury must, paradoxically, use empirical tools to write about that to which reason has no access: the Mexican "spirit." Although Fuentes's collection appropriates many of the issues and images that preoccupy Paz (most notably in El laberinto de la soledad [1950]), it does so in a way that exposes the inevitable contradictions of essentializing discourse.

The issue of Mexican subjectivity (national identity, la mexicanidad) has been a central preoccupation of Mexican intellectuals since the nineteenth-century and reached critical mass in the decades after the revolution. When Paz published his study of Mexican character in 1950, his work represented the latest contribution to a long list of treatises including work by José Vasconcelos (Una interpretación de la cultura iberoamericana [1927]), Samuel Ramos El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México [1934]), Alfonso Reyes (La x en la frente [1952]), and Leopoldo Zea "El mexicano en busca de la mexicanidad" [1951]), to name only the four most prominent.³ Moreover, the early fifties saw the development of a philosophical school around the personality of Zea called El Grupo Hiperión dedicated to the question of Mexican national identity and consciousness. The group initiated a series titled "México y lo mexicano" that would eventually number 26 books on the subject by such luminaries as José Gaos, Mariano Picón-Salas, Ramón Xirau, and José Luis Martínez. The goal of the series was to apply reason to the question of identity and subjectivity. Samuel Ramos's El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México served, in many ways, as the model for such a project because of its appropriation of psychoanalytic discourse. The

philosophical mood of the early fifties combined the reviled positivism of the porfiriato intellectuals (now called "reason") with the mytho-poetic views of Vasconcelos and other Ateneo thinkers who melded Mexico's mythic past and post-revolutionary present. This contradictory amalgamation allowed Paz to view Los días enmascarados as sublimely mythical in outlook, and Carballo to deem it a rational demystification of Mexico's nationalistic culture.⁴

In the estimation of contemporary thinkers such as Luis Villoro, Rafael Moreno, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, and especially Roger Bartra, the confusing and often contradictory pronouncements on Mexican identity by members of the Ateneo de la Juventud, Contemporáneos, and Grupo Hiperión, who viewed the issue of Mexican subjectivity from a modern, universalist (often European) perspective, produced startling results.⁵ One of the collective contributions of post-revolutionary thinkers is a metaphysical syncretism of Spanish and Indian culture. Where Catholicism, colonialism, and positivism failed to produce a cohesive national subject, the story of a universalized, modern mestizo might succeed. Bonfil Batalla sarcastically sums up this conflicted analysis of Mexican identity:

It is a national project, a model of society aspired to and implicit or explicitly delineated. [A project] that will wed "the best" of our Indian and Spanish heritage in order to give birth to a new culture and a new man (a cosmic man said America's Teacher), a cocktail, probably, of pulque and champagne. (94)

Se trata de un proyecto de nación, de un modelo de sociedad a la que se aspira, y que está implícito o se delinea explícitamente. Habrá que maridar "lo mejor" de nuestra herencia india y española para dar a luz una nueva cultura y un hombre nuevo (cósmico dijo el Maestro de América), coctel, probablemente, de pulque y champán.

This self-reflective invention, the mestizo, José Vasconcelos's "cosmic man," becomes, for the "universalists," a category that can be invoked to explain the violence of the revolution and the failure of successive governments to bring about permanent radical change in Mexican society. Paz, for example, uses it to explain the student massacre of 1968 at Tlatelolco as a necessary reenactment of the Aztec sacrifice, an

"inevitable" reenactment given the nature of the Mexican soul and the student demonstrators' unfortunate choice of geography when planning their demonstration. Tlatelolco, the Plaza of the three cultures was the scene, not only of Aztec sacrifice in the precolombian period, but of the Aztec empire's heroic last stand against Cortés (Bartra 21). The "cosmic race" becomes an open signifier used in political and cultural discourse to explain the difference between the modern, industrialized, prosperous, bourgeois ideal and Mexican reality.

Fuentes's Los días enmascarados, superficially at least, seems to complement the dominant philosophical approaches to la mexicanidad of the fifties. Paz, after all, waxes poetic over the connotations implicit in the title: the masks of fear, violence, sex, and inferiority behind which an authentic Mexican soul hides. The project of Fuentes's book implicit in Paz's comments is to reveal, through tensions and contradictions, an essential Mexican identity.⁶

To describe Los días enmascarados in such terms, however, is to overlook certain aspects of the collection and enforce upon it an unambiguous "signified." In fact, half the stories in the book refer obliquely if at all to issues of Mexican national identity and culture. Frank Dauster, Genevieve Mary Ramírez, and Anthony Ciccone all

struggle with the heterogenous nature of the six stories in the collection. Each of these critics divides the volume in half and focuses most attention on the stories that seem to deal with the question of la mexicanidad directly: "Chac Mool," "Tlactocatzine, del jardín de Flandes," and "Por boca de los dioses." They pay relatively less attention to "En defensa de la Trigolibia," "Letanía de la orquídea," and "El que inventó la pólvora," stories that Ciccone classifies as social parodies and that Ramírez sees as less important in the development of Fuentes's later fiction.

Brushwood describes a similar division and notes that although the stories, taken individually, create an increasing expectation for resolution, the collection as a whole prevents closure because of the shifting roles the reader is forced to play.

The volume, experienced as a single work, does not share this characteristic [of unambiguous closure] with its six parts. Quite to the contrary, the volume destroys the possibility of increasing intensity by persistently changing the functions the reader has to perform, so creating a seesaw effect of reading two kinds of texts and moving back and forth

from one kind of experience to another. ("Los días" 25)

Brushwood even suggests that if the purpose of the book were the production of a singular experience for the reader, a purposeful movement toward closure, three of the stories ("Letanía de la orquídea," "En defensa de la Trigolibia," and "El que inventó la pólvora") would have to have been published separately (Los días 25).

Overlooked Stories: Fuentes's "Less" Mexican Narratives

Raymond L. Williams calls "En defensa de la Trigolibia" a game "that functions as an autonomous verbal construct, a fictional world of 'Nusitanios' who speak an invented language called Trigolibia. It is a game of language invention, full of neologisms" (25). The more commonly anthologized "Chac Mool" often overshadows "Trigolibia" in critical studies of Los días enmascarados. Williams notes its relationship to the abstract, ludic fiction of Borges and its apparent disinterest in explicitly Mexican themes that seems uncharacteristic of Fuentes when compared with his later work. "Trigolibia" makes no reference to mythology, to an Aztec precolombian past, or even to Mexico itself. There are no characters, virtually no plot structure, and it lacks the characteristic denouement of the other

stories in the collection. It is one of the stories that, according to Brushwood, prevents readers from constructing a unified experience of the collection as a whole.

"Trigolibia," however, constitutes an important element of Los días enmascarados in two respects. The story's close stylistic relationship with the fiction of Borges and Arreola demonstrates how different it was from the work of other more established Mexican writers of the period. Close on the heels of Arreola's Varia invención (1949) and Confabulario (1952), "En defensa de la Trigolibia" and the other stories in Fuentes's collection are on the opposite end of the spectrum from, for example, Juan Rulfo's El llano en llamas (1953).⁷ Rulfo's stories are set in rural environments and describe the aftermath of the revolution and the plight of the agrarian lower class, while Arreola's and Fuentes's narratives avoid the regional and the particular.

Beyond its cosmopolitan bent, "Trigolibia," like other stories in the collection and Fuentes's later fiction, calls attention to the nature of fictive language itself. The neologism "trigolibia" is a nonsense term that at first interferes with the reader's capacity to make sense of the text:

Trigolibia is the supreme value of the Nusitanios. When the Nusitanios trigolibed themselves from the Terribrios, the first thing they did was to proclaim an Act of Trigolibia and a Declaration of the Trigolibes of Man. . . .

Organized in Trigolibic Trigolibe, the Nusitanios proceeded to elect a Great Trigolibe of Trigolibica. (29)

La Trigolibia es el valor supremo de los Nusitanios. Cuando los Nusitanios se trigolibiaron de los Terribrios, lo primero que hicieron fue proclamar un Acta de Tribolibia y una Declaración de los Trigolibios del Hombre Organizados en Trigolíbica Trigoliba, los Nusitanios procedieron a elegir un Gran Trigolibio de la Trigolíbica.

In spite of the disorienting repetition of this apparently open signifier, a definite narrative structure slowly reveals itself.

The essay-like story describes a country and its people, the "Nusitanios," in conflict with the "Tundirusos," their mortal enemies. Other invented countries are peripherally aligned around the binary Nusitanios versus Tundirusos. The story describes intense political conflict and attributes acute

differences between the belief systems of the two nations. These distinctions are, however, entirely described by substituting the neologism "trigolibia" for ideologically laden signifiers such as destiny, democracy, tyranny, human rights, liberty.

It is tempting to write the story off as a simple parody of political discourse, a narrative dead-end in Fuentes's work, and focus attention instead on the other stories in the collection that follow more traditional formulas. Upon closer scrutiny, the story reveals itself to be a parody of the process of signification. At first glance, the word "trigolibia" appears to be a signifier without a signified. However, the story's position in the political and cultural field encodes "trigolibia" with familiar connotations as the narrative progresses.

The Korean War (1950-53) had only just ended when Los días enmascarados was published and cold war tensions were acute. "Trigolibia," far from simply parodying ideological discourse in general, is indelibly encoded by the field of political discourse of the era. "Nusitania" and "Tundirusa" cannot help but become analogies for the conflict between the United States and Russia. The other minor players in the story, the countries "Perupla" and "Tropereta" are obliged to align themselves accordingly: "In order to defend Trigolibia, the people of Perupla

were prohibited from visiting those of Tropereta. The people of Tropereta found themselves obligated to reject friendship with those of Nusitania" (30). These two non-aligned nations stand in for the Third World as they are forced to take positions relative to the dominant poles in the field.

The principal consequence of this apparently empty signifier is a demonstration of how difference molds signification. "En defensa de la Trigolibia," represents cold war conflict and its effect on nations such as Mexico caught in its wake without ever explicitly invoking the terms democracy and socialism. It does so because these binaries are not closed vessels with transparent meanings. Terms like "democracy" and "socialism" are only capable of signifying when they occupy different, often fluid positions in the political field.

"En defensa de la Trigolibia" peels away the mythological substrate of cold war political rhetoric and demonstrates that the two superpowers and their relationship to "peripheral regions" (such as Latin America) are predicated, not on what they are in a purely metaphysical sense, but on what they are not in a discursive sense. While it never mentions Mexico or Latin America explicitly, the story lays bare the

political field into which they are forced to compete for position.

The last story in the collection, "El que inventó la pólvora" is closely related. The story's anonymous narrator describes a Borgesian-like situation. One morning during breakfast, his elegant silver spoon melts in his hands (85). Slowly and inexorably, every manufactured item in society turns to dust.⁸ Factories are obliged to produce goods at ever faster rates while consumers must buy up and use items at an equally ridiculous tempo (89). The universal motto of this doomed society becomes "Use, use, consume, consume, everything, everything!" (94). Like "Trigolibia" however, the story functions as much more than a satirical condemnation of capitalist consumption.

The story demonstrates the consequences of absolute reification, the severing of meaning from artifact. As the masses in the narrative accelerate their consumption of goods, they illustrate to an absurd degree the alienation endemic to advanced industrial economies. The spoons, bicycles, and airplanes that they now hourly purchase before they can turn to dust lose all sense of their original value or purpose. It soon becomes impossible to assign worth or meaning to products and in

the ensuing vacuum, the irrational urge simply to consume is all that remains.

The situation is analogous to the way political rhetoric is demythologized in "Trigolibia." The manufactured items of an industrialized economy are drained of any essential meaning or permanence and the story shows that the ideology of consumerism is as much an artifact of discourse as its political analog. Bicycles in the story, for example, do not derive value because of their real capacity to transport people (at one point in the story they disintegrate before ever leaving the factory floor). Instead, they (and other commodities in the story that disintegrate into dust) acquire value through their absence: a lacuna that must be filled at any cost.

Like "Trigolibia," "El que inventó la pólvora" makes no explicit reference to Mexico. The setting is an impersonal, slowly disintegrating cityscape that could represent any major urban area in the industrialized world. Nevertheless, readers in the fifties could not have helped but draw parallels between the story and Mexican society. The years of the Alemán administration immediately preceding the publication of Los días enmascarados saw tremendous growth in the industrial sectors of the Mexican economy and the inevitable rise of

a consumer economy. From this perspective, "El que inventó la pólvora" is a fantastic, cautionary tale that not only disarms the rhetoric of consumerism, but illustrates the fundamental contradictions of an official discourse positing a stable, unitary identity combined with unlimited progress and consumer culture. It is as if Fuentes's narrator had posited the obvious conclusion to the Alemán administration's project: collapse, disintegration, and social deterioration.

The third story in the collection, "Letanía de la orquídea," typically included in classification schemes splitting the book into two parts (explicitly Mexican versus universal), brings the issue of identity from the broad-ranging abstractions of "Trigolibia" and "Pólvora" to the human body itself. "Letanía de la orquídea" is a Kafkaesque tale of transformation and possession. During the rainy season in Panamá, Muriel, the protagonist, awakes one morning after troubled dreams to find that he has sprouted, not the spindly legs of an insect, but the delicate stem of an orchid from his coccyx. As he admires his new appendage in the mirror, it blooms into a beautiful flower. Muriel discovers that the flower is literally part of him and not a simple ornament: "From the stem of the orchid to the center of his nerves flowed a dictate that fused the life of the flower to his own"

(55). The next twelve hours are an orgiastic celebration of his new life as he moves from club to club, dancing, drinking, and singing. The orchid takes over, dances of its own accord and even chants afro-Caribbean verse in Antilles dialect (56).

The denouement occurs late the same night when Muriel, elated from his adventures, decides to exploit and commercialize his new talent. He theorizes that it might be possible to grow a new unique bud every morning, a cottage industry that could net him perhaps \$100 daily (57). With razor in hand he contemplates a new life, not of authentic experience, but of economic profit as he slices off the stem. The consequences of this pseudo-botanical castration are predictable within the logical framework of the story. It is as if he had cut himself in half and he slowly bleeds to death on his bed while the flower wilts.

Although set in Panamá, "Letanía del la orquídea" addresses the question of midcentury Mexico's growing drive to urbanize and exploit resources, both natural and human. The resulting alienation, the literal dismembering of the body politic for commercial gain, is represented in the death of Muriel. The story is more than a romantic allegory of the consequences of economic change in Latin America. The protagonist is not merely

alienated from the fruits (literally) of his labor. Muriel's death is a consequence of being alienated from himself, from his own body and from his previous identity. The incongruity of authentic existence and commercialism provoke not simply a conflicted identity, but the total annihilation of the self.

The (Un)Essential Mexican

Possession, identity, and annihilation are the dominant themes of the other three stories in the collection. "Por Boca de los dioses," the least studied of the three "Mexican" stories in the collection, combines these themes with the issue of esthetics.⁹ The narrative is divided between the feverish, scattered interior monologues of the protagonist Oliverio and the mimetically rendered sections related by an external narrator. This division between mimesis and experimental narrative is mirrored in the plot. After a paranoid and disjointed first-person monologue, the external narrator steps in and describes Oliverio's meeting with an acquaintance on the steps of Bellas Artes in Mexico City. They decide to explore the museum together.

Oliverio's companion, Don Diego, is an older gentleman with a predilection for colonial art. He describes Oliverio as "un muchacho estridentista," a

bohemian primarily interested in modern art. They compromise and decide to visit the exhibition of traditional art first and then turn their attention to the modern gallery. Only two paintings are described in the story, an anonymous colonial-era portrait and a painting by the modern Mexican artist, Rufino Tamayo.¹⁰ Both are paintings of a woman: mimetically represented in the case of the anonymous colonial portrait, and fragmented and disjointed in the case of the Tamayo painting.

Oliverio and Don Diego engage in a vigorous discussion concerning the validity of classical versus modern esthetics. Don Diego is repulsed by the Tamayo painting and insists that the woman in the colonial-era painting is so faithfully rendered that she could have come from off the street in front of Bellas Artes (63). The woman in the modern painting, however, appears "cut to pieces by the colors as if art had just been assassinated by art" (63-64). Don Diego's conclusion is as old as the debate between mimetic and non-representational esthetics itself: "Bah!" he says pointing at the Tamayo painting, "where have you seen a woman like that?" (64). He has, of course, already answered his own question: only on the artist's canvas.

Although the debate in which Oliverio and his older companion engage could have as easily taken place in the halls of the Louvre or the Prado as the Palacio de Bellas Artes, it takes on an added dimension of relevance with regard to the cultural field of Mexico at midcentury. The year after the publication of Los días enmascarados Mexican literary critic Andrés Henestrosa wrote an article in the Revista de la Universidad de Mexico, arguably one of the most influential cultural organs of the era, condemning the modern esthetics of the fifties and arguing for a more mimetically centered social realism: the same polemic that the narrator of "Por boca de los dioses" illustrates in the characters of Don Diego and Oliverio.

Their argument is intensified when Oliverio takes Tamayo's project one step further and cuts out the mouth, already severed from the other features in the painting, and places it in a bucket left in the gallery serendipitously. Don Diego protests vehemently and an infuriated Oliverio abandons rhetoric and resorts to violence. He pushes Don Diego out of the museum window to the streets below, pausing momentarily to contemplate his antagonist's body, dead and broken amidst shards of window glass, a macabre reenactment of the Tamayo painting. The narrative, from this point in the story,

proceeds in a much less mimetic fashion and the scene closes with the lips of the severed mouth speaking to Oliverio from the bucket, mocking Don Diego's simplistic reading of the painting.

The remaining episodes in the short story are surrealistic and chaotic. Oliverio eventually returns to the hotel room in which he has taken residence and is met by a young woman dressed as a dancer and reeking of garbage. She tells him that her name is "Tlazol," a compound Nahuatl (Aztec) word formed by joining the prefix "Tla" meaning "thing" and "zolli" meaning trash (Santamaría 1061). "Tlazol" is also close to the name of the Aztec deity of expiation, "Tlazolteotl."¹¹ She rebukes Oliverio for the mess he has made of Don Diego: "I have just gathered up the broken pieces of that old man you murdered. Why do you add to my labors unnecessarily?" (70). Tlazol hounds Oliverio throughout the rest of the story, slowly driving him mad. The narrative ends when she drives a stone knife into his chest.

Tlazol is the element in the story most closely aligned with Mexico's cultural discourse concerning a mythical past. Her presence permits readings not unlike that of Joseph Sommers who sees Fuentes's work as a kind of narrative fulfillment of Leopoldo Zea and Octavio Paz

(98). If Fuentes's narrative project was to reach back into Mexico's mythological past and retrieve the key to the present, to create a narrative cocktail (as Bonfil Batalla might describe it) of pulque and champagne, Tlazol was a strange choice, a peculiarly conflicted deity.

Tlazol appears to Oliverio as a rumbera, a dancer. The narrator describes her as, at once, repulsive and enticing: capable of inciting erotic desire. Her teeth are ground to points and her straight black hair appears caked with blood: "An unbearable stench emerged from her entire body, and at the same time invited communion with it" (70). The scene ends suggestively when Oliverio invites her into his room for the evening.

Her role changes at the end of the story, however, and she changes from lover to adversary. During their final confrontation, Oliverio escapes from a swarm of butterflies that, at Tlazol's command, nearly carry him off to be sacrificed at the hands of her brethren: Tepoyolltl, a creative God whose name means "Heart of the Mountains"; Mayauel, goddess of fertility; Tezcatlipoca, "Smoking Mirror," one of the Gods of War; Izpaplotl, "Obsidian Butterfly," another fertility Goddess; Tecciztecatl, the gods's attendant who, during the fifth creation of the world, became the Moon; Xolotl, whose

name means "double," and is the twin of Quetzalcóatl who is also present. Tlazol is the narrator's unorthodox addition to the Aztec pantheon.

Oliverio escapes miraculously from all of them and returns to his room refusing to answer Tlazol's knock. He denies her entrance until she coquettishly insults his masculinity. She enters, kisses him, and he sees that "in the hand of the goddess an opaque dagger glittered; slowly, slowly, it neared my heart" (81). The narrator describes Oliverio's death in terms that connote both the macabre and the erotic.

While Tlazol's presence cannot help but call to mind Mexico's mythical Aztec past, her actions prevent a straightforward reading of the central theme of the story: the polemic over mimetic versus non-representational esthetics. The inclusion of Aztec mythology does not privilege either rhetorical position.

The story is not so much a modernized Aztec hagiography as it is a depiction of the difficult combination of modern esthetics and issues of national identity. "Por boca de los dioses" avoids reductive dualities: Oliverio's sacrificial death is neither a vindication of his modernism nor of Don Diego's classicism. Instead, the narrator uses a juxtaposition of traditional and modern techniques to present Mexico's precolombian past,

not as a panacea, nor a convenient category invoked to resolve questions of identity, but a contradictory, precarious (and perhaps even dangerous) construct.

If "Por boca de los dioses" demonstrates the explosive confrontation between the mythology and esthetics, the second story in the collection, "Tlactocatzine, del jardín de Flandes," illustrates the confrontation between past and present. Drawing on Mexico's post-colonial encounter with Napoleon III in the, the story anticipates Fuentes's short novel Aura (1962) (Williams 125). The plots of both stories are similar: the protagonists gain the use of a mansion in an old colonial section of Mexico City and after reluctantly moving in, begin to witness strange, uncanny events. In "Tlactocatzine" the protagonist discovers that the enclosed garden in the center of the mansion is curiously different than the rest of the house. While the Mexico City sun shines brightly on the streets outside, the interior walled garden is strangely overcast and rainy. To add to the mystery, an old woman often appears in the garden (a kind of anti-locus amoenus), her method of entry undetermined.

The impossible climate of the garden calls to mind, for the protagonist, the writings of a nineteenth-century Belgian affiliated with the French Symbolists, probably

Georges Rodenbach. As he describes the garden he notes,

"Now that I write, the associations of the garden bring to mind, without a doubt, the cadences of Rodenbach"

(40). The protagonist begins to view his journal as a mirror that reflects, not the garden, but another text, Rodenbach's descriptions of melancholy and ethereal Belgian landscapes. He even inserts a quotation, probably from Rodenbach's Bruges la morte: a novel that depicts a dreary Brussels and describes a young man's destructive obsession with a bewitching femme fatale. This intertext interrupts the illusion of obligatory movement from word to reality, from signifier to signified; the journal substitutes text for text and produces a kind of vertigo for the reader as it hypnotically slides from one discursive plane to another. It also foreshadows the identity of the visitor in the garden.

In both Aura and "Tlactocatzine," the protagonists slowly fall under the older woman's spell and discover too late that they have been trapped for eternity, transformed into her lover. The old woman in "Tlactocatzine" reveals herself to be Carlota, the one-time empress of nineteenth-century Mexico. The narrative ends when the protagonist discovers that the enchanted/haunted garden belongs, not to the mansion in

Mexico City, but to Carlota's castle Bouchot in Belgium.

The historical Carlota lived and died in castle Bouchot after fleeing Mexico when Benito Juarez's forces gained the upper hand in their conflict with the French army and their puppet-emperor, Maximilian of Austria. In the short story, Carlota's garden remains in geographical limbo occupying space in both Mexico and Europe, in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its enigmatic space represents a complicated intersection of past and present, of the real and the fantastic. As such, the presence of the garden functions to problematize rather than resolve Mexico's conflicted colonial past.

Although the plots and settings of Aura and "Tlactocatzine" are similar, there are important differences. The novella is narrated in the second person whereas the short story is a collection of the protagonist's diary entries arranged without the explicit presence of a third person. Moreover, "Tlactocatzine," from the title on, makes constant use of Nahua (Aztec) intertexts and in doing so blends Mexico's nineteenth-century and precolombian history. When the story was rewritten and published as Aura, however, the Nahua references had been omitted.

Tlactocatzine, or "Tlahtocatzine" according to more traditional transliteration schemes,

is a form of address used for the ruler. The title of the ruler is "Tlahtoani"--one accustomed to speaking. One who speaks is a "tlahtoca--." The "tzin" is a reverential form, so to address an honorable ruler one would say tlahtocatzin. The "-ne" is a hortative, calling upon the honorable speaker, as in "I exhort you." Thus when one says "tlahtocatzine" one expects that the honored speaker will respond. (Schwaller)

The word appears for the first time in the story when a note, written by Carlota, mysteriously appears on the protagonist's nightstand. The message contains the single enigmatic word "Tlahtocatzine" (46). In one sense, Carlota addresses him as she might have addressed her husband, Maximilian, expecting the protagonist to take his place, to fill the vacant position. But her use of Nahuatl invokes a peculiar irony: a difficult juxtaposition of the autochthonous and the extrinsic, the colonizer speaking with the voice of the colonized.

That "Tlahtocatzine" calls on the protagonist to respond is doubly ironic given that he apparently does not speak Nahuatl. There can be no response to Carlota's insistent query. The protagonist, an educated, cosmopolitan Mexican does not possess the linguistic

competence to react to her notice. He descends to the garden, the "Kuperzinergruft," the family vault of the Hapsburgs in Vienna where Maximillian's corpse was finally interred. He fails to understand until it is too late that the "odor of the grave," the "coffin stench" emanating from Carlota's body, the omnipresent smell of "siemprevivas," are indications of his own fate (47-48).

It is only when Carlota addresses him as "Max," reminding him of how she has faithfully carried flowers to his grave, that the protagonist realizes that he will never leave the mysterious garden, that he is her "eternal" prisoner (50).

The story has been seen by some as a cautionary tale examining the consequences of a nation that has forgotten its past. The protagonist's benefactor, the owner of the mansion had, after all, planned to raze the building to make way for a shopping mall, a decision all too typical of Mexican urban expansion during the Alemán era. According to such an interpretation, the protagonist's predicament at the end of the story is simply a consequence of Mexico's conflicted past intruding on and sabotaging its future. But if "Tlactocatzine" is a cautionary tale, what is its moral? Should the protagonist have tapped into the "cosmic" oversoul and

studied Nahua at the Universidad Nacional instead of business and finance?

The story's numerous intertexts, parnassian, historical, and Aztec, point in another direction. The quotations from Rodenbach, the amalgam of nineteenth-century historical figures and precolombian language frustrate attempts to exact closure on the text. If the story is a demonstration of the inextricable link between history and destiny, the future must be as impossible as the past, as absurd as an Austrian monarch of Mexico speaking Nahua. The ubiquitous past in "Tlactocatzine" is a signifier without a unitary signified, a sign that points, not to a fixed coordinate in the future, but only to other conflicted signs.

The showcase story and most anthologized piece in the collection, entitled "Chac Mool," also examines the slippery nature of signification. Structured as a kind of embedded narrative, the plot is disclosed when a recently drowned man's friend discovers and reads his diary. The entries relate the strange story of how the dead man, Filiberto, had recently acquired a kitsch statuette of an indigenous Mexican deity. Filiberto takes the object home with him and fantastical things begin to occur. His apartment mysteriously floods a number of times from leaky faucets, unexpected down

pours, and extreme humidity. As his cellar becomes dank and humid, the statuette made of stone begins to change into living flesh. The animated statue gradually takes over Filiberto's life, enslaving and possessing him. In a desperate attempt to rid himself of the statue's influence, he flees his home for Acapulco where he drowns while swimming in the ocean.

Georgina García Gutiérrez, in her book Los disfraces: La obra mestiza de Carlos Fuentes, describes the story as an investigation of Mexico's indigenous past. García Gutiérrez argues that Chac Mool's domination of Filiberto, a cosmopolitan midcentury Mexican, is an example of the incursion of Mexico's past into its present (20). Her careful analysis mirrors the observations of other critics of Fuentes's fiction who see "Chac Mool" as a search for origins.¹² The story, in such critical paradigms, becomes an examination of the national unconscious, its conflicted cultural oversoul; the animated statuette reconquers cosmopolitan Mexico as decisively as the Spanish conquered the Aztecs. Luis Leal sums up this line of criticism when he quotes the philosopher Ernst Cassirer to describe the project of Los días enmascarados: "It is not by its history that the mythology of a nation is determined but, conversely, its history is determined by its mythology" (6).¹³

This formula produces certain contradictions by placing the critical focus almost entirely on mythology, on the personage of Chac Mool, and on the past instead of midcentury Mexico. It rests on the premise that Mexico's mythological past constitutes an a priori category that determines "history" rather than a twentieth-century rhetorical construct serving the ideological needs of post-revolutionary administrations. Such an approach to the story erases the protagonist Filiberto as completely as does Chac Mool.

"Chac Mool" is not a story of the decline of its protagonist as much as a memoir of his last moments. There are also problems in reading the death of the protagonist as an allegory of Mexico's mythological past sabotaging the present. Filiberto is already a defeated character at the beginning of the narrative when he acquires the odd statuette. In his diary, he attributes this original turn in fortune to the dynamics of modern, urban life, not as a consequence of his subsequent encounter with the Aztec deity, Chac Mool. He recounts in his entries, for example, how he and his school friends used to gather in a certain cafe to drink coffee and speculate about their futures:

I knew that many (perhaps those of most humble circumstances) would arrive at the very top,

and that here, in school lasting friendships would be forged with those in whose company we would frequent the rough seas. But it didn't turn out like that. There were no rules. Many of the humble stayed there, many arrived much higher than we could have foreseen in those ardent gatherings. Others, who appeared to us to have the world at their feet were left behind in midstream, undone by an extracurricular exam, isolated by an invisible ditch that separated those who triumphed from those who achieved nothing. (9-10)

Yo sabía que muchos (quizás los más humildes) llegarían muy alto, y aquí, en la Escuela, se iban a forjar las amistades duraderas en cuya compañía cursaríamos el mar bravío. No, no fue así. No hubo reglas. Muchos de los humildes quedaron allí, muchos llegaron más arriba de lo que pudimos pronosticar en aquellas fogosas, amables tertulias. Otros, que parecíamos prometerlo todo, quedamos a la mitad del camino, destripados en un examen extracurricular, aislados por una zanja

invisible de los que triunfaron y de los que nada alcanzaron.

Filiberto belongs to the last category, alone, alienated, frustrated at his job, his only pastime consisting of collecting indigenous artifacts. Apparently "undone" by events beyond his control, by the dynamics of Mexican society at midcentury, Filiberto turns to the past for consolation rather than vindication.

Filiberto becomes an amateur collector of precolombian artifacts. The narrator emphasizes the kitsch nature of Filiberto's newest acquisition when he informs us that the unscrupulous vendor had splashed catsup on its belly to simulate its sacrificial aspect (15). Filiberto purchases the object the day after he describes, in his diaries, a discussion he had with a friend about the relationship between Christianity and earlier indigenous religions. His friend's theory, dutifully recorded by Filiberto, is that Buddhism or Hinduism would never have successfully proselytized the indigenous inhabitants of Mexico. Christianity's unique success derived, according to Filiberto's friend, from indigenous worship of a sacrificed, bloody God. Christianity, "in its hot, bloody sense of sacrifice and liturgy," becomes a natural prolongation of the indigenous religion (13).

This discussion of Spanish-Aztec theological and cultural syncretism sets the stage for the troubled last days of Filiberto's life. Rather than saving Filiberto from his mediocrity and isolation (as might have happened were the story a fairy tale or hagiography), the resurrected god Huitzilopochtli, named Chac Mool in this incarnation, enslaves him. Water is a recurring motif in the story. Chac Mool needs water to come to life as well as to sustain it. He forces Filiberto to bring water in buckets to the house and leaves at night to find dogs, cats, and rats on whose blood he feeds. It is certainly no coincidence that Filiberto meets his death by drowning. Moreover, Filiberto dies at the end of Holy Week, the period of the Christian calendar that marks the crucifixion of Jesus (4). His friend's theory that Christianity represents a "natural" continuation of Aztec religion neatly bridges the two discursive systems and the story suggests that both indigenous and Christian discourse determine Mexican identity.

The text makes reference to several codes that are in play in the fifties in Mexico. Filiberto, an unhappy member of Mexico's new middle class, suffers the kind of alienation endemic to urban life. At the same time, he remains keenly aware of Mexico's past. In this sense, the story seeks to articulate an antagonism that

dominated Mexican cultural debates of the time. In 1950 Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz published his landmark book-length essay, Laberinto de Soledad. In his analysis of Mexican identity, Paz grapples with many of the same issues and sets the tone for the debate over how to reconcile Mexico's Spanish and indigenous pasts.

Paz's theory is that the Mexican revolution "was a search and an immersion of ourselves in our own origins and being . . ." (152). He describes the effects of the revolution on the intelligentsia as a kind of bildungsroman, a discovery of the "true nature" of the Mexican people (153). But Paz's coming-of-age story ends anticlimactically. He writes:

The revolution began as a discovery of our own selves and a return to our origins; later it became a search and an abortive attempt at a synthesis; finally, since it was unable to assimilate our tradition and to offer us a new and workable plan, it became a compromise. The revolution has not been capable of organizing its explosive values into a world view, and the Mexican intelligentsia has not been able to resolve the conflict between the insufficiencies of our tradition and our need and desire for universality.¹⁴ (168)

For Paz, the "most extraordinary fact of our situation is that we are enigmatic not only to strangers but also to ourselves" (70). The revolution was, for Paz, an attempt to transcend Mexico's immediate past, the Porfiriato, the days of colonialism and conquest, and to find a deeper, mythological past. Paz works from the logical, empirical premise that without a solid starting point, there can be no definite conclusion, no transcendence.

It is here that he is most thoroughly modern. Paz agrees with Vasconcelos's and other ateneístas's rejection of nineteenth-century positivism and their attempt to posit a new origin, the "cosmic race." But he laments Vasconcelos's lack of "rigor": "The work that Vasconcelos created has all the poetic coherency of the great philosophical systems, but not their rigor. . . . it does not contain the essentials of our being or our culture" (155). The contradictory problem for Paz is how to employ "philosophical rigor," (a code word for empirical discipline) in the search for quasi-metaphysical origins. "Liberal secularism" is not enough (155). The goal of the Mexican intelligentsia must be to decipher the enigma, to engage themselves in a quest as epic as that of Gilgamesh or Odysseus, to discover the universal Mexican.

"Chac Mool," on the other hand, proceeds as a kind of anti-bildungsroman: the story of a young man who hates what he has become. The protagonist of the story decides the Rilke was right, that "the great reward of the adventure of youth should be death" ("Chac Mool" 11). He feels the existential frustration of not being able to reach back into the past and "put into place the pieces of some abandoned puzzle" (11). His youthful romanticism has failed him and he begins to be dominated by a creature of his making, his stone golem, Chac Mool. Near the end of his narrative, Filiberto confesses that he has become Chac Mool's prisoner. But he had other plans: "My original idea was to dominate Chac Mool, like one dominates a plaything" (24). Filiberto's relationship with the resurrected Aztec god produces, not redemption, not spiritual insight, but annihilation.

The effect of the embedded narration constitutes, as Paz points out, a game of masks. An anonymous third-person narrator acts as our filter for Filiberto's voice, a mask superimposed on the protagonist's voice. This narrator mediates our reading of Filiberto's diary and shares a metonymical connection with readers as they both struggle to work out the puzzle of Filiberto's death. But just as Filiberto is unable to rework the puzzle of his adolescence, Filiberto's readers, both intra- and

extra-textual are unable to solve the enigma of his demise. The story ends when the anonymous friend accompanies Filiberto's body back from Acapulco to his residence in Mexico City. He is met at the door by a figure who hardly resembles precolombian Mexico's most powerful deity:

A yellow indian appeared, dressed in a house coat and scarf. His appearance could not be more repulsive; he gave off the odor of cheap lotion; his powdered face tried to hide its wrinkles, his mouth was smeared with badly applied lipstick and his hair gave the impression of having been dyed. (28)

Apareció un indio amarillo, en bata de casa, con bufanda. su aspecto no podía ser más repulsivo; despedía un olor a loción barata; su cara, polveada, quería cubrir las arrugas; tenía la boca embarrada de lápiz labial mal aplicado, y el pelo daba la impresión de estar teñido.

This strange encounter does not resolve the issue of whether or not Filiberto died insane or persecuted by a ghost of Mexico's past. If the story is a narrative description of what lies behind the mask of Mexican

identity, the "essentials" of being or culture are not what is revealed, but rather the immense contradictions facing midcentury Mexico.

While Mexico's past, both historical and mythological, plays a significant role in many of the short stories contained in Los días enmascarados, the collection focuses on language itself. Unlike Paz, who encourages readers in Laberinto de la soledad to uncover and reconcile an authentic relationship between Mexico's Aztec past and its modern present, Fuentes's stories problematize the representation of identity in such terms. When the characters in his collection encounter the past, they discover fragmentation and confusion rather than identity and redemption. Even when Fuentes's stories avoid treatments of Mexico's past and focus instead on its cosmopolitan present, their emphasis on the complex nature of signification undermines the possibility of transparent connections between monolithic master narratives and identity.

Elena Poniatowska's Problem Child: Lilus Kikus

Elena Poniatowska's short novel, Lilus Kikus (1954) approaches the issue of identity differently, but with similar results. Her present reputation rests mainly on two newer books, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío (1967) and La

noche de Tlatelolco (1971), both very different from her first book published by Los Presentes. These two later books are documentary-style novels that describe major social problems faced by Mexico in the late sixties. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, the pseudo-autobiography of a real woman, Jesusa Palancares, evolved from interviews conducted by Poniatowska in weekly sessions over a period of two years. In it Poniatowska narrates Jesusa's life in an autobiographical style, replacing Jesusa's voice with her own. The complex palimpsest that emerges from the narration prevents the inscription of a stable, unitary identity for the protagonist.

Poniatowska's other landmark book, La noche de Tlatelolco, also relies on a complex narrative arrangement that explodes conventional notions of identity. The narrative presence in the text stitches together short testimonies of a student massacre that occurred in downtown Mexico City in late 1968 on the eve of the Olympic games in Mexico. Mexican government forces, in an attempt to preserve an image of stability and order in the face of international scrutiny attendant to the Olympic games, crushed Mexico's growing student movement with deadly force. The voiceless narrator of La noche de Tlatelolco (in a manner reminiscent of epistolary novels) gathers the testimonies of bystanders,

participants, and victims to paint a vivid portrait of the tragedy. The profusion of voices and perspectives frustrate readerly attempts to find a unitary narrative presence or to reconstruct a totalizing view of the massacre, its perpetrators and victims.

Lilus Kikus also reads much like an epistolary novel and exhibits many of the same narrative strategies as those of Poniatowska's later testimonial novels. Unfortunately, the book has essentially disappeared from the critical scope in recent years and is often mentioned by students of Poniatowska's work only in passing as a collection of short stories with an autobiographical element (Bell 431). Moreover, no article-length study of the book has ever appeared.¹⁵ As a consequence, perhaps, of the nearly fifteen-year gap between the publication of Lilus Kikus (1954) and Hasta no verte, Jesús mío (1969), the first novel is often overlooked in bibliographies of her work.¹⁶

Divided into twelve separate sections, each episode in Lilus Kikus can function autonomously as a short story or may be linked together as part of larger narrative. The individual chapters of the book relate episodes in the life of Lilus Kikus, a young girl who belongs to a prosperous Mexican family. There is little if any plot that links the individual episodes together; they are,

instead, held together by the repeated presence of Lilus.

Moreover, the episodes build toward a kind of climax when, at the end of the book, Lilus's parents banish her to a convent school to finish her education. In the end, the question of finding a comfortable generic niche for the book remains less central than understanding the narrative tactics that position it within the literary field.

While the identity of the narrator is never made explicit, the book functions in ways that are reminiscent of Poniatowska's later fiction as the narrator uses a kind of doubled voicing throughout. The narrator relates events from Lilus's life from the child's perspective, employing a kind of free indirect discourse and liberally appropriating Lilus's thoughts, feelings, reasoning, and vocabulary. The question of doubled voicing arises when, in certain sections, it is impossible to separate the narrator's voice from that of Lilus.

The issue of doubled voicing is never more apparent than when the book illustrates Lilus's confrontation with ideology. In a chapter entitled, "El cielo" [Heaven], we are given insight into Lilus's perceptions of religion:

Lilus worries about how to enter heaven. She isn't a heretic. She knows that heaven is a state, a way of being, and not a place. . . .

But always, since she was young, she thought that Our Lord was higher up than the clouds. High up there. And in order to get up as high as Him, one needed to be a plane, an angel, or a bird. As the bird-Lilus went rising into heaven, God would be watching. And at a certain point in her flight, God's gaze would be so intense that it would convert her into a golden dove, more beautiful than an angel. Since the day of her first communion, Lilus thought that Our Lord came down into her soul by means of a little elevator installed in her throat. Our Lord would take the elevator to descend into Lilus's soul and stay there as if it were a room that he liked. In order to please him, she would prepare him a well furnished room. Lilus's sacrifices were like room furnishings. A large sacrifice was a sofa, another a bed. Small sacrifices were only chairs, flower vases, decorations, or coffee tables. (29-30)

A Lilus le preocupa cómo entrar en el cielo. No es ninguna hereje. Sabe que el cielo es un estado, un modo de ser, y no un lugar y . . .

Pero siempre, desde chiquita, pensó que Nuestro Señor está más allá de las nubes. Allá arriba.

Y que para llegar allá El tiene uno que ser avión, ángel, o pájaro. A medida que el pájaro Lilus iría subiendo por el cielo, Dios iba mirándolo. Y en cierto punto de su vuelo, la mirada de Dios era tan intensa que bastaba a convertirla en paloma de oro, más bella que un ángel. Desde el día de su primera comunión, Lilus pensó que Nuestro Señor bajaba a su alma en un elevadorcito instalado en su garganta. Nuestro Señor tomaba el elevador para bajar al alma de Lilus y quedarse allí como en un cuarto que le gustaba. Para que le gustara, ella tenía que prepararle una habitación bien amueblada. Los sacrificios de Lilus componían el ajuar. Un sacrificio grande era el sofá, otro la cama. Los sacrificios chicos eran solamente sillones, vasos de flores, adornos o mesitas.

In this section, the narrator is obviously quoting from Lilus's thoughts, and Lilus is certainly recalling one of those gruesomely allegorical sermons aimed at helping young people envision abstract theology. Where the text of the sermon ends and Lilus's rhapsodizing begins is

unclear, but the idea of a tiny elevator in her throat is possibly her addition to the lecture, a detail that satirizes the imagery of the sermon.

The shifting degree of double voicing in the cited passage produces an ironic statement about the religious education of young women. The narrator begins by telling us that Lilus knows that heaven is not a place, but rather a "state." Later, according to the narrator, Lilus is not a "heretic." But the narration obscures issues of identity by informing readers of Lilus's capacity to understand heaven in non-literal terms and then relating her fantasies of turning into a golden dove to fly up to heaven or preparing a small, well furnished room in her soul accessible by elevator. The two representations of heaven are antithetical and produce ambiguity as to which belongs to the "real" Lilus.

The effect of the contrast satirizes and critiques the middle-class values gaining currency in midcentury Mexico when the book was published. The passage brings into sharp relief an absurd juxtaposition of a mystical inner-place where divinity can be felt (not unlike Santa Teresa's "morada interior"), a kind of authentic religious experience, on the one hand, and a well-decorated, bourgeois parlor on the other. The possibility emerges that both versions of heaven belong

to Lilus and that the ambiguities arise from a temporal disjunction in the narration. Although the narrator's identity never explicitly surfaces, it may be that an older Lilus, thinking back on her childhood in these episodes, juxtaposes the two visions. The more sophisticated notions of heaven as a "state of being" would be incongruent with a child's literal perspective.

The narrator's insistence on excusing Lilus's comical, yet logical amplifications of the sermon reveals a self-conscious effort to expose the contradictions of religious indoctrination.

This strategic juxtaposition critiques the ungainly reconciliation of consumer culture and authentic spirituality. The effect of the contrast reveals the absurdity of such an allegory. The narrative voice employs this technique throughout Lilus Kikus with similar results. Lilus's disingenuous perspectives of her middle class surroundings are, through free indirect discourse, ironically juxtaposed with the words of a more mature narrator. An older Lilus emerges from the text, undermining the ideology of her middle-class upbringing by creating moments of intense contradiction. Seen in this light, the book aspires to more than the quaint musings of a precocious child and functions instead as an

indictment of the Mexican middle-class values and ideological discourse.

Lilus never fits the stereotype of a young scion of the Mexican upper middle class. The narrator presents Lilus as something of an oddity. Lilus, unlike other proper girls her age, operates on insects, saving them from inflamed appendices and other imagined illnesses instead of playing with dolls (9-11). The narrator's explanation of Lilus's reluctance to play with dolls resonates far beyond the mind and experience of a young girl:

Lilus has no dolls. Perhaps her physique can explain this rarity. She is thin and takes huge steps when walking because her legs, long and very separated from one another, stick out, tie themselves up, and then choke. When she falls, Lilus invariably causes the death of her doll. (11)

Lilus no tiene muñecas. Quizá su físico pueda explicar esta rareza. Es flaca y da pasos grandes al caminar, porque sus piernas, largas y muy separadas la una de la otra, son saltonas, se engarrotan y luego se le atorán.

Al caerse Lilus causa la muerte invariable de su muñeca.

Lilus, unlike other girls of her age and social class, has no dolls because she kills them. While, in her fantasy world, she saves insects from imagined diseases, her skills do not extend so far as to save her own dolls.

The narrator rationalizes this problem as the product of Lilus's self image: ungainly, disproportionate, and certainly unlike the more perfectly formed simulacras that she invariably exterminates. Her dolls, unlike the flies and beetles that she plays with, are simply not worth saving. Lilus identifies more strongly with the active image of herself as doctor, a role not reinforced by the static playthings more appropriate to her status as a young middle-class girl.

The Lilus that the narrator describes reveals a deep antipathy for all things bourgeois. She attends a concert at Bellas Artes and notices the pretensions of the other concert goers as well as those of her own mother who "is convinced that she is an intellectual" (16). During a trip to Acapulco, Lilus, we are told, refuses to play as other girls do and instead fixates on the obese men who look like "great red fish . . . shining with oil," (18). She sees these "scandalously uncovered" men who belong to the new class of prosperous merchants,

professionals and government fonctionnaires taking advantage of Aleman's Acapulco, and dreams of her own husband, imagining his displeasure at her willful refusal to sunbathe like the others. In the next instant the difficult reality of patriarchal relationships dawns on her and she decides that she "won't let him finish his scolding" (19). Lilus turns her back on her imaginary husbands and walks away to explore more remote sections of the beach on her own (19).

The book ends melancholically. Lilus's parents ship her off to a convent boarding school to learn what she will need to know, not to become a doctor, but in order to marry well. She learns that millionaires are honorable, but that gardeners are not worthy suitors. The nuns teach her that on her wedding night she must bath in rose water, swallow a teaspoon of honey, and then "patiently" and "submissively" wait on the bed for her new husband (64). She also learns that she must tolerate adultly (64). In the convent school Lilus is indoctrinated by her teachers with the codes appropriate to her gender and middle-class environment.

Her most important lesson comes from the Old Testament. In it, God strikes down Uzzah, his foolish servant who reached out a hand to steady the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:6-7). Uzzah, originally given the

responsibility for building the Ark, was punished for his presumption, for refusing to occupy the subordinate position expected of him and instead usurping the place of the priestly caste. Uzzah failed to read well the code that determined his place a society predicated on religious and patriarchal hierarchies. The narrator of Lilus Kikus implicitly compares Uzzah's situation with that of Mexican women who want more than to accept "patiently" the status offered them, who seek control over a life of their own making. Seen in this light, the book is more than the quaint musings of a precocious child. It is, rather, an indictment of the Mexican middle-class and its ideology of gender.

Lilus Kikus's parodic commentary on the religious and social texts used to reproduce subordinate positions for women resonates beyond midcentury Mexico. The novel demonstrates, through its ambiguous narrative agent that identity changes through time. While Lilus's parents, religious authorities and teachers seek to indoctrinate her, an apparently older and empowered Lilus uses irony to open holes in the seemingly monolithic ideology that encircles her. The publication of the book in 1954 ironically contrasts with the simultaneous efforts of the Grupo Hiperión to forge a seamless network of codes fixing Mexican national identity, an identity

that, as Lilus Kikus shows, subordinates women. In the midst of this project to identify the essential, Mexican, Poniatowska's narrator quietly works at the fraying edges of an apparently monolithic text. Narrative complexity overshadows rhetoric in Lilus Kikus. As in Fuentes's short stories, Poniatowska's narrator avoids didactic pronouncements about identity and instead allows the ideological contradictions of cosmopolitan Mexico's emerging middle class to surface.

Existentialism Over Empiricism

Tomás Segovia's Primavera muda, the third book to be published in Los Presentes, like Los días enmascarados and Lilus Kikus, focuses on questions of identity in urban, cosmopolitan settings. The short novel describes twenty four hours in the life of its protagonist, Antonio. A college student bored with his studies, his professors, his friends, Antonio suffers intense alienation and isolation. Paralyzed, unmotivated, apathetic and disgusted with all that surrounds him, Antonio, when the novel opens, is entering the terminal stages of an existential crisis. The principal enigma that fuels the narration is whether or not he will, in some measure, resolve the crisis and realize some mode of authentic existence.

That existential questions preoccupied Segovia is not surprising. Although having established his reputation primarily as a poet, Segovia wrote, drama, essays, and short stories as well. In addition to his eclectic literary production, Segovia associated with several literary journals and publishing houses including Revista Mexicana de Literatura with Carlos Fuentes.¹⁷ One of his most important literary influences throughout these excursions into different genres has been the French existentialist, Albert Camus. In his third volume of essays, Sextante (1988), Segovia devotes an entire section to Camus and unites here several papers written in the mid- to late fifties, not long after the publication of Primavera muda, describing and praising the French writer.

In his "Camusianas," Segovia describes Camus's effect on him and on other like-minded Spanish intellectuals. Segovia was born in Valencia and his parents emigrated to Mexico in 1940 because of the Spanish Civil War and ensuing World War.¹⁸ Camus's descriptions of the predicament of intellectuals caught up in the conflict and his philosophical reflections, Le mythe de Sisyphe (1948) in particular, struck a resonant chord. Segovia describes Camus's writings as "a ray of light from the heavens" (13).

Camus, according Segovia, contributes to existentialist thought the possibility of transcendence through universality (34). Given the deplorable state of world politics and economics in the thirties and forties, Segovia's Camus remedies the paralysis of existentialist crisis by emphasizing the creative act, a universal impulse with transcendent consequences. It is in the creative process itself, whether in the visual arts or in literature, and not through empirical methods that individuals can forge authentic expression and existence.

Primavera muda displays this perspective on various levels. The protagonist of the novel fruitlessly searches for authentic relationships and an unambiguous sense of self. In addition, the narrator steadfastly refuses to mention anything that would securely locate the action of the novel in Mexico. The lack of reference to anything Mexican contrasts with the prevailing philosophic mood of Mexico in the fifties: a period known for a profusion of books seeking to establish the apparently "essential" elements of a uniquely Mexican national identity (a project begun in the first years of the revolution by members of the Ateneo de la Juventud and carried on by their intellectual progeny).

The novel opens with Antonio deciding not to attend class at the university. It has been more than a month

since he stopped going and, this night in particular, his usual recourse of going to the library to browse the catalog for "interesting" or "suggestive" titles has also become tedious (7-8). He elects to wander the empty courtyards of the school and eventually finds his way to a cafe where he meets some friends. A late evening of drinking and cruising aimlessly ensues, followed by an abortive attempt at intimacy with a young woman he has recently met. Throughout the opening scenes of the novel, Antonio feels a strong sense of alienation, of being cut off from himself, his friends, and his surroundings.

The narrator, throughout the novel, repeats a specific metaphor to describe the protagonist's crisis. Antonio feels as though he were nothing more than an actor and that the situations in which he finds himself are a "comedy in which all anyone had to do was repeat the appropriate phrases at the opportune moment" (23). The problem is that the words ring false to him "as if he were obligated to say them" against his own will (26). The theatrical metaphor reveals how Antonio experiences a kind of spiritual disjunction; he feels like he is "remembering" his conversations instead of participating in them first hand (32). In purely existentialist terms,

Antonio experiences Selbstentfremdung or "self-estrangement."

William Barrett, in his examination of the origins of existentialism entitled Irrational Man (1958), describes this condition as the peculiar product of modern society. In his chapter, "The Encounter with Nothingness," Barrett traces this sense of fragmentation and isolation to the decline of metaphysics, "the decline of religion" in Barrett's words, and its attendant world view (24). This loss of a metaphysical anchor sets humanity adrift on a perilous sea across whose face rage the storms of world wars and economic depressions: crises whose only apparent resolution resides in the relentless advance of technology (24-29, 33-34). Barrett, ever the modernist, perceives in modern art a potential solution.

The creative act itself is the only "anchor" left and the possibility of provoking in its receiver a similarly authentic experience is proof that some kind of universality is still credible.

Segovia's narrator, like the existentialists, is also fond of sea-faring metaphors. He tells us that Antonio feels disconnected and cast adrift as he and his friends drive aimlessly through the night: "The friction of the wind against his ears filled them with a rumor like the sea that prevented him from hearing anything

else" (24). Later he notices that the clouds, illuminated by the moonlight, look like tiny islands. The narrator's use of metaphors as old as John Donne's "No Man is an Island" or even Jorge Manrique's "Coplas" is almost clumsy in its earnestness (and also points toward Segovia's erudite interest in poetry).

The next morning, Antonio visits his professor's home to discuss the details of his thesis, a project that he is loath to start. An informal party attended by a group of stereotypically arrogant, idealistic intellectual types upstages his meeting and prevents "true" communication with his mentor. Later that afternoon Antonio finds himself wandering aimlessly through a part of Mexico City that he has never seen before. Tired, disgusted, and depressed by his professor's friends, he finds that he has lost the ability to feel genuine emotion. He decides that neither his education, his family, or his relationships can provide him the authentic experience he is searching for and becomes certain that he will be condemned to live his life as if from a distance, disconnected and estranged from himself (66-68). His random wanderings through an anonymous urban landscape parallels his sense of the desultory nature of existence.

In the midst of this existential despair, Antonio chances upon a deserted lot in a dead-end street filled with refuse. This space, filled with the detritus of modern society mirrors his emotional state in a kind of parody of the pathetic fallacy of the Romantics. The narrator changes strategies at this point in the novel. In the chapters preceding this scene the narrator balances description with dialogue, but here the tempo slows. Time almost comes to a standstill as the narrator focalizes completely through the eyes of Antonio. In the middle of the empty lot stands an untended sickly tree. Every detail of the melancholy scene is carefully catalogued by the protagonist and related to the reader. Whereas other details in the novel are strung together in a descriptive blur that underlines Antonio's sense of desperation and haphazard existence, the narrative now dilates and slows.

Antonio sits underneath the tree in a Buddha-like state of concentration and his attention finally fixes on a fly that has landed on a rock beside him. The narrator describes the fly in poetic terms, avoiding connotations that would associate it with disease and death. The fly moves to and fro, as aimlessly as Antonio had done the night before, but seems to find purpose in the simple act of being, of existing (70). Antonio experiences a

profound epiphany as he watches: "Its small lustrous wings shone in the sun almost gloriously. It inclined its tiny head and wiggled its tiny body; it filled itself with sun, with light, with air. It appeared profoundly intoxicated" (70). Antonio realizes that this action was "its way of smiling," of experiencing joy (70).

The image of a smiling fly sitting on a rock in the middle of a refuse heap is both sentimental and absurd. Antonio reads the situation, however, as a model of authentic existence. William Barrett writes in Irrational Man that the existentialist answer to alienation and detachment is to focus on the esthetic nature of experience. For Kierkegaard, according to Barrett, ethics must be predicated on esthetics, which in turn must arise not from cognition but from existence (164). Any theory of ethical action, according to Barrett's formulation of existentialism, must arise from an experiential (phenomenological) rather than idealist epistemology. Antonio, the protagonist of Primavera muda, connects action and experience directly and in this new formulation finds a solution to his existential dilemma. The novel ends twenty-four hours after it has begun when Antonio calls an older woman whom he met at his professor's home to arrange a rendezvous. Antonio looks forward to this new, authentic relationship and now

believes in the possibility of unfeigned emotion predicated on actual experience, liberated from the models of gender determined by the society and epoch in which he lives.

Antonio resolves his existential crisis by rejecting idealism. At the beginning of the novel he realizes that books and intellectual activity no longer fill the void of alienation. As he cruises the streets of Mexico City with one of the women he and his friends have met, his hope for genuine affinity is sabotaged by his need to think before acting. He realizes that his earlier moody insistence on privileging thought and cognition before experience represents the antithesis of the apparently joyful existence of the fly. His course of action will now be one of his own choosing rather than simply filling the role and reciting the script expected of him.

Segovia's narrator provides a different model of subjectivity than that proposed by the writers preceding Segovia and the other writers who debuted in *Los Presentes*. Similar to the characters in Fuentes's stories and Poniatowska's novel, the protagonist of Primavera muda does not come to terms with his sense of alienation by somehow reconciling indigenous and Spanish culture or locating the necessary elements of his being or identity in mythological Aztec origins. The solution

to his dilemma is distinctly cosmopolitan. He grounds his new sense of identity on the will to act autonomously of essential categories of behavior. Like the heterogenous, atemporal cityscape that serves as the setting for his crisis, Antonio pieces together a sense of self contingent on the moment. The novel, unfortunately, ends with Antonio's epiphany and readers must speculate as to how he will successfully avoid the ideological constraints of midcentury Mexican politics, economics, and culture.

The Decline of Regionalism and the New Cosmopolitan Esthetic

Primavera muda, like Lilus Kikus and many of the stories in Los días enmascarados, makes no direct reference to Mexico. The events may not, in fact, have taken place in Mexico City at all. The novel differs enormously in this regard from the dominant esthetic of the previous decade due to its insistence on nonspecific urban locals and cosmopolitan themes. It is remarkable for its assiduous evasion of any discourse that would directly link it to themes associated with lo mexicano, themes explored by philosophers, critics and writers who established themselves during the preceding decade. While Paz, Zea and the Grupo Hiperión were theorizing the

essential Mexican, Fuentes, Poniatowska and Segovia were quietly searching out the contradictions inherent in such a program.

Fuentes, Poniatowska and Segovia located their search for the contingent ("unessential") Mexican identity in the city. All three writers, with their international, cosmopolitan backgrounds, bypass the often rurally situated narratives elaborated by previous writers. Where, for example, José Revueltas, Agustín Yañez, and Juan Rulfo explored questions of identity from the perspective of the province, the Los Presentes writers locate their narratives almost exclusively in large anonymous urban cityscapes. Rather than, to paraphrase Bartra, concocting an exotic mixture of the autochthonous and the foreign, the first three Los Presentes writers either avoid references to indigenous (Poniatowska and Segovia) or (as in Fuentes) undermine the facile syncretism of earlier narratives. Their stance in the cultural field (as I address in chapter four) proceeded, not only from the texts that they published, but from the their critical analysis of other midcentury writers determined to continue the novelistic program of earlier decades. The publication of Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, and Primavera muda represent the opening salvo in a fierce debate over which cultural

codes would be privileged in the fifties. Their publication also set Los Presentes apart as the publishing venture most closely associated with the redefinition of literary esthetics along cosmopolitan lines.

The conjunction of these three texts represents a strategy that differentiated the series and its contributors from other publishers and writers of the period. In the next chapter I read the last two works that rounded out the initial offering, Juan José Arreola's drama La hora de todos and Alfonso Reyes's Parentalia. Set against the first three, these books help paint a picture of the tactics that Arreola employed to mark out a specific position within the cultural milieu of the period and the privileging of cosmopolitan over regional narratives. Together with interviews and other historical information about Los Presentes, the contrasts and connections between the older and the less established writers illuminate the central debate of the era: the conflicted responses to Mexico's project of modernization.

Notes

¹ Barthes writes in S/Z, "each code is one of the forces that can take over the text (of which the text is a network), one of the voices out of which the text is woven" (21).

² Other important studies that comment on the function of myth and history in Fuentes include Gloria Duran's La magia y las brujas en la obra de Carlos Fuentes (1976) [translated and republished in 1980 as The Archetypes of Carlos Fuentes: From Witch to Androgyné], and Georgina García Gutiérrez's Los disfraces: La obra mestiza de Carlos Fuentes (1981).

³ Other important studies of the Mexican intelligentsia's attempt to formulate a coherent national and cultural identity include Gabriel Careaga's Los intelectuales y la política en México (1971), Martin C. Needler's Politics and Society in Mexico (1971), and Henry C. Schmidt's, The Roots of Lo Mexicano: Self and Society in Mexican Thought (1978).

⁴ John Leddy Phelan, in his study "Mexico y lo Mexicano," reviews the series and comments, "It is apparent that the Mexican existentialists fear that industrialization [at midcentury] will be superimposed

indiscriminately, much in the same way that Anglo-Saxon political institutions were blindly imitated in the last century" (318). The pressure to industrialize provokes a reassessment of national identity and the Hiperión group's objective is, in Phelan's estimation, "to discover the ethos of Mexican culture" (309).

⁵ For a more complete discussion of the issue of Mexican subjectivity and the legacy of the Ateneo de la Juventud see Luis Villoro's Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México (1979), Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's Pensar nuestra cultura (1991), and Roger Bartra's La jaula de melancolía (1987) and Oficio Mexicano (1993). Also, in 1992 Colegio de México published a collection of essays under the direction of Solange Alberro and Alicia Chávez Hernández entitled Cultura, ideas y mentalidades devoted to the issue of the construction of national identity and culture in Mexico. Among the many excellent articles anthologized here, Rafael Moreno's "Creación de la nacionalidad mexicana" gives a broad historical view of the issue from the colonial period to the present.

⁶ Alberto Ruy Sánchez in "Approaches to the Problem of Mexican Identity" argues that for Paz, "the Mexican does not hide behind a mask; he is a mask" (47). My reading of Laberinto de la soledad, emphasizing the

esthetically modern nature of Paz's metaphor is different. I argue that according Paz, the mask, although inevitable, obscures the essential ontology of being.

⁷ Arreola would later combine the two works and publish Confabulario y varia invención in 1955 with Fondo de la Cultura Económica.

⁸ Chalene Helmuth, in The Postmodern Fuentes (1997) intimates the cosmopolitan nature of Los días enmascarados when he describes "El que inventó la pólvora" as an examination of ecological concerns in the context of modern, urban, consumerism (88).

⁹ Many critics have seen the stories in Los días enmascarados as explorations of essential Mexican identity. Teodosio Fernández takes this approach in "Carlos Fuentes o la conciencia del lenguaje" (1988) [105]. Alfonso González in Carlos Fuentes: Life, Work, and Criticism (1987) points to the juxtaposition of past and present in Fuentes's stories (as do many others). González sums up the prevailing view of Los días enmascarados when he states that "[in it] the past becomes an integral part of the present" (10). Other studies that treat his short fiction at least in part include Wendy B. Faris's, Carlos Fuentes (1983); Gloria

Duran's, La magia y las brujas en la obra de Carlos Fuentes (1976) [later translated and republished in 1980 as The Archetypes of Carlos Fuentes: From Witch to Androgyné]; Octavio Paz's "La máscara y la transparencia" (1971); John S. Brushwood's "Los días enmascarados and Cantar de ciegos: Reading the Stories and Reading the Books" (1982), Georgina García Gutiérrez's Los disfraces: La obra mestiza de Carlos Fuentes (1981) [García Gutiérrez's first two chapters, "El Caleidoscopio de lo mexicano" and "El jeroglífico cosmopolita," analyze Los días enmascarados and pay special attention to the role of Aztec mythology in Fuentes's stories]; and Francisco Javier Ordiz studies the role of mythology in Fuentes in El mito en la obra narrativa de Carlos Fuentes (1987). For further bibliographic information on Fuentes see Richard M. Reeve's, Carlos Fuentes y la novela: Una bibliografía escogida (1971) and his updated "Selected Bibliography" (1982), and more recently, Raymond L. Williams's The Writings of Carlos Fuentes (1996).

¹⁰ The Rufino Tamayo painting described in the story is a Fuentes invention. The narrator mentions that it is dated 1958, four years after the publication of Los días enmascarados. Tamayo is an important modern Mexican painter who, although belonging to roughly the same

generation as the famous muralist Diego Rivera, eschewed grand attempts at social realism and instead fused Mexican themes and European modernism in much the same way that Fuentes did with literature.

¹¹ I thank Dr. John F. Schwaller at the University of Montana. He kindly aided in the translation of the Nahuatl words that Fuentes uses in Los días enmascarados.

Translating these words is difficult since Fuentes avoided standard transliterations.

¹² Daniel deGuzman, in Carlos Fuentes (1972), suggests that "Chac Mool" and "Por boca de los dioses" represent Fuentes's literary effort to resolve issues of Mexican identity. He writes:

In "Chac Mool" and "Por boca de los dioses," the author's preoccupation is with the impact--the residual impact--of the primitive gods on the subconscious mind (his own, primarily) of a man who was born of Mexican heritage. (78-79)

Wendy Faris, in Carlos Fuentes (1983) makes a similar suggestion. She indicates that "Chac Mool" reveals the dangers of not coming to terms with Mexico's Aztec past.

Faris compares "Chac Mool" to Julio Cortázar's "Axolotl" and writes, "the tales warn modern children not to play with sacred ancient fire for it may still be smoldering

and ready to ignite" (93). Raymond L. Williams underscores the subversive nature of "Chac Mool" and other stories in Los días enmascarados in his book, The Writings of Carlos Fuentes (1996). Williams writes:

In these stories, Fuentes does indeed stop time for the sacred days, undermining the rationale behind many traditional understandings of time and space, as well as human interaction within the traditional human boundaries of time and space. (125-26)

¹³ See note 9.

¹⁴ This quotation is taken from Lysander Kemp's English translation, The Labyrinth of Solitude (1961).

¹⁵ While no article length study has appeared on Lilus Kikus, Poniatowska's other work is described in several studies. Chief among them are Beth E. Jörgensen's recent book, The Writing of Elena Poniatowska: Engaging Dialogues (1994). Jörgensen has, since her dissertation "Texto e ideología en la obra de Elena Poniatowska" (1986), devoted much of her critical attention to Poniatowska's work and her recent study includes extensive bibliographic references. Other important recent studies include Cynthia Steele's "Testimonio y autor/idad en Hasta no verte, Jesús mío"

(1992), Janet Gold's "Elena Poniatowska: The Search for Authentic Language" (1988), and Nina Scott's "The Fragmented Voice of Elena Poniatowska" (1990).

¹⁶ Jeanne C. Wallace in the Dictionary of Mexican Literature (1992), for example, lists the republication of the novel along with later short stories in 1967 under the title Los cuentos de Lilus Kikus by the University of Veracruz. Moreover, this republication obscures the issue of the whether or not to designate the book a novel or collection of short stories (236).

¹⁷ Tomás Segovia's only novel is Primavera muda (1954) and has largely escaped critical attention. Some articles have appeared examining his poetry, but Segovia is still better known in Mexico than in the United States. This is because of his more recent and prolific work as a critic, essayist, and promotor of culture. Segovia has published several articles on Mexican poetry and literature in Vuelta, the magazine directed Octavio Paz. Segovia has, in fact, published three significant articles on the poetry of Octavio Paz including "Poetry and Politics in Octavio Paz" (1973), "Una obra maestra: Piedra de sol" (1974), and "Poética y poema: Por ejemplo en Octavio Paz" (1975).

¹⁸ Tomás Segovia, Carlos Fuentes and Elena

Poniatowska, bring a distinctly cosmopolitan perspective to Mexican literature from their experience abroad.

Fuentes, the son of a diplomat, was educated in Argentina and Washington D.C. Poniatowska, the daughter of Polish emigrants to Mexico, spent some of her childhood in France and learned Spanish as a second language (her first was French) upon arriving in Mexico City.

Chapter Three:
Alliance and Compromise:
The Issue of Midcentury Cosmopolitanism

The first five books published in "Los Presentes" did not comprise a uniform group. The presence of Alfonso Reyes's autobiography, Parentalia (1954) is curious and even slightly inconsistent given that Arreola billed Los Presentes as a publishing venture dedicated to lesser-known, unpublished, younger writers. Arreola's editorial strategy depended, in fact, on a series of subtle contradictions. As I proposed in chapter two, the novels and short stories he published subtly undermined popular notions of Mexican national identity and the mythology of mestizaje, but they rendered critical interrogation of these notions implicitly. In this chapter I demonstrate that the less than overt critiques arose as consequence of the demands and pressures of the more conservative sectors of the cultural establishment, pressures that become evident when examining Alfonso Reyes's participation in the series. As such, Los Presentes constitutes a contradictory moment in the history of Mexican publishing that saw the intersection of conservative, institutionalized values and modern, cosmopolitan texts that were critical of the orthodoxy promulgated by the cultural elite.

To explore the cultural and institutional contradictions that Los Presentes evokes, in the present chapter I trace out the genealogy of the literary-cultural field in midcentury Mexico. In contrast to my analysis of critical discursive positions articulated in specific texts in the preceding chapter, here I turn to the history of symbolic capital and institutional positions that place Alfonso Reyes and Juan José Arreola in the literary-cultural field. This history explains, in large measure, the nature of the esthetic projects that Reyes and Arreola advanced in Parentalia and La hora de todos as well as the simultaneously enabling and constraining nature of their alliances in the Los Presentes collection.

The lesser-known writers that Arreola began publishing in 1954 pushed conceptions and definitions of literary modernity in radical directions. Their subversion of an idealized Mexican subject established a distinct discursive position at odds with many of the prevailing ideas of the period. Their novels and short stories implicitly questioned the model of national-cultural identity championed in official discourse rather than reinforcing the well-worn mythology of a harmoniously conjoined Spanish-Indian history and patrimony. Carlos Fuentes's ambiguous deity-demon figure

in "Chac Mool" (1954), Poniatowska's ironically self-reflexive narrator in Lilus Kikus (1954) and Segovia's urbanely, existentialist protagonist in Primavera Muda (1954) do not engage readers as subjects of a monolithic mexicanidad. Instead, their texts encourage readers to consider the contradictions of a rapidly modernizing Mexico while down playing nationalist considerations. The dominant rhetoric of previous decades (embodied in such diverse cultural work as the murals of Diego Rivera, the educational campaigns of José Vasconcelos, and the novels of the revolution) imagined a seamless national identity forged in a revolutionary struggle that erased social and political inequities. The young writers publishing their work for the first time in Los Presentes, in contrast, exposed contradictions and brought the fragmentary nature of midcentury Mexican subjectivity into sharp relief.

Yet, with the possible exception of Fuentes's short story "Chac Mool," the stories and novels published in 1954 by Los Presentes do not confront the myth of mestizaje directly. The most obvious difference between Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, Primavera muda and the dominant literary esthetic that preceded them is stylistic. In contrast to many of the regionally-oriented novels that describe the effects of the

revolution on rural communities and provincial lifestyles, the works of the Los Presentes writers explore disconnected urban landscapes and the problems of alienation in modern, cosmopolitan settings. Instead of painting textual images of Mexico in broad strokes as the generation of post-revolutionary muralists and novelists had done, they describe solitary individuals trapped within the fragmented margins of urban chaos.

The early texts of these writers also differ from much of their later work. Carlos Fuentes continued his critique of modern, cosmopolitan Mexico in La región más transparente (1958), but his most radical appraisal of the mythology of mestizaje promulgated by post-revolutionary administrations, La muerte de Artemio Cruz (1962) was not published until almost a decade had passed. Elena Poniatowska's most pointed attacks on economic injustices and the dangers implicit in the official rhetoric of Mexican nationalism did not appear until the late sixties and early seventies with the publication of Hasta no verte Jesús mío (1969) and La noche de Tlatelolco (1971).

Whereas Fuentes's and Poniatowska's writing after their initial debut in Los Presentes became explicit and direct in their thematic critique of post-revolutionary Mexico, Tomás Segovia abandoned the novel altogether, turning his attention instead to poetry and literary criticism.

In this chapter I address the issue of literary cosmopolitanism, not only as a stylistic move, an appropriation of elements of the Mexican and European avant-garde, but as the initiation of a new critique of Mexican subjectivity that culminated in the progressively more radical novels of the sixties. I argue that younger Los Presentes writers encoded radical critiques of Mexican society in the relatively safer terms of cosmopolitanism, an esthetic apparently concerned with the status of the marginalized individual situated in ostensibly anonymous, urban cityscapes. This move was a consequence of the intersection of two currents in the literary-cultural field: the consecrated establishment and the relatively lesser-known younger writers struggling to find an audience for their work.

This convergence arose from Arreola's ambition to introduce young writers and their innovative texts into the narrow and competitive market of midcentury Mexican intellectual readers. To attract critical attention to his publishing venture, Arreola published Fuentes's, Poniatowska's, Segovia's, and his own work alongside that of Alfonso Reyes, an enormously prestigious writer of the time. The presence of Reyes's autobiography, Parentalia (1954), together with the work of the younger writers published in Los Presentes conferred on them and the

venture a measure of the prestige associated with the name, the authorial presence, "Alfonso Reyes." Such an exchange, however, was not without consequences. In the following sections I explore the repercussions of Reyes's relationship with *Los Presentes* and the degree to which his affiliation with younger, more radicalized writers may have modulated their critique of la mexicanidad.

In Bourdieuan terms, Arreola effected an articulation between two poles in the field, linking writers with a low degree of consecration who lacked an audience for their work to consecrated writers who had gained a following and could count on the support of the principal cultural institutions of the day. This articulation of old and young, of consecrated and unknown, provoked a transformation in the configuration of the field. To the degree that younger writers accumulated symbolic capital by publishing in *Los Presentes*, they moved, I argue, toward positions in the field that permitted them relatively less autonomy due to closer associations and proximity with the more conservative cultural establishment. As they took advantage of the benefits of institutional consecration, their capacity to confront directly the ideological positions encouraged by and promulgated through the Mexican cultural establishment necessarily diminished.

Arreola's strategy did not pass unnoticed, but its broader effects on the nature of critical discourse was not immediately apparent. In 1954, one month after the first publications of the series appeared, noted book reviewer and critic, María Elvira Bermúdez, wrote an article describing Arreola's plan in La Revista Mexicana de Cultura, the weekly cultural supplement of one of Mexico City's leading newspapers, El Nacional. In this article, she intuitively understood the dynamics of the literary field that Pierre Bourdieu would explicitly theorize in more general terms thirty years later:

Except for Alfonso Reyes, Arreola himself and Emmanuel Carballo, it currently appears that [Los Presentes] will give preference to new writers. This circumstance, far from being a demerit for [Los Presentes], constitutes its most important quality. Given the director's literary awareness and his clever preferences, high quality and modern tendencies will be guaranteed in all, or at least the greater part, of its publications. Moreover, this is one of the paths that our literature should follow: making space in collections endorsed by consecrated writers [valores literarios] for ones who are not well known. (12)

Exceptuando a Alfonso Reyes, al propio Arreola y a Emmanuel Carballo, parece hasta ahora que [Los Presentes] se dará preferencia a escritores nuevos. Esta circunstancia, lejos de ser un demérito para Los Presentes, constituye su más importante cualidad. Dados los conocimientos literarios y el atinado gusto de su director, estarán garantizadas la buena calidad y las tendencias modernas de todas, o de la mayor parte, de las publicaciones. Por lo demás, es éste uno de los caminos que nuestra literatura necesita emprender: dar cabida en colecciones que cuenten con el aval de valores literarios consagrados, a los escritores nóveles y a los no suficientemente conocidos. . . . (12)

Bermúdez's commentary indicates that Arreola's strategy of borrowing prestige from established writers to help propel the careers of younger writers came at a cost, a subtle loss of autonomy. Bermúdez encouraged the Mexican literary elite to embrace the work of younger writers. But, along with the notion of bringing up-and-coming writers into the fold, Bermúdez's article hints at the disciplinary function of the literary-cultural field.

Her appraisal of Los Presentes suggests an inevitable contract between writer and society. In her formulation, as younger writers are given access to the market, they accede to the responsibility of conforming to consecrated literary values. Bermúdez alludes to the disciplining function of this implied contract when she promises her readers that Arreola's strategy guarantees "high quality" and "modern tendencies."

Her comment is slightly idiosyncratic given that the term "Mexican literary modernity," by 1954, encompassed more than half a century of writing and included an extraordinary variety of texts. The Mexican poet Amado Nervo had, by 1905, founded a literary journal called Revista Moderna. Mariano Azuela's novel Los de abajo, published in 1915, marks, for some, the initiation of the modern Mexican novel. The term "modern" also obtains in discussions of the Mexican vanguard movement of the twenties and thirties. And, for Brushwood, Agustín Yañez's Al filo de agua (1947) represents the novelistic fulfillment of the literary intentions of the modern Mexican vanguard (Mexico 9).

Bermúdez further complicates the situation by linking "modern tendencies," a term that in many contexts connotes original, iconoclastic artistic approaches, to "consecrated" or traditional literary values. In each

situation, the term "modern" resonates with the particular rhetorical agenda of those who wield it. "Literary modernity" had, by midcentury, come to connote a prescribed range of ideological stances vis-à-vis Mexican national and cultural identity. Furthermore, the younger writers who participated in Arreola's consecrating strategy were necessarily constrained by these ideologically-charged discursive pressures.

Ironically, the fifth book published in Los Presentes, Alfonso Reyes's autobiography Parentalia, functions both as a textual object that lent symbolic capital to the other titles in the series and as an autobiographical project that sought to provide a unified vision of Mexican culture that would ameliorate the contradictions inherent in post-revolutionary conceptions of Mexican subjectivity. Arreola's own contribution to the Los Presentes series, the drama La hora de todos (1954), is slightly more ambiguous as a cultural project.

Harkening back to the previously published books, Carlos Fuentes's Los días enmascarados, Elena Poniatowska's Lilus Kikus, and Tomás Segovia's Primavera muda, Arreola's drama treats the theme of mestizaje and Mexican national identity only obliquely.

To understand the motivations and consequences of Arreola's decisions as director of the series, I first

examine in detail the presence and legacy of Alfonso Reyes. By 1954, Reyes participated as a major player in the literary-cultural field. In order to understand his complex relationship with *Los Presentes*, I briefly discuss his early work to show the evolution and development of many of the ideas to which Fuentes's, Poniatowska's, and Segovia's work responds. I also examine Reyes's participation in the establishment of the primary cultural institutions of the period and draw out the principal themes in his attempts to reconcile Mexico's heterogenous past. Reyes was associated with positions in the field that defined Mexican modernity in ways that tended to preclude the critiques that other texts in *Los Presentes* sought to elaborate. I conclude my discussion of Reyes with an analysis of his contribution to *Los Presentes*. I suggest that Parentalia functions both as an autobiographical project in which Reyes represents himself as an archetypal Mexican subject, and as a textual object that bound him securely to the generation of promising literary talent vying for a more established position in the field.

My discussion of Reyes leads me in the end to the drama, La hora de todos. Arreola's text, like those of Fuentes, Poniatowska, and Segovia, explores the dilemmas of midcentury Mexican subjectivity by safely displacing

the terms of its critique onto a more anonymous urban setting. I conclude that Arreola's drama, while never invoking the familiar terms of mestizaje, of Mexico's Spanish and indigenous past, engages these issues nonetheless by encoding the debate as a simple analysis of the problems of racism in modern, urban, cosmopolitan society.

Alfonso Reyes: The Godfather of Midcentury Mexican Culture

Alfonso Reyes continues to occupy a place of privilege within the Mexican literary field nearly four decades after his death in 1959. Reyes's literary career and his work as founder and director of the most important publishing houses, cultural institutes, and educational agencies of his time enabled him to deploy enormous influence within the literary-cultural field. In the following sections, I draw out many of the important moments of his career. These moments, I argue, helped shape the field in which younger Los Presentes struggled for position in the mid-fifties.

Reyes was, undoubtedly, one of twentieth-century Mexico's most prolific writers and the enormous scope of his work and interests was such that attempts to succinctly describe and characterize his oeuvre risk

disingenuous oversimplification. The force of Reyes's influence on the field seems to produce a kind of anxiety in his disciples, an implicit understanding that whatever they might write, Reyes the critic could have written it better, handled the subject with greater erudition, and brought the full weight of his unique genius to the subject. Raúl Rangel Frías in his analysis of Reyes's poetry, for example, qualifies his comments reverently, almost as if he were about to pronounce aloud the name of God: "I'm going to dare to speak about Alfonso Reyes. . ." ("Reyes" 7).

Visión de Anáhuac, published in 1917, and a dramatic poem, Ifigenia cruel, published in 1924, helped establish the authorial presence that Rangel Frías venerates. The first represents, for Luis Leal, Reyes's definitive work: a panoramic, poetic description of the scenery and stage on which the Conquest would unfold ("La visión" 49). The essay, according to Rangel Frías, describes the fantastic landscapes of a virgin Mexico on the eve of the Conquest and sets forth the nation's essential elements that were awaiting the organizing influence of Spanish culture (9-11). The essay also helped set the ideological stage on which debates about Mexican national identity after the revolution took place.

Leal concurs with Rangel Frías's assessment when he describes the figurative elements in Reyes's essay: "[The work] is, in truth, an esthetic contemplation of the landscape, a recreation of the Valley of Anáhuac according to what the first Spaniards saw in 1519" (50).

Reyes, according to Leal, uses the topography of Mexico as a metaphor for cultural conflict and assimilation.¹ This use of figurative language creates a mythology of race and identity transforming, as Roland Barthes might suggest, "history into nature" (Mythologies 129). In more precise terms, Visión de Anáhuac naturalizes a particular version of the history of Mexico, the conquest of its indigenous cultures, as the inevitable birth pangs of a new, ideal modern nation.

This "naturalization" of linguistic tropes is also central to Reyes's conception of the role of literature and the modern writer. In Parentalia, as I will later demonstrate, Reyes's speaker presents himself as an archetypal Mexican subject through whom the narrative of mestizaje is fully realized. Parentalia also continues the project of Visión de Anáhuac in the sense that it presents an image of national identity as ostensibly seamless, ahistorical, and ideal: and yet his image privileges elements of Mexico's European cultural legacy over indigenous ones. Visión de Anáhuac functions as a

kind of modern creation myth of Mexico and its elaboration of Mexican subjectivity in terms of an apparently harmonious conjoining of Spanish and indigenous culture resonates, not only in the work of Reyes's contemporaries, but throughout Parentalia as well. The vision that Reyes would later present of himself in his autobiography anchors itself firmly to the same ontological ground as that which informs Visión de Anáhuac: a lyrical portrait in which the Valley of Anáhuac represents a crucible where the apparently essential and universal elements of Spanish and indigenous cultures merge in a modern synthesis. Through this implicit metaphor of mestizaje, the poetic essay erects a modern version of the history of Mexico's colonial and nineteenth-century racial conflicts and participates in laying the ideological framework for the national-cultural project of post-revolutionary Mexico.

Alfonso Reyes's critical essays, monographs, and books of poetry are so numerous and wide ranging that they defy succinct categorization. In the years after the revolution until his death, Reyes published on almost every literary subject conceivable from the poetic work of the French Symbolists and early Mexican modernists to religion, philology, and twentieth-century Latin American poetry.² In her book-length study of Reyes's poetry,

Concha Meléndez reproduces a photograph taken by Ricardo Salazar, a double exposure that superimposes Reyes's countenance over an image of his library, La Capilla Alfonsina.³ The photograph shows an ethereal and mystical Reyes towering over his extensive library. Reyes's image fades gradually into the countless columns of bookshelves housing thousands of volumes and suffuses itself into every corner of the enormous room. The picture represents, in photographic terms, a vision of Reyes as a figure of almost God-like stature presiding over his temple, the implicit center of midcentury Mexican culture. This image symbolized, as I demonstrate in the following section, the positions that Reyes occupied vis-à-vis the Mexican cultural establishment.

Alfonso Reyes and the Mexican Culture Industry

The image of Reyes as a modern, cosmopolitan Mexican writer, projected in Parentalia and reproduced in Salazar's photograph, illuminates the role that Reyes played in the development of Los Presentes and other Mexican cultural institutions. The narrative voice in Parentalia presents a textual portrait of a writer and thinker actively involved in the construction of a new, post-revolutionary Mexican subject. The autobiographical subject that emerges from the text resolves his

heterogenous patrimony through language. Alfonso Reyes's speaker takes the conflicting, disparate threads of his Spanish and indigenous cultural heritage and tries to forge them into a harmonious unity, into a textual whole that produces for readers a complete and totalizing experience of the self.

This theory of the function of language, as I proposed in chapter one, belongs to the European esthetic associated with high modernity. As Art Berman has explained, "[European high modernity] led to esthetic theories contending that paradoxes and oppositions are held unified in ironic tension in the artwork [of the era]" (189). Although Reyes, the autobiographical subject of Parentalia, unifies the "paradoxes and oppositions" of his national and cultural experience through language, the historical Reyes also relied on an extensive network of cultural institutions to produce such a unification. While he assiduously avoided Marxist discourse, the historical Reyes evidently understood the importance of controlling the means of artistic and cultural production. To that end, he founded and lead institutions that oversaw much of what the Mexican cultural elite read and discussed in the decades after the revolution. In short, while the autobiographical subject that emerges from Parentalia relies on language

to produce an apparently unified sense of national and cultural identity, the historical Reyes depended on an elaborate network of cultural institutions to produce a "name," an authorial presence in the field.

As a consequence of this public "name" or *personae*, Reyes's collaboration with Arreola conferred on Los Presentes an extraordinary measure of prestige. Edith Negrín, in her study of the Ateneo generation, lists the numerous institutions founded in the forties that owe their origin, at least in part, to Alfonso Reyes. Reyes supervised the growing institutionalization of Mexican letters by participating in the establishment of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Colegio Nacional, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, and Colegio de México ("El Ateneo" 77). These state-affiliated institutions, apart from the innumerable conferences, grants, and seminars that they patronized, also provided a publishing platform for the scholars, critics, and writers whose careers began around 1910, the hundred-year celebration of Mexican independence.

Alfonso Reyes belongs to this "Centennial Generation" of Mexican writers. These critics and students of literature acquired their moniker because of their relative proximity to the centenary celebration of

Mexico's independence from Spain in 1910, and to the revolution that immediately ensued. Many, including Reyes, participated in the publication of a short-lived journal in 1906 called Savia Moderna: Revista Mensual de Arte (De Beer 740). It was here that Reyes met, among others, like-minded thinker Pedro Henríquez Ureña and began to effect an articulation of his ideas about the function of art in society and the institutions that could discipline and reproduce a corresponding subjectivity. These affiliations provided the impetus for the Ateneo de la Juventud, a loose community of scholars and writers responsible for the establishment of a cultural corollary to the revolution.

The Early Evolution of the Professional Writer: From Author to Bureaucrat

One important facet of the history of the writers affiliated with the Ateneo generation is the repeated theme of expatriation and return. Alfonso Reyes, José Vasconcelos, Martín Luis Guzmán, and other Ateneo writers fled Mexico after the conservatively backed general Victoriano Huerta led a military coup that overthrew the short-lived, liberal Madero government (Negrín 70).⁴ While in exile, they published many of their best-known works. Guzmán published his famous novelistic treatments

of the revolution, El águila y la serpiente (1928) and La sombra del caudillo (1932) while in exile.

Vasconcelos, like Guzmán, wrote much of his most famous work in exile: Prometeo vencedor (1916) and El monismo estético (1919).

Alfonso Reyes himself published Visión de Anáhuac and Ifigenia cruel, and many other texts while in Spain.

If, as Negrín says, Reyes was Mexico's first professional writer, it is ironic that his professional career began far from his native country and that many of the early works upon which his reputation rests found their first audience in Spain (76). Their experiences abroad also inspire the first stirrings of modern literary cosmopolitanism in Mexico. The openness to "extra" Mexican culture that pervades much of Reyes's writing, including Parentalia, finds its historical antecedent in the expatriot experiences of the Ateneístas. This fact opens the door to a rich irony in that, as I argued in chapter two, the works of younger writers associated with Los Presentes appropriated cosmopolitanism, displacing their critiques of modern Mexican society onto the ambiguous terrain of more anonymous, less obviously Mexican urban settings.

Reyes's dominance in the field depended on another important irony. When he and his peers returned from

exile to Mexico, their writing tended to become a secondary, although still important endeavor as they accepted positions as diplomats, government ministers, and bureaucrats. These positions enabled them to articulate their collective vision of the role of art and politics. All three of these Ateneo writers, like many of their less famous contemporaries, filled important posts in revolutionary government administrations. Vasconcelos, before running for the presidency against Plutarco Elías Calles in 1929, had filled the influential post of Secretary of Education under president Alvaro Obregón. Guzmán served as Counselor to the Ministry of War, Secretary of the National University, Director of the National Library, and Colonel of the revolutionary Army before fleeing the country when the revolutionary faction he supported (the Villistas) fell from favor (Robb 408).

Alfonso Reyes, even before he returned from self-imposed exile, had become more than a simple man of letters when he accepted the opportunity to serve as the revolutionary government's diplomatic representative to Spain. Reyes continued to serve in the Mexican diplomatic corps until 1940 when the board of directors of the newly founded Colegio de México appointed him as its director. By the forties, Reyes had, as a

consequence of these bureaucratic connections, amassed an extraordinary amount of prestige, of cultural capital. In their history of Colegio de México, Clara E. Lida and José Antonio Matesanz point to the value of this capital when they credit much of the success of Colegio de México to the fact that its "prestigious president" was none other than Reyes.

Lida and Matesanz describe Reyes's enormous influence in almost Bourdieuan terms:

The presidency of an institution as sui generis as El Colegio functioned as a stimulus for his personal work, for from it Reyes could create for himself a cultural and literary environment that existed nowhere else in Mexico.

Surrounding himself with such an excellent group of intellectuals obligated him to a certain degree to outdo himself and, to a certain degree also, created for his texts a select audience that could act at once as reader and critic, and that forced him to give of all his talent. Consequently, he corroborated the old truism that in Mexico the actor must not only know how to act, but also must turn himself into an entrepreneur and build his own theatre. (El Colegio 61)

La presidencia de una institución tan sui generis como El Colegio debió funcionar como un estímulo para su obra personal, pues desde ella Reyes pudo crear para sí un ambiente cultural y literario que no existía en otro lugar de México. Al rodearse de un grupo tan excelente de intelectuales, en cierta forma se obligaba a superarse a sí mismo y, en cierta forma también, creaba para sus textos un público selecto que podía actuar a la vez como lector y como crítico, y que lo forzaba a dar lo máximo de su talento. Corroboró así la vieja verdad de que en México el actor no sólo debe saber actuar, sino que tiene que convertirse en empresario y construir su propio teatro.

If Colegio serves as an example of Reyes's relationships with the institutions he helped found and direct, Lida and Matesanz make it clear that these formed the groundwork for the establishment of a powerful cultural empire that had the power to reproduce and discipline its readers. The image of Reyes that emerges from their analysis is not dissimilar from that of Ricardo Salazar's photograph: a man who saw his own reflection mirrored in the institutions he built and the readers he cultivated.

This genealogy of Reyes's influence is important to an analysis of Los Presentes because Arreola's ability to start a publishing venture was a direct consequence of his association with one of Reyes's pet projects: the Fondo de Cultura Económica. The history of Reyes's administration of cultural institutions that recruited and disciplined readers as subjects of a new post-revolutionary Mexico intersects my analysis of Los Presentes precisely because Juan José Arreola was, in a real sense, a product of and subsequent player in the Mexican cultural establishment. As such, the history of Reyes's patronage of institutions such as Fondo de Cultura Económica parallels the history of the development of twentieth-century professional writing in Mexico.

The history of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, the dominant institutional patron of letters, not only at midcentury but in subsequent decades as well, is closely tied to one of Reyes's most successful endeavors, Colegio de México. Colegio de México, a publishing house and cultural think-tank, dates to the early twenties when Reyes's fellow Ateneísta, José Vasconcelos, served as Secretary of Education to President Alvaro Obregón.⁵ In 1940, the Fondo de Cultura Económica merged with Colegio de México and, in doing so, consolidated the already

considerable influence of Reyes, other Ateneístas, and their protegees (Lida and Matesanz 32). The new quasi-governmental entity situated itself securely within the Mexican political and cultural field:

The network was extensive: it included certain key sectors of the government, such as the Secretariat of the Interior and Public Credit, the [National] Bank of Mexico and the Secretariat of Public Education, the most important institutions of high culture in the country, such as the National University and the Polytechnic Institute; and a vigorous publishing concern, the Fondo de Cultura Económica--a twin institution, as Reyes had called it a few months before--, that for most of two decades would maintain a close relationship with El Colegio de México. (Lida and Matesanz 32-33)

La red era amplia: abarcaba ciertos sectores del gobierno, como la Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, el Banco de México y la Secretaría de Educación Pública; las instituciones de cultura superior más importantes del país, como la Universidad

Nacional y el Instituto Politécnico; y una pujante empresa editorial, el Fondo de Cultura Económica--institución gemela, como la había llamado Reyes pocos meses antes--, que a lo largo de dos décadas mantendría una estrecha relación con El Colegio de México.

As a consequence of Alfonso Reyes's dominant position within this network and his capacity to produce disciplined readers, he wielded extraordinary power and influence over Mexican culture. Lida and Matesanz also highlight an important fact about the Mexican culture industry of Reyes's time. Institutions like Fondo de Cultura Económica and Colegio de México relied on an extraordinary level of patronage from post-revolutionary government administrations and operated as quasi-state bureaucracies.

Because of these institutions' close relationship to the state, Reyes served dual separate but related functions. In the time span that followed his self-imposed exile, he had metamorphosed from political diplomat to cultural ambassador. Reyes's unique position in both the cultural and political fields permitted an articulation between official rhetoric and the project of elaborating a new, distinctly Mexican national-cultural identity. Alfonso Reyes's integral involvement in the

principal cultural institutions of the period signals, not only his unique charisma and bureaucratic talent, but the strategic ideological positions he took as well. Reyes managed to successfully link a modernist cultural vision of Mexico with the goals of post-revolutionary political ideology in an institutional framework, a position that enabled him to produce and discipline readership.

While Reyes and his fellow Ateneístas's bourgeois predilections may not have been entirely compatible with the more socially progressive and radical elements of the revolution (the dissolution of the Ateneo group after the fall of Madero attests to this fundamental incongruity between the two terms), their disdain for the dominant philosophical mode of the Porfirio Díaz era, positivism, and their enthusiasm for conjecturing a new, more utopian, modern Mexico made possible a practical alliance. This alliance provided a framework for the articulation of the post-revolutionary ideology of mestizaje and Mexican national-cultural identity that younger Los Presentes writers confronted.

The irony, of course, is that Los Presentes owes its existence to the very hierarchy that its first writers, Fuentes, Poniatowska, and Segovia, indirectly critique. In the following section I examine in greater detail the

ideological preconceptions of the institutions whose history I have sketched and offer evidence for my argument that official rhetoric regarding issues of national and artistic identity found a corollary in the institutional culture that Reyes established. I further argue that the Mexican literary establishment helped enact a synthesis of the supposedly essential and unique characteristics of Mexican indigenous and colonial culture with its Spanish analogues. I conclude with a brief analysis of the reaction of several Los Presentes writers and their contemporaries to show that, in fact, the campaign consisted of updating Mexican letters by bringing it more closely in line with Western European modernism.

Evangelical Humanism and the Modern Conquest of Mexico

At the same time that political revolutionaries like Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa contested the real social and economic inequalities inherent in the Porfiriato, the more bookish revolutionaries of the Ateneo were coming to terms with a different and only peripherally related crisis. By the beginning of the twentieth-century there was a growing sense that empiricism, the Enlightenment's philosophical legacy, and positivism, its epistemological corollary, had failed

Western intellectuals in general and Mexican thinkers in particular. Barbara Bockus Aponte describes Reyes's rejection of nineteenth-century positivism as a consequence of the Porifirato's neglect of the study of the humanities. She quotes (and translates) Reyes's complaints about the subordinate status of humanistic endeavors in her book Alfonso Reyes and Spain:

It became the fashion, precisely among the middle class for whom that educational system had been conceived, to consider that there was a schism between the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical was a lie, a falsehood, and belonged to the metaphysical era, if not to the theological one. The practical was reality, the true truth. All of it an expression of a reaction against culture, of a love for the meanest ignorance, that which refuses to recognize itself and cherishes and delights in itself. When society loses confidence in culture, it retrocedes to barbarity with the swiftness of light. (7)

Reyes declaimed Mexico's pragmatic, positivistic dismissal of "culture" and reliance on purely practical, empirical, and tangible realities. The famed científicos or technocrats who formed the bureaucratic backbone of

the Porfirio Díaz government had, according to Reyes, successfully propagated the notion that humanistic studies deserved subordinate status. For Reyes, the principal epistemological mode of "modern" nineteenth-century Mexican society swiftly propelled the country toward barbarism. To the members of the Ateneo, the violent moments of the revolution after the fall of Madero, whose succession to the presidency of Mexico had been rather bloodless by comparison, must have appeared to be the apocalyptic culmination of positivism's barbarous turn.

Leopoldo Zea, a member of the generation of writers and thinkers who dominated the forties and fifties and who had been educated and trained by the Ateneístas, describes the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century crisis produced by the Díaz regime's reliance on positivist discourse in his now canonical study, El positivismo en México:

Philosophical truths are not absolute truths in the eternal sense, they are, rather, absolute in the circumstantial sense, that is to say, they are valuable in an absolute form to a given circumstance. The problems that man proposes have their origin in his circumstance; therefore, let his solutions be circumstantial

as well. Philosophical truths appear contradictory because one wants these truths, the solutions of a given historical circumstance, to be valid for all circumstances that present themselves. The pretension of making circumstantial truths into eternal truths engenders contradictions. (21)

Las verdades de la filosofía no son verdades absolutas en el sentido de eternas, sino absolutas en un sentido circunstancial, es decir, que valen en forma absoluta para un circunstancia dada. Los problemas que se plantea el hombre, son problemas que tienen su origen en su circunstancia; de aquí que sus soluciones sean también circunstanciales. Las verdades de la filosofía aparecen como contradictorias porque se quiere que las verdades, las soluciones de una determinada circunstancia histórica, valgan para todas las circunstancias que se presenten. La pretensión de hacer de una verdad circunstancial una verdad eterna da lugar a las contradicciones.

Zea describes, with his sometimes difficult and periphrastic reasoning, positivism's failure to produce

transcendent meaning. The chief problem for Zea, Reyes, and other modern Mexican writers and thinkers resided in the fact that positivistic philosophical discourse could only portray contingent, local, and often apparently contradictory positions. Any attempt to deduce universal truth using positivistic methods must, according to Zea's formulation, end in failure. Positivism's failure, however, to provide transcendence did not mean, for the Ateneístas, that universal, transcendent truth remained unattainable or that its search was inherently fruitless.

Martín Luis Guzmán, fellow Ateneísta and writer, characterizes the solution to the dilemma in his essay, "Alfonso Reyes y las letras mexicanas." Guzmán's essay functions as a brief manifesto of the goals and methods of the Ateneo group in general and Alfonso Reyes in particular. Guzmán indicates that one of the most salient characteristics of the Ateneo group was its insistence on "seriousness," on the "notion that things should be known firsthand. This lead them to consider philosophy, art and letters as more than a "mere distraction." They came to represent the elements of a "profession like any other" (76).

Guzmán employs a subtle strategy to recuperate the study of literature and the arts in early twentieth-century Mexican society. His tactic incorporates a rejection of

bourgeois values and, paradoxically enough, the professionalization of writing and criticism. Guzmán rejects romantic notions of the artist and critic whose texts were "noble escapes" and "distractions," leisure activities reserved for the upper classes. Instead, Guzmán proposes to integrate writers into the professional network of an incipient Mexican industrial capitalism. For Guzmán, and presumably the other Ateneístas, literary and critical texts should now be considered the product of "serious" labor like other products of an industrial society, rather than the natural and inevitable communication of the artistic or sensitive (romantic) spirit.

One of the principal objectives of this "laborious" and "serious" work was to define Mexico as a nation and, consequently, the "Mexican" as its natural subject. Guzmán, like many of his contemporaries (and much of twentieth-century Mexican criticism in general) complained about the apparent lack of studies dedicated to Mexican culture and subjectivity. In a review of the novel Christine (1917) by Alice Cholmondely, he writes, "El mexicano [es] un ser no definido hasta ahora, ni ante los extranjeros ni ante sí mismo. . . ." (88). The Ateneo generation began to examine, to an unprecedented degree, the origins and essence of "la mexicanidad." Alfonso

Reyes's own Visión de Anáhuac exemplifies this critical emphasis. Although Reyes's early essay located the privileged site of Mexican subjectivity in the country's unique geography (a strategy reminiscent of the romantics), he, along with other Ateneístas and their successors, Leopoldo Zea, Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz for example, began to focus also on Mexico's relationship to European culture.⁶

Alfonso Reyes championed western cultural modernity with a positively evangelical zeal. In 1955, one year after the foundation of Los Presentes and the publication of Parentalia, Venezuelan critic, Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, wrote an article advocating Reyes's strategy for the second issue of La Revista Mexicana de Literatura. Two Los Presentes writers, Carlos Fuentes and Emmanuel Carballo had founded the journal, dedicated to the promotion of both Mexican and "universal" culture, shortly after Arreola published their first books in 1954.⁷ The journal often carried heated debates about the state of Mexican culture and the need to professionalize writing (which I discuss more fully in chapter four). Although Gutiérrez Girardot was not Mexican, his interest in the humanism of Reyes and the flourishing cosmopolitanism of the mid-fifties continued after the publication of "Notas sobre la imagen de

América en Alfonso Reyes." Gutiérrez Girardot examined Reyes's contributions from the point of view, not of a Mexican, but of a Latin American.⁸

Gutiérrez Girardot does not mince words when describing Reyes's activities. He suggests that Reyes, who fought "to incorporate the idea of America into the system of universal history" employed a discursive strategy that paralleled the tactics of the Spanish conquistadors ("Notas" 112). Reyes, according to Gutiérrez Girardot, approached the issues of national identity, mestizaje and "la mexicanidad" from a soteriological perspective. He writes, "[Reyes's] great preoccupation is to save mankind, and, thereby, to save culture" ("Notas" 117). Gutiérrez Girardot calls this tactic "missionary humanism" (humanismo misional), a "Renaissance" tactic, "in its . . . insistence on the international, universality, cosmopolitanism in the last instance" and "conspicuous preoccupation for mankind" ("Notas" 117). Reyes's distrust and disillusionment with philosophical approaches that neglect "universal" truths and that insulate Mexico from international currents lead him in two paradoxical directions.

On the one hand, Reyes embraced modern esthetic and philosophical projects that privileged the artist and his (and less often her) capacity to generate authentic

experience in the face of "technical progress" (the self-sustaining goal of empiricism) and the hegemony of capitalism in early twentieth-century western society. He also moved the privileged site of transcendent, universal truth and experience from nature (as per the romantic ideal) to the metropolis. On the other hand, Reyes's adoption of an expeditionary, evangelical discourse pointed squarely back toward the renaissance and Mexico's colonial past. Reyes's project was, at once, profoundly humanistic and deeply metaphysical. Gutiérrez Girardot, in 1955, sensed the unsettling problems that this contradictory stance produced. He wrote, "now is not the moment to ask if the humanism of the renaissance--and that of Reyes as well--is not, rather a Godless, mutilated anthropocentrism ("Notas" 117).

Gutiérrez Girardot does not elaborate as to why 1955 was not the moment to question the premises of Reyes's humanistic colonialism, but the circumstances of the fledgling journal that published his remarks points toward the answer. In 1955 the Revista Mexicana de Literatura was a young journal whose probable life expectancy, given the fate of the majority of Latin American journals dedicated to the arts, could have been measured in months rather than years. In dedicating the

second issue to Reyes, the young writers who directed the journal were performing a tactically astute maneuver, the same maneuver that some of them had performed the year before with *Los Presentes*. By linking their new journal to Reyes, they allied themselves with a consecrated writer who held a dominant position in the cultural field. Such an alliance, in Bourdieudian terms, certainly increased the cultural capital of the new journal. In dedicating the issue to Reyes, the Revista Mexicana de Literatura paradoxically defined itself in symbolic terms as a journal led by a fresh and potentially iconoclastic group of writers and, at the same time, as a cultural instrument closely in tune with and respectful of the "consecrated values" of the preceding generation.

The two-fold effect of the alliance provided the journal a position of "institutional consecration," to use Bourdieu's term, and simultaneously reinforced Reyes as a dominant figure within that same sector of the field. The consequence of such an alliance however necessarily constrained the critical instincts of the younger writers associated with the journal. Gutiérrez Girardot's telling elision of questions concerning Reyes's politics points to an important consequence of the economy of the field. Sustained criticism of Reyes's reliance on essential, quasi-metaphysical categories cast

in terms of Mexico's Spanish colonial legacy would have to wait. It would have to wait for the same reasons that Los Presentes writers often chose to situate explicit criticism of Mexican society in the more ambiguous terrain of relatively anonymous cityscapes. With the prospect ahead of them of establishing themselves as professional writers, younger Mexican writers at midcentury could little afford to alienate the cultural establishment that defined the parameters of the debate.

The alliance between the Revista Mexicana de Literatura and Reyes constrained Gutiérrez Girardot, in this instance, in his appraisal of a universal, pan-Spanish American humanism. Within the cultural field, new, relatively lesser-known players may amass capital in one of two ways according to Bourdieu. They may either define themselves oppositionally relative to dominant positions in the field or they may perform the more conservative maneuver of forming an alliance with established writers. Bourdieu explains the dynamics of such a maneuver in negative terms when he writes:

When the newcomers are not disposed to enter the cycle of simple reproduction, based on recognition of the "old" by the "young"--homage, celebration, etc.--and recognition of the "young" by the "old"--prefaces, co-

optation, consecration, etc.--but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without the help of external changes.

(The Field 57)

While I argue that in Los Presentes and La Revista Mexicana de Literatura "newcomers" sought and received "recognition" and "consecration" from the established, the situation in Mexico at midcentury is less polarized than the general model that Bourdieu proposes. Although Fuentes, Poniatowska, Segovia, and their peers in La Revista Mexicana de Literatura such as Gutiérrez Girardot avoided "positions-takings" that directly disputed the "norms" of the establishment, they insinuated more subtle critiques into the interstices opened by the cosmopolitan esthetic they explore in their texts.

In the conclusion of his essay, Gutiérrez Girardot reveals the logic behind an alliance between newcomers and established writers:

With the intellectual at the apex of the social pyramid, directing everything and, as a representative of spiritual solidarity, forming it and transforming it, America can be ready to give the world of the spirit something like a

coup d'etat. She [America] reunites all the elements to bring to pass a great revolution in the cultural, political, and human order of the world. ("Notas" 119)

Con el intelectual en la cima de la pirámide social, todo dirigiéndolo y, como representante de la solidaridad del espíritu, todo modelándolo, transformándolo, América puede estar dispuesta a dar en el mundo del espíritu algo así como un golpe de estado. Reúne ella todos los elementos para llevar a cabo una gran revolución en el orden cultural, político y humano del mundo.

Gutiérrez Girardot demonstrates that, his fears of propagating a "mutilated anthropocentrism" notwithstanding, the Revista Mexicana de la Literatura nevertheless appropriated Reyes's "evangelical humanism" and quasi-colonist discourse. An alliance with Reyes, with the institutionalized positions represented by the Mexican cultural establishment, opened a path to the "apex of the social pyramid." Gutiérrez Girardot deftly articulates both the rhetoric of Rodó's Ariel and the Mexican revolution to envision a new class of philosopher-kings, a group of Mexican intellectuals with

real political power, prepared to re-conquer the colony and transform the world.

The strategy of alliance that the Revista Mexicana de Literatura took in 1955 was prefigured by Los Presentes in 1954 and involved many of the same players.

As I explained in chapter one, Juan José Arreola had strong connections to one of the principal institutions for cultural promotion in midcentury Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica. In his recent autobiography, Arreola describes how, in the late forties, Alfonso Reyes's had befriended him after Arreola had returned to Mexico from a failed theatrical career in Paris. Reyes lent him money and was presumably involved in getting Arreola a job with the Fondo de Cultura Económica (the company was, at the time, directed by Reyes's close associate and fellow board member at the Colegio de México, Daniel Cosío Villegas). It is uncertain at this time how Arreola raised financial capital to start Los Presentes, but the fact that the fifth text in the initial offering was Reyes's first volume of an extensive autobiography hints at the probability of his involvement.⁹

Reyes's interest and involvement seems all the more likely given the peculiar circumstances surrounding the publication of Parentalia (1954). Two versions of the autobiography were published creating some confusion as

to which represented the definitive edition. After Los Presentes, Reyes republished Parentalia in 1958 in a series produced by Fondo de Cultura Económica called "Tezontle." This later, 1958 version, oddly enough, is designated as the "first edition" on the cover page. A short note appeared before the first chapter of the "Tezontle" version with the following information: "The section 'Primeras imágenes,' under the title Parentalia (here expanded and corrected) was published in the Los Presentes collection, Mexico, 1945 (sic), limited edition" (10). This exergue suggests that Reyes considered the 1958 version of the book to be the definitive one. While any autobiography is, in some sense, a work in progress, the Los Presentes version of Parentalia is almost 200-pages shorter than the final "Tezontle" version and apparently needed, in Reyes's opinion, extensive "corrections" and "expansion."

If Reyes's did not consider the 1954 version to be the definitive one, what possible motives could he have had for publishing the shorter, unfinished version in a series of books dedicated to bringing to light unknown or little-known writers? Or, to ask the question from Arreola's perspective, given Alfonso Reyes's exceptional position within the cultural field: why did Arreola choose to publish the first volume of his memoirs

alongside his own work and that of Fuentes, Poniatowska, and Segovia? If the mission of Los Presentes was to open a path for younger writers, aspiring talents who were being checked by the very culture industry that Reyes represented, why publish his autobiography among the initial offerings? The answer to these questions lies in the ambitious project of Parentalia, both as a textual object within the field and as autobiography.

Parentalia is a book of origins, of genealogy. In it, the autobiographical voice imagines the origins of both Reyes (the referential, historical subject) and Mexico. An analysis of the autobiography shows that it effects a not so subtle substitution of Reyes's lineage for that of the nation itself. The text displays the working out of contradictions and tensions inherent in post-revolutionary constructions of national identity and posits Reyes as a prototypical Mexican subject. The autobiographical subject that emerges imagines his conflicted identity as an epic struggle with metaphysical overtones that finds resolution in language.

A Lesser Son of the Word

The version of Alfonso Reyes's Parentalia published by Arreola in 1954 is the first book-length installment of a more extensive, but ultimately unrealized

autobiographical project. Fragments of the text had begun appearing as early as 1948 in some of the most prestigious literary and cultural journals of the period, including Novedades, Cuadernos Americanos, Todo, and Repertorio Americano (Costa Rica).¹⁰ The expanded 1958 version included several new chapters and incorporated the entirety of the first edition as the first of three longer sections and two appendices. Reyes also reworded the epigraphs and dedications in the 1958 version. Reyes's constant tinkering and additions to his autobiography not only signal his desire to fix identity irrevocably in language, but also underscore the corresponding impossibility of such a project.

Contemporary analyses of autobiography hotly debate the status of the autobiographical subject. Paul De Man's often cited essay, "Autobiography as De-facement" and James Olney's Metaphors of the Self (1972) represent two different contemporary approaches to the problem. These two conceptions of autobiography proceed from radically divergent assumptions about the nature of subjectivity. Olney produces a description of autobiography rooted in high-modernist esthetics that closely resembles the implicit premise of Parentalia. As a theorist of autobiography who proceeds from many of the general assumptions about language that also informed

Parentalia, Olney helps underscore premises that Reyes the writer and artist never explicitly outlined. De Man, on the other hand, generates a post-structural critique of autobiographical projects such as Reyes's. By reading Parentalia through the optic of De Man's critique of high-modernist notions of the function of autobiography, I underscore the profound differences between Reyes's confident appraisal of the power of language to ameliorate cultural tensions and fix identity, and the other Los Presentes writers' more cautious reappraisals of Mexican subjectivity. I take both approaches to autobiography, not at their word, but as descriptions of self-reflexive writing that, taken in contrast, underscore the movement from modern to post-modern understandings of subjectivity: a movement that was also beginning to be played out in midcentury Mexico in Los Presentes.¹¹

Reyes, while he never explicitly described a theory of autobiography, operates roughly within the parameters that Olney describes. In Metaphors of the Self, Olney examines several autobiographical texts from a new critical perspective with a special interest in the figurative nature of language and the fact that the "self" is never a complete entity, but always in the process of "becoming" (6). While Olney recognizes the

inherently slippery nature of tropic discourse and the difficulties inherent in postulating a complete subject, he also holds to the assumption that these problems are mitigated because,

there is a oneness of the self, an integrity or internal harmony that holds together the multiplicity and continual transformations of being. . . . In every individual, to the degree that he is individual, the whole principle and essence of the Logos is wholly present, so that in his integrity the whole harmony of the universe is entirely and, as it were, uniquely present or existent. (6)

Olney proceeds from a paradoxical assumption in which the writing subject integrates itself, overcomes "the continual transformations of being," through the use of figurative language. Olney's formulation resonates with spiritual and quasi-mystical overtones, a fact highlighted by his evocation of the "Logos" as the ontological origin of being. (Reyes also relies on the notion of "Logos" to produce a unified representation of the self.) For Olney, linguistic tropes represent the tensions and contradictions implicit in identity and produce, for readers, the experience of a unified self.

Olney's ideas about language, the self, and autobiography find their antecedents in high-modern esthetics, in the same cultural context that informs Reyes's autobiography. Art Berman, a critic who studies the history of modernism, characterizes the general assumptions about language that inform Olney's work. Berman describes, in his book A Preface to Modernism, how modern art, from painting to text, proceeds from the assumption that the work as object "gives structure to the world, since the world itself cannot give structure to the works" (61). In this view of the function of art and its relationship to both the world and the artist, an autobiographical text correlates the various and contradictory threads of experience, "the multiplicity and continual transformations of being," into a unified whole. Olney recapitulates these assumptions when he describes autobiography as a textual object that permits the artist (the autobiographer, or writing subject) to fix the essential elements of identity through a representation of ironic tensions.

De Man, on the other hand, deems the question of whether or not subjectivity can be unproblematically represented through language as fundamentally unanswerable, and even uninteresting. He suggests that autobiography is a "whirligig," a linguistic paradox in

which the referential subject (the autobiographer) and discursive subject (the protagonist) continually flicker back and forth between perpetually liminal potentials: "The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution" (921). For De Man, the rhetorical trope of prosopopeia rather than metaphor best describes the way that autobiography operates to construct a public "face" for the subject in language (926).

De Man's conception of autobiography, that it constructs a discursive position or "face" for the subject, permits a reformulation of questions about the presence of Parentalia in an editorial launched to help young writers. Reyes's autobiography may be seen as a glossary of the techniques he employed to construct a public identity as well as a record of the ideological pressures that determined the field in which these attempts took place. In Bourdieuan terms, Reyes's occupied a position of institutionalized consecration within the literary-cultural field. Reyes's dominant position in the field depended not only on the institutions he helped establish, but the symbolic capital he secured as a "unique" and "charismatic" genius

who appeared to function autonomously of the Mexican cultural establishment. Parentalia demonstrates this strategy from two perspectives: as both an autobiographical project and as a textual object within the field.

Parentalia is a an analeptic autobiography that refers to its referential subject only obliquely. The 1954 version of the text, as its title suggests, functions as an elaborate genealogy. The sections that Reyes included in the 1958 version expand on his family's history, but never quite approach the referential subject himself. The book underscores Reyes's genealogy rather than his life.¹² Reyes divides the book into chapters that describe, in turn, his paternal and maternal lineage. Parentalia bears a remarkable resemblance to the opening chapters of the synoptic gospels of Christian tradition and other epic texts of western culture that begin by establishing the royal lineage of their subjects.

Curiously though, the autobiographical voice in Reyes's book never meets the expectations raised in the dedication and opening chapter. While the dedication promises a "book of Reyes's memories," Parentalia forces readers to connect Reyes's genealogical origins with his public personae. It is as if Reyes the autobiographer

assumes a complete familiarity on the part of his readers with his public life. Reyes's public "face," reflected in and represented through not only his critical monographs and literary texts, but the cultural institutions he built, is endowed with an epic history in Parentalia.

Both editions of the book bear a dedication to Reyes's mother with the following confession:

You asked me many times for a book of remembrance; I began it many times, but emotion did not permit me. With effort I now take up the work, which I have divided in various volumes. And if I now manage to finish it-- even though my life story, like all, may seem like something tinged with legend--, this series of volumes will be for you. (9-10)

Muchas veces me pediste un libro de recuerdos; muchas veces lo comencé, pero la emoción no me dejaba. Con esfuerzo me pongo a la obra, que se me ha partido en varios libros. Y si, ahora logro darle término--aunque mi historia, como todas, aparezca algo sollamada de leyenda--, esta serie de volúmenes será para ti.

Parentalia represents, according to Reyes, the prologue of a grand autobiographical project that never saw completion. This is not entirely a loss if, as De Man suggests, all texts that bear the author's name on the title page are, in some sense, autobiographical.

Although Reyes the referential subject never managed to finish his textual self-portrait, he did establish his parentage at various levels in Parentalia, a lineage that at once evidences the apparent symbolic capital to which he claimed inheritance, and establishes his unique credentials as godfather of Mexican letters.

Reyes was, by his own declaration, a product of both earthly and heavenly parents. He describes his metaphysical lineage with a religious metaphor. If, he says, God the Son, the eternal Logos, arose from a sacred conversation, a sacra conversazione between the Father and the Holy Spirit, he himself must admit to only slightly more humble origins (14).

For a creature as humble as he of whom we are going to speak one does not have to go back so far [as the origin of God the Son]. The Titans who fathered the human race are more than enough: Epimetheus the fool, who outdid himself as a fool, and his clever brother Prometheus

who, as all recall, outdid himself at being clever. (14)

Para la criatura tan humilde de que vamos a hablar no habrá que remontarnos mucho. Bastan y sobran los titanes que han apadrinado a la raza humana; el tonto Epimeteo, que se pasaba de tonto, y su hermano listo de Prometeo, que se pasó de listo como todos recuerdan.

Reyes traces his symbolic lineage to the Greek gods Epimetheus and Prometheus, the two brothers who represented the fundamental dichotomies of afterthought and forethought. Clever Prometheus saw the future and brought light and knowledge to humanity while his foolish brother Epimetheus contributed to humanity's fall. Reyes the discursive subject establishes himself as the product of a dialogue between remembrance and prophecy, foolishness and cleverness, and between backward-looking conservatism rooted in the past and the forward-looking rhetoric of progress predicated on an infinite faith in the future. Reyes the autobiographer, in elaborating this figurative lineage, represents himself as a product of ironic tension.

The metaphysical tension that characterizes the identity of Reyes the discursive subject ultimately

harmonizes a more materially-oriented conflict: the anxiety of mestizaje, or what Néstor García Canclini would call "hybridization," the impulse to imagine Latin American culture as a "multitemporal heterogeneity" (Culturas híbridas 15). Reyes, after tracing the epic filiations of his being to Greek mythology and the relative "purity" of the dualities they represent, bemoans the "inattentive demiurge" who bestowed upon him a more confused ethnic and racial heritage:

O God!, o gods! Is such a confusion of atavisms possible? As if it were not already enough that this pagan of the Mediterranean fondly feels suddenly Asiatic, that to him should be added condiments of Andalucian and Manchegan Reyes, and of Navarran Ochoas, the edges and center of Iberia; Spanish and indigenous American substance were thrown together in the crucible, so that there inside Cortés and Cuauhtémoc might continue battling during the black hours of insomnia. . . . (15)

¡Oh Dios, oh dioses! ¿Tanta revoltura de atavismos será posible? Como si no fuera ya bastante que este pagano del Mediterráneo por afición se sienta asiático de repente, se le

añadieron condimentos de Reyes andaluces y manchegos, y de Ochoas navarros, extremos y centro de Iberia; se arrojaron juntas en el crisol la sustancia hispánica y la indígena americana, para que allí adentro se sigan librando batallas Cortés y Cuauhtémoc, a la hora negra del insomnio. . . .

Reyes finds in these conflicts, both metaphysical and material, the possibility of harmonious resolution. For Reyes, the call to write signifies more than a simple vocation. Anticipating Olney's theory of autobiography, Reyes discovers in the process of writing "the longed for unity" that "appears to me to be found in the word" (17).

Reyes the discursive subject finds salvation in the Word, the Logos. Not content to leave unspoken the multitude of associations that his metaphor evokes, he ends the first chapter of Parentalia with the following query:

Does one understand what the study of letters has been for me? A double salvation through the word: first, in the agglutination of lineages; second in the matrix of the self; in related types and particular difference. And if we are to record one day on the mausoleum the way in which someone would remember us,

"Here lies--let it say on my tomb-- a lesser son of the Word. (Reyes's emphasis 19)

¿Se entiende lo que ha podido ser para mi el estudio de las letras? Doble redención del verbo: primero, en la aglutinación de las sangres; segundo, en el molde de la persona: en el género próximo y en la diferencia particular. Y se hemos de salvar algún día el arco de la muerte en forma que alguien quiera evocarnos, Aquí yace--digan en mi tumba--un hijo menor de la Palabra.

For Reyes the autobiographer, writing and studying literature is a salvific act. He refers to the self as a matrix, a womb, that resolves difference through signification, representation. The autobiographical voice of Parentalia sees difference as problematic and ultimately chimerical. The text, as a work of art, attempts to produce the experience of unity for both the reading and writing subject by representing difference as an amalgam of ironic tension under which resides an unproblematic, essential identity.

Reyes titles this first chapter, "Etogenia," or the origins of ethos. In the 1958 version of the book he tones this down to the more prosaic, "raíces": "roots" or

"origins." The grandiloquent ontological declarations in this chapter are as close as the text ever comes to speaking directly of Reyes the referential subject, and the autobiographical voice devotes the rest of Parentalia to elaborating the transcendent history of his specific ancestors. The origins of the autobiographical subject of the book double as a metaphor for the imagined origins of post-revolutionary Mexico. The voice of Parentalia envisions a hybrid identity, the confluence and "agglutination" of many lineages, and resolves subsequent disparities by placing them side by side within the text. The vision of language implicit in Parentalia privileges language ("Logos") in the extreme. For the autobiographical subject of the book, the text itself generates and fixes identity and unites difference into a seamless whole.

By implication, the narrator of Parentalia seems to suggest that contradictions in post-revolutionary constructions of identity may be resolved through access to an imagined notion of universal western culture. The narrative presence in the text resolves the particularities of Mexican identity by articulating subjectivity in western terms. In Parentalia, he literally grafts Mexican identity onto the larger tree (the master narrative) of western culture.

Reyes's effects this transplantation of Mexican identity through a language in which contradictions are mystically resolved in the principle of the "Logos." From a post-structuralist perspective, De Man's for example, the illusion of seamless unity signals the operation of ideology. The "self-reflexive moment," when Reyes the writer and Reyes the autobiographical subject meet in an imagined totality, is constrained by the literary-cultural field. The unstated rules of the game that permit both subjects to meet face to face, the ideological ground or topography on which they encounter each other, privileges one "lineage" over another. The privileged term throughout Parentalia, is Reyes's Spanish, western European origins.

In the autobiography, Reyes's paternal lineage comes first, literally and figuratively. His "darker" ("morena") roots (those of his mother) are subsumed by the "blond and blue eyed" ("rubio y zarco") blood of his father (16). The autobiographical voice claims to be a man of the people, a "typical" American: "Thank Heavens! I am a man of the people: and like a good American, lacking patrimonial lineage, I am a universal inheritor" (25). But this is a partial contradiction. An elegy of Reyes's paternal family and his father in particular dominates.

Alfonso Reyes's illustrious father, Bernardo Reyes, served as general under Porfirio Díaz in the nineteenth-century and, in Parentalia, he appears throughout as a royal figure. The autobiographical voice calls him the "probable successor to the Porfirian throne" (23). He also recalls an anecdote from childhood when his father reprimanded him for displaying unseemly pride in the paternal family's coat of arms. The image of Reyes that emerges is of a prince who has lost his earthly throne, but who gains a spiritual one instead. Reyes the successor to the "Porfirian throne" instead becomes the intellectual, spiritual sovereign of modern Mexico unified by an ideological construct: mestizaje.

Reyes articulates the issue of hybridization or mestizaje in terms that provide a measure of transcendence and that reveal one of the important threads of post-revolutionary Mexico's imagined national identity. Mexico was, for Reyes, a modern tower of Babel, a confusion of races, ethnicities, and languages.

To repair this chaotic condition, Reyes interjects a new (or resurrects an old) term, the "Logos":

a term that, in the Greek, embraces language and the spirit, and in which the Christian had only to carry the emphasis to the final and most sublime phase . . . And luckily--

considering that the Logos is as transcendental as the Sóter or Savior--I was given such a simple means, so material and so attainable by the mouth and the hand as is the saying and stringing together of words with the breath or the pen. (18, ellipsis in original)

término que en que el griego resumía el habla y el espíritu, y en que ya el cristiano sólo tuvo que cargar el énfasis sobre la fase final y más sublime . . . Y fue una suerte que, para objeto tan transcendental--el Logos es el Sóter, el Salvador--se me hubiera proporcionado un recurso tan sencillito, tan material y tan al alcance de la boca y la mano, como lo es el decir y el ensartar palabras con el aliento o con la pluma.

In this passage, the narrating voice of Parentalia outlines a theory of language in which the process of writing and speaking, of signifying, leads to salvation.

Readers are left with the image of Reyes's taking up the pen, as it were, and finding absolute transcendence.

Reyes finds, in the strategy of the medieval Scholastics, the hybridization of Platonic and Augustinian thought, a model for modern Mexico's salvation. The

autobiographical voice lays claim to a uniquely inventive language that transparently rectifies the issues of mestizaje by coupling them with a universal western cultural heritage. In Reyes's system of ontological privilege, first suggested in Visión de Anáhuac, Cortés finally wins and miraculously mitigates the problematic legacy of colonialism.

Parentalia comes full circle and, just as Visión de Anáhuac prepares the ideological ground upon which a modern conception of mestizaje may rest, the autobiography sets the stage on which Reyes the referential or historical subject may act. The role it assigns to "the lesser son of the Word" allows him to act as priest, missionary, and savior. It is here that the twin functions of Parentalia, as both a textual object in the field and an autobiographical project establishing Reyes's position as a subject within the field, meet. Parentalia, as a textual object, seeks to close the circuit of signification regarding Reyes as discursive subject. The metaphor of Reyes's tombstone serves as a metonymy of the autobiography as a whole. Just as an epitaph functions as an apparent punctuation mark that completes the meaning of a proper name, the first chapter of Parentalia serves, as Olney would say, to establish "the whole principle and essence of the Logos" so that in

the imagined "integrity" of Reyes the discursive subject, "the whole harmony of the universe is entirely and, as it were, uniquely present or existent."

The irony of the presence of Parentalia in Los Presentes becomes clear when one reads it next to Arreola's own contribution, the drama La hora de todos. Like the other younger writers who published in Los Presentes, Arreola's texts operates from a radically different premise than Reyes's autobiography. The characters in Arreola's drama have no illusions about the permanence of meaning or the salvific power of language.

On the contrary, language becomes, in Arreola's drama, a fluid medium that both empowers and damns.

Arreola's Forgotten Drama

La hora de todos has, in large measure, escaped critical attention. While the bibliography of criticism and analysis devoted to Arreola's short story collections and one novel, La feria (1962) is extensive, only one major article examines his own contribution to the Los Presentes series. In "Continuity in Evolution: Juan José Arreola as Dramatist," Theda Hertz details the circumstances leading up to the publication of La hora de todos and places the drama in its historical context.¹³

Arreola began studying drama in 1939 with two of Mexico's most influential modern dramatists, Xavier Villaurrutia and Rodolfo Usigli, and spent the next six years of his life acting in many of the important theatre productions now known as "la renovación mexicana" (Washburn 7). Arreola occasionally published short stories in the early forties, but by 1945 he had devoted himself entirely to the theatre and consequently received a scholarship permitting him to travel to France to study acting. From 1945 to 1946, Arreola participated as a repertory actor with Comédie Française and acted in Alexandro Jodorowsky's film, Fando and Lis (Hertz 15). While in Paris, Arreola also came into contact with actor Louis Jouvet and playwright Jean-Louis Barrault (Hertz 15). Jouvet, an associate of Jean Genet, and Barrault,

who collaborated with André Gide on a dramatic adaptation of Kafka's The Trial, gave Arreola the opportunity to witness the radical avant-garde renovation of French theatre in the forties and learn first-hand the dramatic techniques of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Martin Esslin, in his landmark study The Theatre of the Absurd, describes the existentialist origins of the absurdist esthetic and describes the movement in broad terms as an effort to "express the sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational [dramatic] devices and discursive thought" (24). Esslin also draws a subtle distinction between French absurdist and avant-garde theatre describing the former as an attempt to devalue language and the latter as a more "poetic" esthetic that privileges verbal play, word associations, and shocking images (23-24). It is, however, difficult to evaluate Arreola's theatre using Esslin's strict esthetic categories.

In more general terms, one might say that La hora de todos shares with French absurdist drama a cosmopolitan, critical stance toward bourgeois values. Hertz notes a distinctly "Continental orientation" in Arreola's drama and comments on his use of Pirandellian metatheatrical devices (16). These absurdist tendencies

notwithstanding, Hertz also finds many parallels between La hora de todos and the Spanish peninsular religious allegories of the renaissance known as autos sacramentales. These short, one-act plays concentrated, according to Hertz, on the notion of "spiritual authenticity" (16). Arreola's drama, in its insistence on universal conceptions of justice and the "human spirit" demonstrates an essentially metaphysical understanding of language and subjectivity. Although La hora de todos superficially resembles absurdist theatre, its humanist ontological preoccupations seem to situate it in a different category.

Arreola had published a few short stories and essays in two literary journals that he helped found in the thirties, Pan and Eos. By the mid forties, however, Arreola had apparently decided that his principal ambitions lay in an acting career. Unfortunately, his stay in Paris ended abruptly when a mental and physical crisis incapacitated him and left him hospitalized. In his recent autobiography, Arreola recounts some of his experiences in Paris and the precipitous illness that forced his return to Mexico after only a short stay (Memoria y olvido 168-70). Although Arreola describes his impressions of French culture in general terms, in his memoir he focuses more on his recollections of the

Mexican expatriate community in Paris and avoids details of his experiences as an actor in Comédie Française and his exposure to the Theatre of the Absurd.

Arreola returned to Mexico penniless and unemployed (Washburn 13). With the help of friends, he eventually found a position with the Fondo de Cultura Económica composing announcements for the dust jackets of books published by the editorial. While at the Fondo de Cultura Económica, Arreola also met Alfonso Reyes and began a relationship that would culminate in the publication of Parentalia in Los Presentes. Yulan Washburn recounts the episode of their encounter as if it were a scene from a bildungsroman. According to Washburn, the meeting was at once serendipitous, slightly sentimental, but also demonstrated Reyes's awareness of the dynamics of the literary field:

One of the signal events that mark the period for him [Arreola] was his introduction to Alfonso Reyes, a critic, scholar, and short-story writer of vast erudition and world-wide eminence. Reyes's career was slightly past its peak and he was beginning to be dubious of and perhaps even fearful of many of the young talents who were coming to him for patronage and encouragement. Yet he received the

slightly breathless and tousled young Jaliscan [Arreola was born in the Mexican state of Jalisco] with kindness, lectured him about the way he was living, and generously helped him through some of his financial difficulties. His influence helped Arreola acquire a fellowship at the Colegio de México. (15)

Washburn, unfortunately, does not indicate a source for the assertion that Reyes was "past his peak" and "fearful" of the young generation of writers who rose to prominence in the fifties with the help of publishers like Los Presentes. Nevertheless, his comments provide a possible context for the alliance. In Bourdieuan terms, Washburn underscores the fact that Reyes's dominant position in the field depended on other positions, especially the more autonomous ones, rich in "symbolic capital" but poor in "cultural capital." Washburn's comments point to Reyes's actions as player in the field who knew to shore up his prestige through alliances with younger writers.

Reyes's tactics as a player in the field foreshadowed Arreola's strategy of establishing alliances with writers younger than himself. Washburn speculates about Arreola's motives for establishing Los Presentes in a contradictory fashion. In his psychologically-oriented

analysis, Arreola, like Reyes's, is at once altruistic and calculating:

Arreola's good fortune in no way made him forget his resolve to try to open up more favorable literary possibilities for young writers. At the beginning of the nineteen fifties he founded a book series called Los Presentes, wanting to bring before the public the best talents he had discovered, most of whom were quite young. . . . Thus Arreola, who on the surface seemed so impractical and visionary, proved himself to be a clear-eyed prophet who helped open up an almost closed market to aspiring talent. . . . Los Presentes published limited editions which were well designed and distributed in a businesslike way so as to attract reader and buyers. . . . Los Presentes proved that there was a mine of untapped talent in Mexico. Other publishers hastened to capitalize on the unexpected vogue for new writers, and it has subsequently proved eminently fashionable and frequently profitable to publish them. (19-20 emphasis in original).

Washburn paints a picture of Arreola that echoes Lida and Matesanz's description of Reyes. Both players within the

field apparently understood "the old truism that in Mexico the actor must not only know how to act, but also must turn himself into a entrepreneur and build his own theatre."

In 1949, Arreola published the collection of short stories that would set the tone for the rest of his career. Varia invención received rave reviews and, together with Confabulario in 1952, established Arreola's early reputation as a short story writer with a penchant for the fantastic. In 1955, La hora de todos was awarded first prize in the annual competition sponsored by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (one of the many institutions Alfonso Reyes's helped found) but French critics panned the play after a 1963 Paris performance (Hertz 19).

Predicated on a metafictional premise, La hora de todos is a play-within-a-play in which its central character, a successful North American businessman named Harrison Fish confronts his past. Partaking of elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, Fish's antagonist, an eccentric character named Harss, directs a series of introspective vignettes that reveal the businessman's past crimes. In addition to the presence of Harss, the apparent "director" of the drama, Arreola places a large megaphone on stage that, from time to time, fills in

details from Fish's life, adding the "truths" that he refuses to acknowledge. People that Fish murdered, cheated, and robbed in order to achieve his current level of financial success, confront him in a series of dramatic episodes, judging him and forcing him to accept responsibility for his actions. The play ends when an airplane crashes into Fish's office on the seventieth floor of the Empire State Building killing him and destroying his own amoral "empire."

Like Carlos Fuentes's "El que inventó la pólvora," La hora de todos makes no explicit references to Mexico. Arreola sets the play in New York, populates it with North-American characters, and examines apparently North-American social issues such as racism, consumerism, and the myth of modern progress. Many of the scenes demonstrate Fish's manipulation of other people and the unscrupulous decisions he makes in order to acquire wealth and rise to a position of social prominence. The first episode sets the tone of the play, however, and occurs when Harss forces Fish to confront the ghost of an African-American entertainer named Joe "Tap Tap" Smith.

While Smith performs his dance act in one corner of the office, Fish recounts how he and his friends gang-raped a young woman named Alice and subsequently shifted blame for the incident to Smith. The violation occurred

on the outskirts of a small town and in the ensuing scandal, the sheriff and his deputies lynched Smith and incinerated his body. As Fish narrates the episode, Alice screams and the sheriff's deputies taunt and jeer from off-stage. Fish tries to recount the episode in the third person, but under Harss's cross-examination, he reluctantly takes responsibility for the situation and begins to substitute "I" for "they." As the sounds of Smith being beaten and tortured gradually increase to an almost deafening level, the stage lights dim and from the megaphone a disembodied voice reveals one last horrible detail: Fish poured the gasoline and lit the match.

Arreola's play, like many of Fuentes's short stories and Poniatowska's and Segovia's novels, implicitly addresses many of the social and ideological pressures created by Mexico's rapid industrialization, urbanization, and problematic articulation of racial and ethnic issues. While Reyes seems confident in the capacity of language to resolve these tensions, Arreola's drama, like other Los Presentes texts paints a less sanguine picture. Where Reyes sees Mexican national identity transparently resolved in the discourse of mestizaje, the ideal hybridization or synthesis of essential elements, Arreola recasts the issue of racism in North-American terms. While Arreola provides for a

kind of poetic justice when an airplane crash ends Harrison Fish's life, the absurdity of the denouement elides the larger questions of oppression and violence.

This shift, from purely "Mexican" localities to anonymous or archetypal urban locales in the work of Arreola and the other early Los Presentes writers, parallels the uncomfortable silence of Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot. In establishing an alliance with Reyes and profiting from the subsequent advantage of institutional consecration, the younger Los Presentes writers ceded a certain degree of autonomy. While their texts address the contradictions of Mexican modernization at midcentury, they shift the site of their critical encounters with these ideological constraints from Mexico to more anonymous urban locales. The bleak, cosmopolitan cityscapes in their texts and the loss of faith in the power of language to unambiguously mediate the issues of oppression, ethnicity, and social inequality point to an attempt to negotiate the dynamics of the field.

The first five books published by Arreola worked to redefine the nature of literature at midcentury. While their texts often engaged social and historical referents, the vision of modernity that emerged from their writing privileged form over content. If the novels and short stories were somewhat contradictory in

this respect, the reviews and essays that Los Presentes writers published in the mid-fifties are much less ambiguous. In the pages of important literary journals and supplements of the era, these writers struggled to carve out a new definition for novelistic activity. At the same time that they sought to professionalize writing and infuse it with the values of cosmopolitanism, the theory of literature they advanced favored the elision of social problems and commentary. It is to this contradictory position that I turn my attention in chapter four.

Notes

¹ In Visión de Anáhuac Paz describes the geography of the valley in which Mexico City is situated as the product of three civilizations (Aztec, Spanish, and finally, Mexican):

Abarca la desecación del valle desde el año de 1449 hasta el año de 1900. Tres razas han trabajado en ella, y casi tres civilizaciones-- que poco hay de común entre el organismo virreinal y la prodigiosa ficción política que nos dio treinta años de paz augusta. Tres regímenes monárquicos, divididos por paréntesis de anarquía, son aquí ejemplo de cómo crece y se corrige la obra del Estado, ante las mismas amenazas de la naturaleza y la misma tierra que cavar. (5)

² The bibliography of critical work on Alfonso Reyes's writing is daunting. For the best recent summary see James Robb's bibliographical article in the Revista Iberoamericana 57 (1991): 691-736.

³ Concha Meléndez does not identify the source of the photograph that she reproduces in her book Moradas de poesía en Alfonso Reyes (1973), other than attributing it to Ricardo Salazar. It bears mentioning that the Capilla

Alfonsina, or Alfonso Chapel, is itself a cultural institution in Mexico. More than a simple private library, the "Chapel" is a research center and institutional patron of arts and letters, a kind of secular temple over which Reyes, the "patron saint" of Mexican letters presides.

⁴ Alfonso Reyes's father, Bernardo Reyes, a 1909 presidential candidate against Porfirio Díaz was involved in the overthrow of Francisco Madero, a point that Alfonso assiduously avoids when discussing his father in Parentalia.

⁵ The entire history of Colegio de México is too extensive to be related here. Clara E. Lida and José A. Matesanz have written an exhaustive study of the institution in their recent book, El Colegio de México: Una hazaña cultural (1990).

⁶ For a further discussion of the place of geography in Mexican romantic literature see Emmanuel Carballo's Historia de las letras mexicanas en el siglo XIX (1991) and La crítica de la literatura mexicana en el siglo XIX (1987) by Fernando Tola de Habich. Romantic theories of subjectivity typically privilege landscape and geography whereas modernists, such as Proust, Joyce, and, in Mexico, Agustín Yañez locate subjectivity in

notions of the individual (or occasionally national) psyche.

⁷ Emmanuel Carballo's first book of short stories, Gran estorbo la esperanza was published in 1954 as the eighth selection in the Los Presentes series.

⁸ Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot published "La imagen de América en Alfonso Reyes" in 1988, an extension of his original piece in Revista Mexicana de Literatura and a subsequent article with Ingemar Döring of the same title.

Gutiérrez Girardot describes, in the 1988 version, what he sees as the basic elements of Spanish American literary modernity. According Gutiérrez Girardot, these include cosmopolitanism, a recognition of heterogenous ethnicity, and a common Spanish American intellectual project (42). His 1988 analysis of Reyes's contributions, especially with regard to a pan-Latin American humanism, is consistent with his earlier views.

In the later article, however, Girardot removed his assertion that "now is not the time" to effect a critique of Reyes's humanism.

⁹ The initial cost to Arreola would not have been prohibitive. As I show in chapter four, the major cultural journals and newspaper supplements of the era provided free advertising in the form of articles and

reviews such as María Elvira Bermúdez's (quoted earlier in this chapter), and start up costs were probably not too great. It is not clear, for example, that Los Presentes ever had its own office space. Exactly how much the series was worth in 1957 when Pedro F. De Andrea purchased it and the remaining inventory is difficult to say. The De Andrea family is not aware of the existence of a bill of sale. Francisco De Andrea, Pedro's son, indicates that the benefit of the purchase was seen in terms of the prestige it would add to the his father's company as well as the financial profit that arose from residual sales. While the family still holds a small inventory of less popular Los Presentes titles, because of high demand it now owns no complete set of the series.

¹⁰ The first chapter of the first section of the most complete version of Parentalia, the 1958 Tezontle edition, first appeared in Novedades 8.5 (1949) and Cuadernos Americanos 5 and 9 (1952). Chapters one through six of the second section of the Tezontle version appeared in Todo (1948) and Novedades 10.4 (1949). Chapter one of the second section was also published under the title "Evocación paterna: Charlas de la siesta" in the Costa Rican journal Repertorio Americano 9 (1948).

¹¹ Sylvia Molloy, in At Face Value (1991), describes

Spanish American autobiography generally and José Vasconcelos's writing specifically as a metatextual process. She writes, "Spanish American autobiographers fashion themselves according to an image gleaned from other texts. . . ." (199). In the case of Reyes's Parentalia, these other "texts" are (among other things) the histories of his maternal and paternal ancestors. Reyes constructed a vision of himself as the product of mestizaje, and then actively privileged the Spanish/European element of that mix.

¹² In fact, as the title Parentalia suggests, Reyes's book describes his ancestors in detail. However, aside from brief mentions of his childhood, Reyes does not discuss his later professional life. The book may be taken as the introduction to a larger autobiographical project. The various versions and revisions of the text point to this conclusion. Unfortunately, however, the larger project remained largely unfulfilled.

¹³ While the critical bibliography of Arreola's work is extensive, certain key studies stand out. Emmanuel Carballo, Arreola's contemporary, has published several studies of Arreola's short fiction including an entry in his now famous, El cuento mexicano del siglo XX (1964) and an early article in the journal of the Universidad

Nacional Autónoma de México entitled, "Arreola y Rulfo, cuentistas." In both, Carballo sees Arreola as, not only a major player in Mexican letters, but a short story writer of international stature. Theda Hertz, in addition to her article on Arreola's dramas, has written extensively on his prose fiction. Seymour Menton's early article, "Juan José Arreola and the Twentieth-Century Short Story" (1959), focuses on, among other things, Arreola's affinities with Jorge Luis Borges and his role in the development of fantastic esthetic in Latin American literature. For a more extensive treatment of Arreola criticism, see Yulan M. Washburn's book, Juan José Arreola (1983).

Chapter Four:

Emergent Critical Modes: Los Presentes Writers as Critics

In the field of cultural production in Mexico at midcentury, Los Presentes was, by no means, the only game in town. The writers and texts associated with the publishing venture represented a small, but growing segment of literary culture. With their strong ties to the consecrated elite, the access to established literary journals, and the creation of new ones, Los Presentes writers and their favorably inclined critics successfully began to carve out a space in the public sphere. To understand their position within the emergent discursive trend, however, other texts and critical tendencies must be given consideration, especially those with which Los Presentes writers engaged in contentious dialogue. And, while the critical focus of the previous chapters may artificially magnify the profile of Los Presentes writers, their texts represented only a small part of what was published in 1954, and perhaps more importantly, what the reading public consumed. At least two other novels published that year deserve mention.¹ These books, written by authors who, while recognized and admired in their day, have received less critical attention in recent years. Nevertheless, they shed light

on the ideologically charged, esthetic debates of the day. In fact, the two other major novels that circulated in 1954, Tenemos sed by Magdalena Mondragón and La bruma lo vuelve azul by Ramón Rubín, garnered a relatively larger share of the public audience that year than did the texts in *Los Presentes*.²

These two novels are fundamentally different from the work published by Arreola in his new series. *Los Presentes* writers themselves called attention to the differences and one at least, Emmanuel Carballo, went so far as to declare that Tenemos sed was anything but "literature" ("Las letras" 151). To explore more fully the contradictions between the emergent esthetic represented by *Los Presentes* writers and the dominant and more widely read category of novels published in 1954, I first read Mondragón and Rubín's novels as instances of rural, provincially-oriented narratives that conveyed a strong social message. While the apparent themes of both novels are distinct (Tenemos sed has been described as a proletarian novel, an example of social realism, and La bruma lo vuelve azul is a novela indigenista), each shares a similar subtext, a similar political unconscious. With these novels, I attempt to reconstruct some of the traces, in Fredric Jameson's words, of the function of value and desire in the

dominant esthetic discourse at midcentury (Political Unconscious 281-82). The project of revealing the particular utopia or resolution of collective dilemmas at the level of the Symbolic is, according to Jameson:

to detect and to reveal--behind such written traces of the political unconscious as the narrative texts of high or mass culture, but also behind those other symptoms or traces which are opinion, ideology, and even philosophical systems--the outlines of some deeper and vaster narrative movement in which groups of a given collectivity at a certain historical conjuncture anxiously interrogate their fate, and explore it with hope or dread.

("Progress" 147-48)

The fate in question, with regard to Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul, revolves around the issue of the advance of modernity in all its dimensions, political, economic, cultural, and perhaps most importantly, technological, in the context of midcentury Mexico. And the ways Mondragón and Rubin's novels "interrogate" this "fate" with both hope and dread stand in stark contrast to the first novels published by Arreola.

The chapter concludes with a wide ranging examination of midcentury literary criticism that

highlights the controversies engendered by the proximity of emergent and dominant literary trends. The point of critical contact between the two trends often surfaced as a debate over definitions. Rather than directly contesting the opinions presented in the more popular novels written by Mondragón and Rubín, critics in the Los Presentes circle simply denied them the status of real or "true" literature. They elaborated a theory of the novel (or, more precisely, of narrative) that excluded popular, mass-culture texts. And, while the debate was often cast in terms of style, I argue that what was more fundamentally at stake were divergent interrogations of Mexico's encounter with the modern.

The literary criticism and book reviews published by writers associated with Los Presentes illustrate the struggle to articulate cosmopolitanism as the predominant literary esthetic at midcentury. Raymond Williams's triad of emergent, dominant, and residual discourses serves as a useful paradigm to portray the struggle that took place on the pages of midcentury literary journals.

Cosmopolitanism, the emergent esthetic mode of the fifties dominated the literary field in the next decade.

The criticism and reviews of Mondragón and Rubín's novels by Los Presentes writers provide a cross-section of the effort to establish a new dominant discourse.

Mondragón's and Rubín's books are, in a general sense, "national novels." Although they belong to different literary genres (Tenemos sed is a social realist novel and La bruma lo vuelve azul is novela indigenista), both explicitly link issues of identity to the project of nation building. As such, they competed with Los Presentes novels, not just for readers, but also for a position in the cultural field. An analysis of Mondragón's and Rubín's novels brings into sharper relief the midcentury struggle to define a new literary esthetic. The cosmopolitanism esthetic advocated by Los Presentes writers competed to become the dominant discursive mode of the era. As Los Presentes writers consolidated their position through book reviews and literary criticism, they helped establish Arreola's publishing venture as the preeminent institution dedicated to literary cosmopolitanism.

Out With the Old: Past and Present in Tenemos sed

Tenemos sed, set in the rural desert of Northern Mexico and written by a prominent journalist of the period, won an important literary award in 1954, a feat not matched by any of the Los Presentes texts. The leading Mexico City newspaper, El Nacional, presented the "Premio Concurso de Novela" to the author, Magdalena

Mondragón for her manuscript that had circulated widely in 1954. El Nacional later published the novel in early 1956 and included a brief dedication describing its merits and the author's accomplishments. After listing other novels that had been awarded the prize in previous years, the editors of El Nacional added Mondragón's "interesting and suggestive novel" to the "illustrious list" (Tenemos sed 5).

Mondragón's novel deserved recognition because, according to the jury, "through her esteemed pen, national problems parade and are seen from a superior angle: loving one's country through literature" (5). Mondragón won because she reinforced official notions of national identity. The jury added, "the personality of the author of this novel is well known in Mexico and abroad" (5). In fact, Magdalena Mondragón, so celebrated in 1954, has become, in recent years, little more than a footnote in contemporary literary histories. Blanca Galván Romani sought to rectify the dearth of critical attention with a recent book, Magdalena Mondragón: Su vida y su obra (1983). Martha Robles's La sombra fugitiva, a two volume study of women writers in Mexico, also devotes a chapter to Mondragón.³ Without the impetus provided by feminist criticism in the past few

decades, Mondragón may well have dropped entirely from critical view.

While Poniatowska's, Fuentes's, Segovia's, and Arreola's texts avoid facile evocations of rural sentimentality and nationalism, Magdalena Mondragón's Tenemos sed cautiously celebrates midcentury Mexico's rush toward modernity, as well its popular notions of national identity and mestizaje. Where the Los Presentes writers quietly undermined monolithic notions of Mexican subjectivity, the narrator of Tenemos sed describes idealized characters whose identities are transparently rendered in mythic terms. This apparent resolution of fractured identity comes, however, at a cost. Mondragón's narrator depicts an inflexibly hierarchical society in which men and women conform to narrowly structured categories of gender identity. In contradistinction to the novels of the Los Presentes writers, the narrator of Tenemos sed retells the institutional narrative of the revolution with an emphasis on its teleology: the official assurance of a new, modern Mexico purchased with self-sacrifice, unquestioning commitment, and acceptance of the mythology of mestizaje promulgated by post-revolutionary administrations.

Tenemos sed tells the story of the construction of Falcon Dam near the town of Ciudad Guerrero la Vieja on the Río Bravo (named the Río Grande on the United States side of the border). The project, when completed, will inundate Ciudad Guerrero la Vieja and a new town is readied to replace it. The plot begins when a devastating rainfall prematurely floods the river valley and José García, one of the project directors, supervises the rescue efforts. The rest of the novel explores the many difficulties encountered by José and his family as he struggles to complete work on the dam.

The hardships are numerous, but not insurmountable. José García, a kind of Mexican everyman, faces contrary townsfolk, industrial accidents that deplete his work force, the harsh climate of Northern Mexico, and, finally, a diphtheria epidemic that takes the life of his youngest son. The novel's anonymous narrator describes these events from an omniscient perspective, frequently employing indirectly reported speech to provide a totalizing view of the novel's dramatic moments. The narrator seeks to produce a realistic, uncomplicated picture of the characters and events and feigns all-knowing objectivity, employing occasional analepses to develop characters and explain their motivations. This apparently unbiased, documentary account is undermined,

however, by the principal ideological conflict in the novel.

The narrator recognizes, on the one hand, the revolution's failure to provide opportunity and prosperity. These problems are addressed in editorial asides on such issues as immigration to the United States, the Bracero program, poverty, and social discontent. The answer to this apparent breakdown, however, does not lie in rethinking the revolution's teleological discourse or questioning its rigidly fixed categories of identity. On the contrary, the narrator offers the example of the Falcon Dam construction project as a metaphor for the fulfillment of revolutionary promise.

The dam, in Tenemos sed, does much more than provide flood control for the north. It literally "opens the path to civilization" (10). The project brings together a heterogenous group of people from many parts of Mexico who bring with them regional songs, melodies and stories:

They listened to the cries and laughter of children and the singing of the women who brought new melodies to the region. There were songs of the desert, old "corridos" or slow melodies; but one could also hear southern voices or the cheerful tunes of Veracruz. (10)

Escucharon el llanto y la risa de los niños y el cantar de las mujeres, que trajeron nuevas melodías a la región. Eran cantos de desierto, viejos "corridos" o melodías lentas; pero también se dejaba oír la voz sureña o el alegre son "veracruzano."

Indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, and Spanish voices all have a place in the idealized space of the construction camp. This polyglot of songs and customs, rather than marking cultural, ethnic, and racial difference, merge into a celebratory whole about which the narrator exclaims: "all of it together was the voice of Mexico!" (10). The construction site transforms difference into harmony and produces an ideal "mestizaje" capable of building a modern, technologically developed nation.

The unifying activity of the construction project is so powerful that even workers from the United States, a potentially disruptive element, now play a positive role.

The community that arises amid the workers camps comes to see their northern neighbors more clearly and they are, according to the narrator, demystified:

Not all of them [Americans] were tall and muscle bound and working side by side they became brothers, smiling without fatigue, and

needing no more than the language of mutual appreciation to understand one another. They didn't feel like foreigners. And indeed they weren't. (11)

No todos eran altos y fornidos y en el trabajo se hermanaban en el esfuerzo, sonreían sin cansancio y no necesitaban más que el idioma del mejor entendimiento para la comprensión. No los sintieron extraños. Ni ellos tampoco lo fueron.

The community of construction workers that participates in the building project converts itself, through common purpose and the ennobling power of manual labor, into a social utopia where class, ethnic, and even national differences are erased. Readers are encouraged to see the monolithic dam that slowly rises above the barren desertscape as an uncomplicated metaphor of a new, ethnically homogenous and industriously modern Mexico.

One of the principal issues addressed by the narrator is the clash between old and new. Progress, in the novel, comes at the expense of the old. The tension between old and new is represented by the two towns, Old and New Ciudad Guerrero, with the old town resting squarely in the path of progress. Falcon Dam, once

completed, will flood the valley in which the old city lies and so the company in charge of the construction, in conjunction with a benevolent government, builds a new, modern town safely out of the way of danger. Each resident is generously indemnified with a new, modern home and land to farm.

The switch from old to new, however, does not proceed smoothly. Unexpected rainfall forces the evacuation of the old city earlier than had been planned.

This evacuation is represented in epic terms with the protagonist leading an exodus from old to new, from the limitations of pre-industrial, colonial society to the promise of a prosperous future and confidently modern Mexico. The older inhabitants complain bitterly, and yet are given preference because, while they represent the now dead past, "they were also the roots of the present" (26). The move is traumatic, but ultimately salvific and the narrator assures readers that the citizens of Ciudad Guerrero la Vieja will be much better off in the long run:

The [new] homes awaited them. All were empty. . . . They entered the first street, wide and paved. The eyes of the future occupants gazed out in different directions. They had been transplanted from the old and colonial Ciudad

Guerrero in order to grow and multiply in a new, modern zone. (32-33).

Las casas los esperaban. Todas estaban vacías. Entraron en la primera calle, ancha y asfaltada. Los ojos de los futuros moradores, se extendieron en distintas direcciones. Habían sido transplantados de la vieja y colonial Ciudad Guerrero para crecer y fructificar en una zona moderna, nueva.

The townsfolk are literally transplanted, a painful but necessary process if civilization is to advance efficiently. And although the old colonial city must disappear, its inhabitants will have moved into the modern age, a benefit that, for the narrator, surely outweighs the costs.

The men who make such advances possible are described in reverential tones. They are pioneers and missionaries who devote their lives with an evangelical zeal to Mexico's transformation into a modern, ordered, technological society:

They were the company engineers, the men who for five years had fought the desert and raised the dam. Now, within a few days, these men, in the company of their wives, their children, and

their friends, would abandon Nueva Ciudad Guerrero for . . . where? To go to another work site, another place, pioneers of the new civilization conquering one triumph more in the fight to forge a life. (32 ellipses in the original).

Eran los ingenieros de la compañía, los hombres que desde hacía cinco años venían luchando con el desierto y levantando la presa. Ya dentro de pocos días estos hombres en unión de sus mujeres, de sus hijos, de sus amigos, abandonarían Nueva Ciudad Guerrero para ir . . . ¿a dónde? A otro sitio, a otro lugar, pioneros de la nueva civilización, para conquistar un triunfo más en su lucha para forjar la vida.

The pioneering workers who raise the dam represent, for the narrator, a utopian vision of Mexico's future. They are unified and absolutely dedicated to the project. They lack class distinctions and subordinate ethnic difference to harmonious mestizaje. And, most of all, they represent unequivocal "natural" masculinity entirely separate from debilitating, effeminate urban cityscapes.

Where other differences in the novel diminish, gender identity, portrayed in nationalist overtones in a rural context, dominates. The relationship between the protagonist and his wife grounds gender issues in the well-worn narrative of Mexican masculinity. José García is the ideal man: resourceful, dedicated, hard-working, sober, and commanding. Throughout the novel, the narrator employs erotic language to describe his powerfully commanding presence and "gift of authority" (46-47). He is a "miniature God," accustomed to leadership (47). The narrator reports that after leading the inhabitants of the old city from destruction to salvation, a kind of modern exodus, "his strength swelled and his entire presence filled the air that his body displaced" (47). José García's presence, the narrator reverently states, charges and pervades everything around him ("José lo ocupaba todo") (47). It also makes clear that his vigorous nature fills the vacuum inherent in a rural environment. José García's self-awareness is intimately linked to the "virgin" territory that he comes to dominate. Leaving the uncharted expanses of Northern Mexico for the comforts of the city would be tantamount to castration.

While the narrator describes José as absolutely masculine, ranging widely and freely in his crusade to

dominate the virgin north, his wife, Juana, remains confined to interior, domestic spaces. José speaks with authority, but Juana has little if any voice in the novel. After a particularly hard day at work at the construction site, José returns home to sit beside his wife who:

contemplated him with those eyes that had the same quality as those of a cow: large, black, and sweet. In her eyes there was neither curiosity, nor irritation, nor pain. They were big, black, and sweet. Nothing more. (41)

lo contempló con aquellos ojos que tenían la misma calidad de los de las vacas; grandes, negros, y dulces. En sus ojos no había curiosidad ni irritación ni pena. Eran grandes, negros y dulces. Solamente eso.

Juana does not ask questions, complain about her circumstances, or doubt her husband's authority. Deferential and submissive, Juana represents as extreme a model of femininity as her husband's masculinity. According to the logic of the novel, Mexico's future depends on these rigidly defined gender roles.

The novel ends triumphantly. The protagonist and his family move on to other construction projects and the

inhabitants of Ciudad Guerrero la Nueva begin a new life of prosperity and hope. While the floods caused by Falcon dam have washed away the old city, and metaphorically, Mexico's colonial past, the novel ends with a utopian vision of the country's hopeful future. According to the logic of the novel, this idealistic realization of revolutionary promise is predicated on the model of subjectivity embodied in its protagonist. José García's commanding sense of self allows him to triumph over all obstacles, natural and ideological. He is untroubled by questions of ethnicity and mestizaje, questions that, in the novel, lose significance in the wild north. He continues to preside over a construction camp in which men from all of Mexico's ethnic and linguistic minorities work together in harmonious collaboration. He remains distant from Mexico City and its ideological battles over questions of national identity. Guided instead by an uncomplicated vision of modernity, José García and his men function as technological pioneers who, more than urban politicians and intellectuals, finish the revolutionary work of the generation that preceded them.

The Problem of Paternity

La bruma lo vuelve azul by Ramón Rubín is the other major novel written in 1954. Fashioned as a bildungsroman, the novel tells the story of Kanamayé, a Huichol Indian boy who becomes a murderer and thief. Critics and writers associated with Los Presentes criticized the novel for offering a social message. Jean-François Lyotard's definition of the bildungsroman as a genre helps underscore the position of La bruma lo vuelve azul within the dominant esthetic that younger critics contested:

Popular stories themselves recount what could be called positive or negative apprenticeships (Bildungen): in other words, the successes or failures greeting the hero's undertakings. These successes or failures either bestow legitimacy upon social institutions (the function of myths), or represent positive or negative models (the successful or unsuccessful hero) of integration into established institutions (legends and tales). Thus the narratives allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed

or can be performed within it. (Postmodern 19-20)

The protagonist of La bruma lo vuelve azul represents, in the novel, a particularly negative model of subjectivity.

I read his failure as a cautionary tale of the dangers associated with the "decentered subject." This assessment helps distinguish Rubín's novel from the narratives of Los Presentes writers examined in previous chapters. While Los Presentes writers were exploring the nature of fragmented identity in narratives that resist facile closure and demand active participation on the part of readers, Rubín's novel is much more "readerly." The narrator of his novel, in presenting what Lyotard would call a "negative model" works to legitimize the master narrative of mestizaje or ethnic and racial syncretism. While Los Presentes writers were busy dismantling such notions, Rubín's novel advocates a robust version of Mexican subjectivity, one that harmoniously fuses indigenous and Spanish ethnicity, as the only antidote to social disarray.⁴

The principal conflict revolves around the issue of Kanamayé's uncertain paternity, a situation that leads him to a disastrous, tragic end. The story begins when Lupe Mijares, Kanamayé's mother, is raped by Cuatrododos, a mestizo bandit who regularly harasses the tribe. Lupe

discovers shortly thereafter that she is pregnant, and her husband decides that the young child to be born cannot be his. Antonio Mijares's frustration and anger lead him to beat his wife regularly and savagely after Kanamayé's birth. As the beatings increase in frequency and severity, Lupe's health declines. She dies shortly after Kanamayé's ninth birthday, leaving him to experience the full force of his father's abuse.

The narrator of La bruma lo vuelve azul adopts the distanced, apparently objective stance of an ethnographer and presents Kanamayé's story as a case study in Huichol Indian life-style and beliefs. Including an extensive glossary of Huichol vocabulary at the end of the text, the narrator frequently employs footnotes and long editorial commentary to provide a scientific analysis of indigenous Mexicans. The issue of ethnicity dominates throughout and the narrator adopts a discursive strategy that emphasizes racial, cultural and linguistic difference. Each turning point in the plot of the story is structured around a closed set of strictly implemented binary terms that delineate elements of difference between indigenous and Mexican/Western society. The narrator presents Kanamayé's biracial, bi-ethnic identity as profoundly fragmentary. If Tenemos sed represents an impossibly utopian vision of unproblematic identity, La

bruma lo vuelve azul portrays the ostensible menace to society of decentered subjectivity.

The contrast between Kanamayé's mother, Lupe, and her victimizer, Cuatrodedos, dominates the first section of the novel. The narrator fixates on skin color as the principal measure of racial difference. His eroticized depiction of Lupe being beaten by her husband dwells especially on the color and texture of her skin and invites readers to participate with him both as disinterested observer and, ironically, eager voyeur. The narrator fluidly alternates between his role as detached ethnologist and prurient spectator as he describes the moments of abuse in scrupulous detail: "Each pass of the whip opened five bloody gouges in her brown, silky epidermis. . . . She was a young Indian, delicately featured and slender, her hair fixed in a thick black braid" (8). The juxtaposition of the clinical and the erotic and the bizarre contrast between the word "epidermis" and its sexually charged modifier "silky," camouflages the extreme violence of the situation: a woman being beaten by her husband for having "allowed" herself to be raped. The narrator's vocabulary betrays an intensely erotic interest in the implicit taboo of inter-racial sexual relations, and he carefully deploys signifiers that mark difference.

The terms that the narrator uses to describe the scene also function to define Lupe's racial status. While the narrator often quotes other characters' words and thoughts, Lupe's voice is absent from the novel. The accumulation of signifiers that characterize her focus, not on what she thinks or says but on how she appears before the narrator's eyes: brown skin, braided black hair, and a (prototypically) strong "Indian" physiology (33). These descriptions coalesce into a binary that constructs race in terms of dark/light.

Lupe's victimizer represents the latter term in the duality. The narrator informs readers that Cuatrododos, whose given name is José de Jesús Angeles, is a "blanco," and a bandit who never successfully integrated himself into civil society:

From the times of the revolution he was armed.

And when the revolution ended and the civil conflict left behind military paths to follow instead a course of legality and to direct the destiny of the country, he [Cuatrododos] felt no desire to dedicate himself to the work and became a bandit. He led a band of thieves, mestizos like himself, and who, fleeing from the Mexican authorities that had placed a price on their heads, came to hide themselves in the

rugged mountains of the Huicholes, becoming the scourge of that tribe. (14)

Desde los tiempos de la Revolución anduvo en armas. Y cuando ésta se impuso y la lucha civil dejó los cauces militares para entrar por los de la legalidad y dirigir los destinos del país, él que no sentía ningún deseo de dedicarse al trabajo, se convirtió en forajido.

Capitaneaba una banda de saltantes, mestizos como él, y que, huyendo de las autoridades mexicanas que les habían puesto precio a sus cabezas, vinieron a ocultarse en la escarpada sierra de los huicholes, convirtiéndose en el azote de esta tribu.

The narrator describes the bandit in conflicting ways. He is a blanco when he rapes Lupe, but also a mestizo like the other bandits in his gang. The narrator fluctuates between the two terms according to specific contextual constraints. When he describes Lupe's assault and its consequences, he emphasizes José de Jesús Angeles's whiteness, his light skin and blond hair. This strategy maximizes racial difference and underscores sexual taboos. In turn, in the sections of the novel dealing with the man's career as a bandit the narrator

uses his alias, Cuatrodedos, and emphasizes his "darker" qualities, identifying him not as a blanco, but as a mestizo. When Cuatrodedos and Lupe are not present in the same scenic context, the need to magnify racial difference diminishes. Given the particular exigencies of the story, the narrator fluidly oscillates between identifying the bandit as Lupe's racial opposite, and using the narratively convenient, pejorative connotations associated with mestizaje.

The confusion between what constitutes racially dark versus light heightens when the narrator turns his attention to Kanamayé. At birth, Kanamayé has light colored eyes, a fact that contributes to his father's jealous rage. Antonio complains to a village elder: "No-nitzi, kaapuc, no nitzi." The narrator, in his guise as impartial ethnographer, translates in a footnote, "The child is not my child" (37). Antonio continues, with the narrator now directly (but not transparently) translating, "The tegüi has blue eyes" (37). "And what of it?" the elder replies, "Look at the other children. Newborn they are all like that. Later their eyes change color and darken" (37).⁵

The all-important signifiers of racial identity, such as eye and skin color, shift and slip before Antonio can fix Kanamayé's identity. And because the child's

racial identity has been set up in the narration also to disclose paternity, Kanamayé remains in limbo, neither Indian, mestizo, nor blanco. His identity, throughout the novel, shifts fluidly according to context, with tragic consequences. Rather than providing Kanamayé with a means to negotiate the multiple cultural contexts of post-revolutionary Mexico, his uncertain identity serves to ostracize him.

The second major turning point in the novel occurs when government agents, with the help of acculturated Huichol indians, sequester Kanamayé and force him to attend the Internado, a government school established to integrate indigenous communities into mainstream Mexican society. The narrator, here, subtly shifts the terms of the binary that dominates the first part of the novel from race to culture. Now, rather than moreno/blanco, the principal terms of difference become, indio/vecino (vecino being a Huichol euphemism for mainstream Mexican society).

The narrator's discursive facade also begins to shift as the story turns from Kanamayé's infancy to his stay at the Internado. The narrative voice, earlier that of an impartial ethnographer detailing the particular case of Lupe's abuse within the framework of Huichol society, suddenly takes on the role of cultural critic.

He frames the issue of indian versus Mexican society from the perspective of the Huicholes with the goal of criticizing modern, Western culture. By telling the story through Kanamayé's eyes, the narrator safely distances himself from mainstream culture, adopting the position of critical outsider.

This critique can be seen, for example, in the narrator's paternalistic description on an older Indian man who befriends Kanamayé:

One can always expect an older indian man, because of his habitual slowness and gentleness, to be a loving father to the child at his side. He does not suffer from the irritability characteristic of elderly people with white skin, who, in certain moments, become impatient with themselves and hostile to infants. A balsamic fatalism runs in the veins of elderly Indians, doubly indifferent, which annuls typical moments of bad humor, or dissolves them away in soft, melancholy bitterness. (59)

De un indio viejo, por su pausa y dulzura habituales, se puede siempre esperar que sea el padre amoroso de la criatura que tiene a su

lado. A él no le indispone esa irritabilidad característica de los ancianos de piel blanca, la cual, en cierto momentos, los torna impacientes con ellos mismos y hostiles hasta con la infancia. A los indios, en la senectud, les corre por el caudal de sus venas un fatalismo balsámico, dos veces indiferente, que anula los típicos arrebatos del malhumor o los disuelve en una suave y melancólica amargura.

The narrator, indulging in ethnic psychology, adopts a patronizing stance to critique mainstream culture. This strategy allows him to approach Western culture, to employ Western hermeneutics (empirical analysis), but to do so from an apparently indigenous perspective. The result of this approach reinforces negative stereotypes of both Indian culture (fatalistic, passive, compliant) and mainstream society as well (hurried, uncaring, devoid of "essential" meaning). This celebration of indigenous culture over modern society has its roots in Western Romanticism, but the narrator of La bruma lo vuelve azul aspires to more than facile primitivism. Instead, he presses this paradigm into service to address the issue of Mexican national identity in the post-revolutionary era.

While Romantic and modernist primitivism may have served to criticize modernity in general terms, La bruma lo vuelve azul is more concerned with the question of Mexican national identity. Like Reyes and others, the dominance of rationality and positivism in a Mexican context troubles the narrator. When the actions of acculturated Huichol Indians perplex Kanamayé, the narrator editorializes about Europeanized Mexico by conveying the indian boy's perceptions by means of a cultural critic's linguistic and interpretive mode:

Not in vain had his parents preached to him so much about the cruelty and deception that are the favorite weapons of the vecino . . .

Moreover, for them (Huicholes), born and raised in the marvelous world of a culture that does not recognize one single human event that is not presided over by the will of a god and who proclaim themselves to be the favorite children of these selfsame omniscient deities, the reasonings of those apostates [acculturated Huicholes], altered to conform to the more rational criteria of the white man, lacked value and persuasive power. (63 ellipses in original)

¡No en balde sus padres les habían predicado tanto sobre la crueldad y el engaño que son armas predilectas del vecino. . . Además, para ellos, nacidos y criados en el mundo fantasmagórico de una cultura que no reconoce un solo movimiento humano que no esté presidido por la voluntad de un dios y que los proclamaba hijos predilectos de esas deidades omniscientes, los razonamientos de aquellos apóstatas, modelados conforme al criterio más racional del hombre blanco, carecían de valor y de poder persuasivo.

According to the narrator (who liberally superimposes on the boy's thoughts the same vocabulary and epistemological mode that he criticizes) Kanamayé cannot understand why someone would choose to leave a world saturated with metaphysical significance for one so apparently devoid of meaning. The narrator's interest in Huichol culture stems from the view that indigenous peoples live in a conceptual utopia, secure in the comfort of a profoundly ordered, rurally centered, spiritual universe: a universe that is far more stable than the chaotic urbanity of Mexico City.

Kanamayé, however, susceptible to the influence of western culture because of his uncertain paternity,

suffers rather than thriving at the Internado. Unable to firmly ground himself in Huichol culture, Kanamayé reads and then internalizes Western ideas. The narrator portrays him as a blank slate upon which may now be inscribed the ur-texts of another culture. The other Huichol boys at the Internado tease him and he consciously begins to separate himself from them. Reading picaresque adventures, epics, and other texts in the European canon, Kanamayé changes and begins to identify more with his supposed father, Cuatrododos:

He was no longer completely Huichol like the other boys, rather a quarter white, a quarter vecino, and, in front of his companions, he could now place himself on the pedestal of that fatuousness that motivated all Mexicans to treat them [Indians] with unpremeditated yet benevolent disdain. He was now in a condition to accept new teachings without the instinctive repugnance that first impeded their digestion.

(67-68)

Ya no era huichol íntegro como los demás, sino cuarterón de blanco, de vecino, y podía ir colocándose ante sus compañeros subido en el pedestal de esa fatuidad que motivaba que todos

lo mexicanos los tratasen con un impremeditado aunque benevolente desdén. Estaba ya en condiciones de aceptar las nuevas enseñanzas sin la repugnancia instintiva que primero le hiciese difícil su digestión.

His reading provides a model of subjectivity that allows him to look beyond the taunts of the other boys and overcome his feelings of inferiority. It also leads him to consider other Indians as "enemies" and he decides to emulate the harmful actions of his bandit father rather than adopt the morality of the tribe.

As Kanamayé begins to idolize his presumed father, he sets off on a course that ends in his destruction. The strict set of binaries established by the narrator determines the closing scenes of the novel. Indian culture, on the one hand, is presented as rurally oriented, benign, passive, metaphysically secure, and centered on the collective. European influenced urban Mexico, on the other, takes on purely negative associations: coldly rational, empty, belligerent, and unduly centered on the individual. The narrator describes Kanamayé's desire to emulate the bandit as the consequence of his education:

And that Cuatrododos, almost mythical, with whom he had discovered a blood connection that

undid his entire past, the victim of the betrayal and cruelty of some irresponsible Indians. . . At the same time that he was the hero of daring epics in which he could only be killed, as he was, from behind. All that he learned of the daring exploits of the bandit fit easily with the aspirations suggested by his new education. He became enterprising, daring, even intrepid, able to accumulate wealth and perfectly independent in his actions, like the heroes of all the texts of the Internado. And little by little, the resolution grew within him to emulate his exploits as soon as he could leave. (ellipses in original 68-69)

Y aquel Cuatrodedos casi mítico, con el que había descubierto una relación de sangre que trastornada todo su pasado, la víctima de la sevicia y la traición de unos indios irresponsables. . . A la vez que un héroe de temerarias epopeyas al que sólo hubieran podido matar, como lo hicieron, por la espalda. Lo que iba conociendo él de las hazañas del forajido encajaba fácilmente entre las

aspiraciones sugeridas por su nueva educación.

Fué emprendedor, audaz hasta lo intrépido, hábil para acumular riquezas y perfectamente independiente en sus actos, como los héroes de todos los textos del Internado. Y, poco a poco, tomaba cuerpo en su voluntad el propósito de emular sus proezas en cuanto saliera de allí.

Upon leaving the Internado, Kanamayé embarks on a short career as a thief and murderer. The closing chapters describe how he carefully plans to rape his once beloved half-sister to avenge his present situation. The novel ends when, moments after he discovers that Cuatrodedos could not have been his father and that he is, in fact, "purely" Huichol, Mexican law men gun him down.

Brushwood writes that Rubín's more well-known, novel El callado dolor de los Tzotiles (1949), underscores "one of the principal values of the ethnological tendency in the indigenista novel." This value is the "representation of man in a culture sufficiently different from our own to make us aware of facts that we normally ignore" (México 26). Brushwood comments that the novela indigenista, ironically, provides a clearer view of mainstream culture and society than its Indian counterpart. The narrators of these novels often use

Indian characters and settings to examine Western European culture. The same may also be said of La bruma lo vuelve azul. Whatever the novel's value as Huichol ethnography, it reveals an anxiety in mainstream Mexican culture over the issue of racial and ethnic identity. In a contradictory fashion, the novel both elaborates a code of difference linked to skin color, language, and metaphysical outlook, and strives to ameliorate such differences as artifacts of psychology. For the narrator, Kanamayé's problems are only apparently issues of race and ethnicity. Their true cause is psychological. If Kanamayé had been informed of his true Huichol identity from the beginning, he would not, according to the logic of the novel, have developed a criminal mind-set motivated by rage and alienation.

Kanamayé's story functions as a cautionary tale about the dangers of modernity more than as a case study of Huichol culture. The narrator's principal concern is, in fact, the metaphysical crisis provoked by modern Mexico's increasing reliance on empirical epistemological modes. He laments the forfeiture of meaning and truth in modern society by underscoring the shock that Kanamayé experiences as he moves from the metaphysically secure universe of his Huichol heritage to the Internacão, a

modern space governed by strict reason and empirical assumptions.

Although both Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul ostensibly treat separate issues relating to Mexico's minority cultures, their subtexts are similar. Both novels struggle to resolve the problems prompted by Mexico's rapid economic expansion following the Second World War. In that sense, both novels take rural, provincial settings as a launching point for analyses of Mexico's rapid modernization. The principal concern of both is to interrogate Mexico's "fate" (in Jameson's words), to work out issues of ethnic and culture identity. Both novels present explicit commentaries on midcentury Mexican culture. It is this last facet of Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul that most clearly distinguishes them from Los Presentes texts. Mondragón's and Rubín's novels played an integral role in a wide ranging debate, taking place in the pages of literary journals and supplements of the period, that struggled to redefine literature. Although the two works are different in that Mondragón's novel enacted this debate in terms of gender identity and Rubín's novel proceeded from totalizing notions of ethnicity, both postulate a utopian vision of identity grounded in an encounter with modernity.

Like the Los Presentes writers, Mondragón and Rubín are preoccupied with modernity. This similarity notwithstanding, differences arise in their treatment of the issue. Modernity, in Mondragón and Rubín is primarily thematic. Tenemos sed treats the advance of modernity as a potentially positive force if it is also accompanied by a strong sense of national identity. For Rubín, subjectivity and modernity are also strongly correlated. Rubín's vision, less certain than Mondragón's, also invites a tightly-bound sense of identity. The protagonist of La bruma lo vuelve azul suffers catastrophic failure because the different elements of his racial and ethnic sense of self never coalesce into an organic whole.

The Los Presentes writers see modernity as an invitation to experiment with the form of the novel, short story, and drama. While thematic issues enter their narratives, the modern theory of literature that they elaborate has more to do with form than with content. In the following section, I read several reviews and essays written by Los Presentes writers in the mid-fifties to ascertain more clearly the imbrication of modernity on their writing.

The Location of Meaning

While Los Presentes writers attracted considerable attention from prominent literary critics of the time, they themselves produced extensive critical analyses of their own work and that of others. In the mid-fifties, writers who, among other affiliations, had been or would be published in the Los Presentes series, entered the critical arena in force. An analysis of some of their critical work published at midcentury reveals the development of a "theory of the novel" that excluded socially committed literature.

By 1954, Carlos Fuentes had already published critical essays and reviews and served as editorial assistant for the Revista de la Universidad de México, a position that his colleague Emmanuel Carballo would fill a year later. Another influential young voice, Carballo joined the ranks of Los Presentes when his collection of short stories, Gran estorbo la esperanza (1954) was published in the second wave of texts that followed Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, Primavera muda, La hora de todos, and Parentalia.

In the summer of 1955, shortly after the publication of their first novels, Fuentes, Carballo, and Tomás Segovia created La Revista Mexicana de Literatura, a literary journal that came to be one of the favored

critical vehicles of Los Presentes writers and critics. From the start, the journal evinced a strongly international, cosmopolitan bent and assiduously avoided provincial literature and criticism. The first editions of the journal published such diverse writers and thinkers as, (among others) Octavio Paz, Erich Fromm, Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Alfonso Reyes, Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, Elena Poniatowska, Tomás Segovia, and Ernesto Cardenal.

The first numbers of the journal carried essays on the literary production of Juan Rulfo, Ramón del Valle Inclán's esperpento (an expressionistic mode that correlates with the Spanish avant-garde), a translation of Balzac, essays on the problem of alienation in modern capitalism, and the politics of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The editorial board of the journal fell apart in 1957 as Fuentes prepared his next novel, La región más transparente (1958). After a short hiatus, it reappeared with Tomás Segovia, Juan García Ponce, and Antonio Alatorre at the helm and survived in that incarnation until 1965.⁶

The focus of the journal, its critical essays and opinions, like that of the Los Presentes texts previously studied, points strongly toward cosmopolitan writing and attitudes. Ethnographically oriented novels with

explicit social messages were routinely ignored or, as in Carballo's essay "Las letras Mexicanas en 1956," treated hostilely (150-51). The editors of the journal evaluated their unique contribution to Mexican literary criticism in forceful terms in an anonymous aside: "We want to contribute to the renaissance of a true criticism that, it may be truly said, has never existed in Mexico." ("Actitudes" 41). The "true criticism" the editors advocated was a critical mode devoted to cosmopolitan literature, to "high culture," and to reasoned, unsentimental, text-centered literary analysis. The writers and critics associated with *Los Presentes* and La Revista Mexicana de Literatura had, in other words, begun to elaborate a "theory of literature," unique in its Mexican setting, but strongly influenced by American and European literary trends.

Interest in "literary theory" was on the rise in mid-fifties Mexico. The same month that *Los Presentes* published Fuentes and Poniatowska, Mexico en la Cultura published an article by the acclaimed lyrical poet Alí Chumacero, entitled "Libros sobre teoría literaria." Chumacero describes the modern, European text-centered approaches advocated by a number of pre-linguistic turn theorists (among them Julius Peterson, Hermann Gumbel, and Fritz Medicus) and pays special attention to

Auerbach's Mimesis (2). Chumacero's interests correspond closely with the arguments and critiques that had begun turning up in La Revista Mexicana de Literatura.⁷

In addition to Chumacero's article, Alfonso Reyes had published a book dedicated to literary theory in 1944 entitled El deslinde: Prolegómenos a la teoría literaria.

Reyes book, meticulously researched and grandly expansive in scope, relied on classical models to define literature. In general terms, Reyes divided literature into two categories of unequal value: "pure literature" (literatura en pureza) and "ancillary literature" (literatura ancilar) (42-43). In contradistinction to pure literature, ancillary literature, for Reyes, arises from the experience of the "human spirit." Pure literature reveals the "essential nature of man" (42) Reyes's definition implies that "true" or "worthy" literature is ideologically ambiguous. Like the Los Presentes writers a decade later, he located meaning securely in the text and banished socio-political considerations to the periphery.

The Los Presentes writers, like Reyes, preferred a critical position that privileges the text as a unique artistic object. Political and social debates had little or no place in the more cosmopolitan, universal esthetic they promoted. The analyses of literature that appeared

in the journals aligned with this emergent discourse are slightly paradoxical in that they furthered the notion that literature was an activity separate from the scientifically and empirically contaminated discourses of ethnography, indigenous studies, sociology, and especially history, while, at the same time, they advocated rigorous, objective, text-centered analyses. They eschewed documentary, testimonial novels with rural, provincial settings. And while historical referents in literature were not necessarily anathema, literary criticism, in their view, should focus on the universality and artistic genius of the work, and not its historical background.

The "true criticism" promoted by the editorial board of La Revista Mexicana de Literatura sought to fix meaning securely to the text. Novels like Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul, however, proceeded from a different assumption. In these two novels, the narrators locate meaning outside the text. Whether in the sociology of class relations, the story of the revolution, or the ethnography of indigenous societies, both novels are structured as lenses through which society may be more clearly perceived. Their narrators rely heavily on the knowledge and middle-class opinions of their readers. The implicit "theory of the novel" under

which they function conceives of narrative as an approach to social problems, an instrument used to observe social relations, political values, and historical memory. In both, the text is presumed to mediate, rather than generate meaning.

The general theoretical stance of critics in the Los Presentes circle was more cosmopolitan. Echoing new critical approaches, they sought to erect rhetorical boundaries around the text. As I read several of their critical essays and book reviews in the following pages, I underscore the degree to which Fuentes, Carballo, and others associated with Los Presentes envisioned the text as autonomous from political, economic, and historical discourse. In their view, the text, whether narrative, dramatic, or poetic, achieved the status of "literature" only when it aggressively avoided the entanglements of other modes of discourse. For Carballo especially, literary novels do not elucidate or access meaning from other spheres of discourse. They function instead as self-enclosed, organic systems that generate a meaningful, artistic experience in competent readers, rather than imparting quantifiable, material information about the external world.⁸

One of the first announcements for the Los Presentes series appeared in México en la Cultura, the cultural supplement to one of Mexico City's newspapers of record, Novedades. The supplement carried an anonymous weekly column, "Autores y Libros," that regularly provided, along with brief book reviews, and biographies, news and gossip of the literary elite. The November 14 edition described Juan José Arreola's new venture and, with tongue in cheek, poked fun at his notorious affection for spectacle. The anonymous writer assured readers that the soon to be published books would "sell like hotcakes" and that Arreola, in order to beef up sales, would walk the streets of Mexico City dressed as a pantomime (4). The column also made special mention of the first writers to be published in the new series and included marketing slogans, dubiously attributed to Arreola ("Quiquiriquí, Lilus Kikus se vende aquí"). Although the column teased Arreola about his penchant for theatricality, it revealed genuine enthusiasm for his project and the young writers to be published.

In some quarters, these writers represented the only good news in midcentury Mexican letters. Emmanuel Carballo surveyed the landscape of Mexican literature and adamantly declared that poetry was the only genre worthy of attention ("Las letras" 144-159). While he

recommended young authors who displayed promise (specifically mentioning Poniatowska and Fuentes), Carballo blasted more established writers for bowing to the demands of a readership calling for socially oriented novels devoid of authenticity: "[Today's readers] want, in other words, literature that is anything but literature. They ask writers for sociological, political, and economic testimonials" (150). These readers and the novels they demand "are obsessed with reality," and prefer "solutions" over "questions" (150).

While Carballo does not use the vocabulary of structuralism, the critical discourse of the next decade, he complains about what Barthes would call "readerly" texts. Carballo's position is quintessentially modernist. Echoing the New Critical proclivity for ahistorical analysis, Carballo decries narratives that actively voice socio-historical concerns. The discourse of history, politics, and economics, in his estimation, strip the text of its autonomous status. Novels, for Carballo, may be classified as literature only when they function as unique discursive moments. And, while novels may contain historical and social referents, these are secondary to their status as distinctive works of artistic genius. It is not surprising then that he dedicates the majority of his survey to the very modern,

lyrical, and socially removed poetry of Carlos Pellicer, Alí Chumacero, and Jaime Terrés.

Carballo's position is, of course, not unique to Mexican criticism at midcentury. He represents a loose confederacy of critical opinion that includes Fuentes, Poniatowska, Segovia, Archibaldo Burns Carlos Valdés, and other younger writers now publishing in *Los Presentes* as well as allies, such as Andrés Henestrosa, who established reputations in previous decades. Carballo ends his diatribe against socially committed novels with a devastating critique of Magdalena Mondragón's Tenemos sed. Hers is, according to Carballo, a kitsch romance with a feeble sense of social justice and he ends, "I hope that none of you have read it" (151). Perhaps it is not so surprising after all that Mondragón has all but disappeared from critical view.

Carballo also elaborates this position in a 1955 review of Fuentes's Los días enmascarados. He structures his review around his idea of "useless" versus "true" literature. Fuentes's collection of short stories is "true" literature because, in Carballo's estimation, it "is true to own nature" (4). The stories are organic unities that function first and foremost as art. "Useless" literature, on the other hand, lacks authenticity and autonomy because it "serves as a

mouthpiece for base rallying cries," an allusion to texts with a strong social message (4). Carballo's own collection of short stories, Gran estorbo la esperanza (1955), fulfills this criteria according to an anonymous reviewer in the Revista de la Universidad de México.

In a review entitled "Estorbos de Carballo," a reviewer identifying himself only as "A.B." was especially attracted to Carballo's treatment of provincial Mexico.⁹ In the reviewer's estimation, Carballo, while interested in Mexican provincial life, ultimately rejected it for a more idealistic cosmopolitanism: "Carballo is an idealist, but not a provincialist. He was raised in the provinces [Guadalajara, to be exact] which he loves and rejects" (30). Carballo, according to "A.B.," processes Mexican themes and symbols through his own unique artistic genius to produce a work of art. The reviewer describes Carballo as a cosmopolitan writer and thinker who returns to the province to critique it.

Carballo's approach, evident in both his criticism and fiction, is echoed by an older critic and writer in the same issue of the Revista de la Universidad de México. Andrés Henestrosa published a collection of indigenista short stories in the late twenties and an indigenista novel in the early forties: Los hombres que

dispersó la danza (1929) and Retrato de mi madre (1940).

By the mid-fifties he had turned his attention to literary criticism. His opinions, published in the reappearing column "Pretextos," corresponded closely with the attitudes of the Los Presentes group.¹⁰ For Henestrosa, great novels are produced by literary geniuses who take "materia prima" and turn it into art (29). Documentation and realistic description are insufficient. Literature must take on a life of its own.

It should not capture, document or illustrate the "truth" about Mexican identity and culture; it must, instead, generate it. Great novels function, for Henestrosa, as dynamic, autonomous linguistic systems produced by a literary elite.

The reviews of Los Presentes texts echoed Henestrosa's ideas and placed special emphasis on the importance of language. Elena Poniatowska's novel, Lilus Kikus, and Juan José Arreola's drama, La hora de todos were both reviewed in the first number of Revista de la Universidad de México in 1954 shortly after their publication. Both reviews privileged language over message and underscored the modern characteristics of the texts. The reviewer of Poniatowska's book, identified only as "C.F." (probably Carlos Fuentes) constructed his analysis as an imaginary dialogue between himself and

Lilus Kikus, the protagonist and narrator of Poniatowska's text. During the course of the pseudo interview, the reviewer asks Lilus about her literary influences.

Lilus, a young girl, listens patiently as the reviewer pretentiously instructs her on the finer points of literary analysis:

You know that searching for the precursors of books constitutes an entire profession. There are critics who live by feverishly defining the influence of Kafka and Borges on Mexican short story writers. . . . (30)

Usted sabe que constituye toda una profesión buscar los antecedentes de un libro. Existen críticos que viven angustiados definiendo la influencia de Kafka y Borges sobre los cuentistas mexicanos. . . .

The details of biographical criticism, however, fail to capture Lilus's attention. The reviewer endeavors to search out the antecedents of her book, but Lilus will not indulge him and, instead, rhapsodizes on tangential issues and tells him nursery rhymes. C.F. pays little attention and insists that Lilus must have read Tiko by Consuelo Pani. He even quotes Alfonso Reyes's assessment

of the novel as "cubist," the definitively modern artistic mode (30). When the reviewer presses, Lilus informs him that her "true influences" are not Pani, James Barrie, or any other mortal. Her true influence, she says to C.F., are "witches."

C.F. closes the review informing Lilus that she must be mistaken because: "Most witches committed suicide in the eighteenth century. Apparently, Newton made them lose all hope" (30). As in other reviews and critical pieces of the period, the theme of modernity comes to the fore. C.F. implicitly raises the issue of empiricism and the beginning of the end metaphysics. The review functions at several levels as a critique of modern epistemology. He both ridicules biographical, historical criticism and asserts that the book functions at an abstract, non-empirical level. Lilus consorts with witches, not ethnographers and sociologists. Her book works independently of scientific discourse. Rather than illustrating or documenting "truths" outside the purview of the text, Lilus Kikus, in C.F.'s estimation, operates autonomously.

The review itself, rather than describing various episodes in the novel or resorting to other approaches that provide objective knowledge about the book, invents an interview with its protagonist. Rather than

appropriating the novel as his object of study, the reviewer infiltrates the diegetic sphere of the text. He treats it as a dynamic system that continues to signify and resists closure. C.F. reads Lilus Kikus as a writerly text rather than describing it objectively for readers of the Revista de la Universidad de México. The reviewer's engagement with the language of the text becomes more important than quantifiable observations. In privileging the process of signification, C.F. treats the text as an autonomous, dynamic field, rather than an object of inquiry.

A review of Juan José Arreola's drama La hora de todos, written by A.B. (again, probably Archibaldo Burns) also focuses on language. He begins:

For Arreola, the central preoccupation is language. Violating the word so that it yields the utmost. . . . Consequently, we might say that Arreola considers the written word dead and wasted when employed in arid, grammatical descriptions. (30)

En Arreola, la preocupación central es el lenguaje. Violentar la palabra para que rinda su máximo. . . . Por lo tanto, digamos que Arreola considera la palabra escrita inoperante

y malgastada cuando se emplea en áridas descripciones gramaticales.

Literature, in A.B.'s opinion, should not yield closure.

The fractures and fissures of language should be pressed to their limits and the author should not terminate the process of signification.

This issue of the Revista de la Universidad de México also carried a short but devastating review of Rubín's novel, La bruma lo vuelve azul. Terse and to the point, a reviewer identified as "C.V." (probably Carlos Valdés, whose Ausencias (1955) appeared in the second wave of Los Presentes publications) blasted the novel for its appropriation of scientific discourse: "Rubín on other occasions has demonstrated his competence as a narrator; but he now tenders a short novel with ethnological and anthropological pretensions" (30). According to C.V., Rubín's novel functions as a case study, an empirical exercise and, consequently, he falls short as a narrator. Where Poniatowska and Arreola were praised for their inventive and playful use of language, the reviewer chided Rubín for structuring his novel around a thesis. La bruma lo vuelve azul, in C.V.'s opinion, endeavors to teach readers about indigenous culture and, in doing so, privileges scientific discourse over literary inventiveness. The reviewer implied that

the novel lacks a sense of irony and approaches its subject much too directly.

C.V structured his review as a parody of Rubín's novel, dividing it into three sections that corresponded to the apparently unimaginative structure of the novel: story, thesis, and conclusion. While others have commented on the poetic language of the novel, C.V. intentionally provided as literal a reading as possible.¹¹

His description of the thesis, for example, underscored the narrator's heavy-handed attempts to force closure and provide a succinct, relevant message for readers:

The thesis: the indigenous man should not be instructed in Western culture; a tragic duality is born of the clash between his culture and a foreign one; both are lost in the end and he ends up maladjusted, a problem for both indigenous peoples and whites. (30)

La tesis: el indígena no debe de ser instruido en la cultura occidental; del choque de su cultura y la extraña nace una trágica dualidad; al fin pierde ambas, se convierte en un inadaptado, en un problema para indígenas y blancos.

C.V. reads the novel as literally as possible in his review and declares, satirically, that Kanamayé is a "poor victim of culture!" In fact, the reviewer's use of satire throughout demonstrates the impossibility of moving transparently from subject to object. By intentionally constructing a misreading that, nonetheless, conformed to the logic of Rubín's novel, C.V. displayed his own competence as a modern reader, his own awareness that no single reading of the text could be final. As such, his review of Rubín's novel became a performance, a self-legitimizing act that publicly inscribed the enormous conceptual distance between Los Presentes writers and the generation they had begun to displace.

1954 was a particularly bad year for novels that took up social causes, at least in the emergent critical discourse. Ironically, while Revista de la Universidad de México devoted less space, literally and figuratively, to Rubín's La bruma lo vuleve azul, four times as many copies of his novel had been published than any of the Los Presentes texts.¹² The prestigious Letras Mexicanas series of El Fondo de Cultura Económica published La bruma lo vuelve azul and the number of copies they decided to print was a measure of their confidence in potential demand. In more mainstream circles, Rubín

continued to be seen as an important voice.¹³ One indication of this popularity is that in spite of his low standing with the Los Presentes circle, he received the "Premio concurso de Novela" (the same prize awarded to Mondragón's Tenemos sed) for his novel Cuando mi sombra se espanta (1955) the following year.

Emergent and Dominant Discourses

Both Mondragón's and Rubín's novels bring the critical debate of the period into sharp relief. Younger writers waged an intense battle to control the terms of the discussion, and in the mid-fifties, the polemics often turned to the question of "literature." For the writers associated with Los Presentes, "true literature" engaged readers at the experiential level while denying them the kind of closure provided by the more realist-oriented novels of Mondragón and Rubín. To enact this distinction, Los Presentes writers and their allies appropriated the notion of "universality" to suggest that their literary projects extended far beyond parochial concerns. Descriptions of specific social or political concerns relevant to midcentury Mexico violated, in their opinion, the paradigm of modern literature. A 1954 interview with the poet Alí Chumacero in the cultural

supplement México en la Cultura illustrates this point. The interviewer, Rosa Castro, began with the old chestnut, "Where is literature heading today?" (3). Chumacero answered that literary fashion, in 1954, was led by the young writers who approached old problems in new ways. He specifically described a fault line that separated those who "know" where literature is going from those who do not. Chumacero asserted: "the story of literature 'in the service' of the people is over" (3). Literature, in the fifties, had come to be seen as art and thrown off the yoke of utilitarianism. He praised Juan Rulfo for El llano en llamas (1953) and complained that the socially committed writer, José Revueltas, failed to live up to the promise of his earlier work (3). Rulfo, created "something new" from quotidian situations and imagery where Revueltas did not.

Rosa Castro had interviewed Octavio Paz the month before in México en la Cultura and he was much less circumspect than Chumacero. Paz referred elliptically to Revueltas's novel, Los días terrenales (1949), a socially committed novel censured by the Communist Party in Mexico (of which Revueltas was a member), to criticize literature that placed social commitment above art. Castro wrote that Paz specifically rejected Revueltas's position that, "literature is nothing more than an

instrument with which to effect social change" (3). Paz responded, "To me it appears very dangerous and confused to employ the term 'utility' to judge a work of art because it reduces it to technique. You can't compare a novel with an airplane or a hammer" (3). The idea of literature as tool was particularly abhorrent to Paz who defined the "mission" of literature in more esthetic terms:

In my judgment, the essential mission of literature consists of discovering and revealing that spirit. That is, of man. In this sense it is possible to speak of literary truth. The utility of a work of literature consists in its truth; in the revelation that art makes to man. Art discovers the human spirit or a part of the human spirit. (3)

A mi juicio, la misión esencial de la literatura consiste en descubrir y revelar a ese ser. Esto es, al hombre. En ese sentido es posible hablar de verdad literaria. La utilidad de una obra literaria consiste en su verdad; en la revelación que hace el arte del hombre. El arte descubre al ser del hombre o una parte del ser del hombre.

Paz turns the tables on Revueltas by articulating the term "utility" in a non-utilitarian sense. Literature, for Paz, is art. And art is useful or "utilitarian" because it reveals the "human spirit." Paz here attempts to rescue metaphysics. Art speaks the unspeakable, and reveals the ineffable. Literature becomes a mirror that does not simply reflect the world outside the text, but rather a dynamic process that produces in readers the experience of "truth," the "revelation of the human spirit."

Paz advocated an ironically ambiguous notion of literary esthetics. On the one hand, novels that overtly performed cultural work, that explicitly articulated social issues and utopian visions or that delved too deeply into the specifics of mestizaje crossed the line separating art from political propaganda. On the other hand, works like those published in the Los Presentes series that deflected social critiques and articulated more ambiguous ideological positions merited a privileged position in the literary-cultural field. Paz equated ideological and narrative ambiguity with a monolithic notion of universality.

Implicit in Paz's comments is the idea that a purely national literature dedicated to representing social

problems in realist terms ultimately fails to produce a transcendent experience for readers. Ironically, the books published by Los Presentes writers in the mid-fifties often employ specific historical referents. And even when they do not, issues of identity and mestizaje often emerge as the subtexts of their narratives. As they engage issues of identity, Los Presentes texts reveal their indebtedness to the cultural landscape of the era as definitely as do Mondragón's and Rubín's novels. The anxiety over how to successfully formulate identity pervades Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul, as well as Fuentes's short stories, Poniatowska's and Segovia's novels, Arreola's drama, and Reyes's autobiography as well. Although the Los Presentes writers defined the new esthetic in terms of experimental narrative forms and vigorously criticized the explicit social content of Mondragón's and Rubín's novels, Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, Primavera muda, La hora de todos, and Parentalia are no less ideologically motivated than the more overtly political novels of the same period. This irony represents a central contradiction in midcentury cosmopolitanism. The reviews that appeared in Revista Mexicana de Literatura and Revista de la Universidad de México by Los Presentes writers criticized the ideological content of Mondragón's

and Rubín's novels while eliding the political nature of their own writing.

Midcentury cosmopolitanism becomes, then, an esthetic position as reliant on essential notions of Mexican character as the social realist and indigenist novels it sought to displace. Predicated on a series of binaries (universal-particular, global-local, urban-rural) that disintegrate under closer scrutiny, the discursive position mapped out in *Los Presentes* texts strove to bridge the gap between explicit criticism of traditional/conservative formulations of Mexican identity and tacit acceptance of official rhetoric. Critical pronouncements and polemical posturing notwithstanding, *Los Presentes* secured a position of prominence by articulating the unique concerns of the midcentury Mexican literary-cultural field.

Notes

¹ My criteria for selecting these two novels are twofold. The criticism of the period, which I address later in this chapter, establishes an "us versus them" relationship between Los Presentes texts and these two novels. The intentional polarization of the field makes an analysis of Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul crucial to understanding the relationship between the emergent and dominant esthetic discourses of the time.

² The Los Presentes writer and critic Emmanuel Carballo offer this opinion. Later in the chapter I turn to his important essay, "Las letras Mexicanas en 1956," in which he describes the landscape of midcentury letters (151).

³ In addition to Galván Romani's book and Robles's chapter, Lucía Ramírez's article, "La mujer y Magdalena Mondragón" in Fem describes her contributions to Mexican feminist consciousness in the media.

⁴ Rubín's work belongs to a category of novels known as "indigenist novels" (novelas indigenistas). With roots in the nineteenth century, Clorinda Matto de Turner's novel Aves sin nido (1889) is often considered the first major example of the genre. Other notable examples of the genre include the Bolivian Alcides

Argueda's Raza de bronce (1919), the Ecuadorian Jorge Icaza's Huasipungo (1934), and the Peruvian Ciro Alegría's El mundo es ancho y ajeno (1941). Brushwood describes the expression of indigenist themes in Mexican literature with the following comments:

The indigenista theme constitutes a particular kind of social protest because it involves not only an economic issue, but a cultural one as well. Indeed, this kind of novel is less a novel of protest than of cultural analysis.

(Mexico 24)

Brushwood goes on to cite Ramón Rubín's earlier novel, El callado dolor de los tzotziles (1948) as an important contribution to the genre in Mexico. Other prominent Mexican indigenist novels include Juan Pérez Jolote (1948) by Ricardo Pozas as well as Balúm Canán (1957) and Oficio de tinieblas (1962), both by Rosario Castellanos.

Significantly, all the novels here cited, including those by Ramón Rubín, were authored by Spanish-speaking writers speaking for Indian communities. Studies that bring to light the contradictory nature of indigenist narratives include Teresa Smotherman's "La filosofía de la liberación en la nueva novela indigenista" (1992), José Luis Gómez Martínez's "La novela indigenista en la toma de conciencia de la identidad iberoamericana"

(1989), Evelio Echevarría's "La novel indigenista hispanoamericana: Definición y bibliografía" (1985), Antonio Cornejo Polar's "La novela indigenista: Una desgarrada conciencia de la historia" (1980), "La novela indigenista: Un género contradictorio" (1979), and Antonio A. Leal's "La novela indigenista en México" (1970).

⁵ The full quotation in Spanish follows:

--¡No-nitzi, kaapuc, no-nitzi!* (¡mi hijo no es mi hijo!)

El anciano sacudió compasivo su cabeza.

--Me late que son nomás abusiones tuyas--
 adujo-- . . . El uchitegüi es huichol de
 un todo a todo . . . ¡¿Qué no lo has
 mirado?! . . . (elipses in original 36)

--El tegüi trai los ojos claros"

--¿Y eso, qué? . . . Mira los otro
 niñitos. De recién todos los train asina.

Luego les cambia la color; se les
 ecurecen. (37 ellipsis in original)

⁶ Margarita Vargas, in her dissertation Grupo Revista Mexicana de Literatura y sus coetáneos, discusses the historical role of La Revista Mexicana de Literatura

and places it in context with other important journals. Vargas points out that the writers associated with important literary journals often serve as the nucleus for a particular "generation" of writers:

La afiliación de un grupo o una generación de escritores en múltiples casos se puede comprobar por medio de una revista literaria en la cual todos colaboraron. Pensamos, por ejemplo, en los modernistas y su *Revista Azul*, los Contemporáneos y la revista de la cual toman su nombre, el grupo Florida en la Argentina y *Martín Fierro* o *Sur*, los componentes del "Boom" y *Mundo Nuevo*. . . . (6)

While Vargas does not elucidate any one theoretical model for this assertion, her attempt to outline the historical links between institutions and esthetics anticipates my interest in the case of Los Presentes writers.

⁷ In addition to Alí Chumacero's article, José Luis Martínez published Problemas literarios in 1955: a book that also addressed issues of literary theory in a Spanish American context.

⁸ Fuentes, Poniatowska, Segovia and other Los Presentes writers constituted an emergent generation in the mid-fifties and the core cosmopolitan values, the

literary esthetic they practiced were consistent. The elements that I examine in their earliest work and the conclusions that I draw do not necessarily obtain in their later writing and apply specifically to the historical moment from which their texts emerged. The changes that took place in their writing correspond to perturbations in the cultural field, transitions that merit further study.

⁹ "A.B.," was probably Archibaldo Burns, a fellow Los Presentes writer who published his first novel, Fir (1954), in the second wave of novels edited by Arreola. After getting his start in Los Presentes, Burns went on to publish several other novels before becoming a successful movie producer and script writer. Curiously enough, in 1976 he wrote a movie adaptation of the very socially committed and ethnologically oriented Mexican novel, Juan Pérez Jolote by the anthropologist Ricardo Pozas.

¹⁰ I also mention Henestrosa's column in my introduction and second chapter. Henestrosa, who had associated with the Mexican vanguards, criticized novels of the revolution that relied on documentary, realistic portrayals of provincial life and customs.

¹¹ Eleanor Meyer Ringwald, in her article, "Imagery in the Works of Ramón Rubín," comments briefly on Rubín's use of language. The most salient feature of the novel, in her opinion, is the way the narrator uses color to construct complex, metaphorical imagery (225-29).

¹² Letras Mexicanas printed 2,000 copies of La bruma lo vuelve azul. The early runs of Los Presentes texts were only 500 copies. These numbers help underscore how limited the audience for "high" culture novels was in 1954.

¹³ The Fondo de Cultura Económica was a prominent publishing house in the mid-fifties, but their line Letras Mexicanas was a new addition. In addition to Letras Mexicanas and Los Presentes, the Universidad Veracruzana published many up-and-coming authors in the fifties.

Conclusion

Literary cosmopolitanism, in simple terms, refers to literature that strives to embrace supposedly "universal themes," global issues, and urban lifestyles while avoiding the particular, the regional, and the rural. Los Presentes writers, in their reviews and critical essays, employed these binaries to define their work vis-à-vis the other discursive modalities present in the Mexican literary-cultural field at midcentury. The strict dualities they elaborated in their critical writing do not obtain, however, in their prose fiction. All the texts I examine reflect anxieties pertaining to the effects of modernity on formulations of identity. While the texts published by Arreola represent these anxieties in self-consciously cosmopolitan and apparently universal terms, they are as much the product of national ideology as Magdalena Mondragón's and Ramón Rubín's novels of the same year. Ironically, the notion of "universality" becomes, for Los Presentes writers, an ideological construct for examining the particular effects of the incursions of modernity on Mexican consciousness without specifically engaging the more traditional rhetoric of the revolution, explicit nationalism, and rural concerns.

Consequently, for the young writers staking their careers on books published by Arreola in 1954, cosmopolitanism also implied a resistance to the overtly political and social concerns that informed novels of preceding decades. While the dominant discourse of earlier decades (still a powerful force in 1954 and represented in my study by Mondragón's and Rubín's Tenemos sed and La bruma lo vuelve azul) tended to link the issue of identity to explicitly political considerations, such as the revolution, nation building, and the ethnicity of mestizaje, the emergent discourse promulgated by the Los Presentes writers elided overtly ideological questions. The books they published relied on fragmentary narratives that resist closure and avoided traditional realism as a mode of description and plot development. The ambiguities that these experimental techniques produced with regard to issues of identity were mirrored by ideological ambiguities. Los Presentes writers often avoided specifically Mexican referents. When such referents did appear in their texts, as in some of Carlos Fuentes's short stories, the effect was to undermine rather than reinforce issues of mestizaje and identity in self-consciously nationalist terms.

As a consequence, conspicuous political issues, when they appeared in the writing of Los Presentes authors,

were often veiled by experimental narrative techniques. At first glance, texts like Los días enmascarados, Lilus Kikus, Primavera muda, and La hora de todos appear to privilege form over content. Of the first five books published by Arreola, Alfonso Reyes's Parentalia is unique in its attention to history and politics. Even in the case of Parentalia, however, Reyes's project is ultimately solipsistic and less concerned with social realities than with the autobiographical subject himself.

Three of the short stories that Carlos Fuentes published in Los días enmascarados emerge as the most politically oriented writing of the early Los Presentes series. The narrators of "Chac Mool," "Tlactocatzine, del jardín de Flandes," and "Por boca de los dioses" combine elements of Mexico's Aztec and colonial past with the present. The juxtaposition of a mythological and historical past with Mexico's cosmopolitan present carried ideological implications as a consequence of cultural debates structured around questions of national, ethnic, and political identity. References to Aztec culture and religion in Fuentes's stories bear the imprimatur of the ideological context of the era.

Politics, however, was not the overriding concern of Los días enmascarados. Neither was it the primary anxiety of Elena Poniatowska's, Tomás Segovia's, nor Juan

José Arreola's texts. The narrator of Lilus Kikus struggles with issues of identity, especially as it relates to gender roles, that transcend national politics. Segovia's protagonist in Primavera muda deals with existential questions of personal alienation that, while particularly relevant to Mexico City's growing urban environment, do not depend on the specifics of nationality or ethnicity. Arreola, in turn, set his drama in New York City, the prototypical urban locale, rather than Mexico.

The cosmopolitan esthetic that Los Presentes writers elaborated in their texts and defended in critical essays and reviews precluded the notion of an explicitly national novel. In fact, they branded the work of writers like Mondragón and Rubín as inherently flawed for dealing overtly with social problems of national concern.

The Los Presentes writers preferred instead to couch ideological critiques of modernity in less nationally specific terms. The public justification for the elision of national ideology that Los Presentes writers advanced centered on narrative form. But the texts themselves demonstrate that, experimental forms notwithstanding, questions of identity in the context of urban and industrial modernity played as important a role for Los Presentes writers as it did for Mondragón and Rubín.

The institutional nature of the Mexican publishing industry in the mid-fifties reveals an important connection to the development of the cosmopolitan esthetic. Los Presentes relied on alliances with the previous generation of writers and without the patronage of Reyes in particular, Arreola may not have been able to launch his venture. The critical support of vanguard author Andrés Henestrosa, while difficult to measure, attests to the inter-generational connections that Los Presentes writers fostered. But the alliances that they formed must have come at a cost. In recreating the debates of the period, I have shown that the Los Presentes circle criticized the work of socially-oriented writers in general terms, but did not directly confront the ideology of mestizaje and post-revolutionary national unity, ideas that the previous generation had elaborated and vigorously defended.

Instead, the Los Presentes authors wrote texts that, as a function of their narrative invention, subtly undermined the discourse of mestizaje and nationhood that Reyes and his generation had developed. While identity is the central preoccupation of Fuentes's, Poniatowska's, Segovia's, and Arreola's contributions to the series, the picture that emerges is different from the one present in Reyes's Parentalia. Parentalia shows an autobiographical

subject committed to the possibility of a unitary, complete, and essential identity; in contrast, the other Los Presentes texts vigorously seek to undo monolithic narratives.

Fuentes's protagonists do not resolve questions of identity through a collaboration with Mexico's historical and ethnic past. Their contact with the past annihilates identity rather than restoring it. The narrator of Lilus Kikus elaborates a fierce critique of the gender roles implicit in the national narrative. Segovia's protagonist resolves his existential crisis, not by becoming the archetypal Mexican man, as does the protagonist of Mondragón's Tenemos sed, but instead by fashioning a sense of self dependent on experience rather than history. Arreola's drama portrays the destruction of its main character as the consequence of his racism and materialism, not of his failure to apprehend a greater national identity linked to Mexico's revolutionary, colonial, or Aztec past.

The cosmopolitanism of the Los Presentes writers corresponded with the esthetic predilections of some of the previous generation. Reyes, the consummate worldly, cosmopolitan writer promoted Arreola's venture through the presence of his name and biography in the series. But if the esthetic promoted by the younger writers in

the series correlated superficially with that of earlier writers, the narrative innovations they promoted and the cosmopolitanism they advanced ultimately undermined grand national projects to establish an essential Mexican identity.

My examination of the *Los Presentes* series opens broader questions in two areas. First, the role of Mexican cultural institutions, from publishers and journals to professional associations and cultural institutes that fund writers and promote literary careers, in deflecting critiques of national identity merits further study. The close relationship between Mexican political and cultural institutions in this century, from the Ateneo group to the present invites analysis of the negotiation between official discourse and literary esthetics. If the dynamics of the cultural field at midcentury are at all representative of other periods, the transition of esthetic modes and the writers associated with them from emergent to dominant positions is also marked by constraining alliances with conservative sectors.

The second area of consideration implicated by a study *Los Presentes* is the contradictory nature of essentialist or totalizing appraisals of twentieth-century Mexican letters. The literary work of *Los*

Presentes authors was not nearly so universal nor unambiguously cosmopolitan as their critical writing suggested. At the same time, the work of Mondragón and Rubín was neither as parochial nor esthetically unprogressive as Los Presentes writers assumed. Placed in context, the major pieces of prose fiction that appeared in 1954 all address the issue of modernity, in different ways, but with similar assumptions. The idea that midcentury Mexican modernity required redefinitions of identity on many levels (national and gender identity most specifically) grounds both groups of texts. While Los Presentes writers avoided the unambiguous formulations of subjectivity present in Mondragón's and Rubín's novels, their work reveals similar apprehensions with respect to the relationship between individuals and ideology.

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APPENDIX #1

This list is created from a "Ediciones De Andrea" catalog from the late 1960s, probably 1968. Numbers 20, 46, and 60 of the series do not appear on the catalog and, consequently, their price is unknown. Several of the books had sold out and were unavailable by the late 1960s. These appear with note, "Agot." (sold out) to the right. Numbers 9, 38, 39, 41, 53, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 72, 79, and 95 had also sold out but, because Pedro Frank De Andrea was also a vender of rare books and had connections with bookstores in Mexico City specializing in such items, he was able to continue selling them. Numbers 61-96 inclusive were sold under the "Ediciones De Andrea" label. All notes after the books except those in brackets are Pedro Frank De Andrea's. I have added the explanatory notes, "novela," "poesía," "teatro," "autobiografía," and "ensayo" when the genre of a particular text cannot be discerned from its title.

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