BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS: ON THE LITERARY CREATION OF NATIONAL SENTIMENT IN 19TH CENTURY MEXICO

by

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Abstract

Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Literary Creation and National Sentiment in 19th century Mexico

This dissertation explores the role of sentiment in the construction of national narratives in 19th century Mexico. An introductory history of sentiment allows for the meanings of that term and its associated phenomena to be understood in a new light and makes way for a re-reading of fundamental texts from three luminaries of Mexican discourse on nation-building: José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, Ignacio Ramírez, and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano.

Author of *El periquillo sarniento*, a work often cited as the first Mexican novel, Lizardi’s novels develop a project of sentimental didacticism that provides a moral means of producing an ideal model of citizenry through literature. This dissertation shows how sentiment persists at the heart of Lizardi’s didactic strategies throughout his three original novels, *El Periquillo Sarniento*, *La Quijotita y su prima*, and *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*. Analysis of Lizardi’s unrelenting social critique is followed by an examination of the literary and theoretico-linguistic works of 19th century Mexico’s most dangerous intellectual: Ignacio Ramírez, the Necromancer. Ramírez’s works challenge all social norms in an attempt to bring about a necessary destruction and re-invigoration of ideas, political structures, and social relations in a nation struggling with its own identity. As this dissertation shows, the notion that sentiment might be directly re-articulated through language is both made explicit in his writing and continues as a central presupposition of his overarching projects of social transformation.
This investigation concludes by turning to Ignacio Ramírez’s most famous student, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Where Ramírez cleared the way, Altamirano’s novels construct a sentimental edifice meant to sustain the demands of national identification and fellow-feeling. Nevertheless, his final novel, *El Zarco*, shows how Altamirano’s civic religion is ultimately crippled by its adoptive host, namely, religious sentiment.

Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano all believed that the question of the national community is first addressed to the heart. This investigation provides a novel analysis of their unique contributions to literature and society and a new understanding of how the nation was not only an imagined community, but a felt one.

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Diego Rivera – Excerpt from “Sueño de una tarde dominical en la alameda central” (1948)
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Introduction

The Scene of the Crime

In June 1948, a storm was brewing. For some time, legendary muralist Diego Rivera (1886-1957) had been close to completing his work, *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central.*

It would soon be revealed to the public, a monument to the story and sentiments of the patria that had come to be reinterpreted yet again in the wake of the Mexican Revolution. Rivera’s mural adorned the walls of one of the government’s recent building projects, the Hotel del Prado, which was scheduled to open for business after being duly anointed and blessed by Luis María Martínez (1881-1956), the archbishop of Mexico. The storm broke when the archbishop arrived and saw the mural. Although its contents had escaped serious scrutiny up to that point, the results of the archbishop’s inspection proved sufficient for him to condemn the mural and insist that no blessing would occur until it had been changed to exclude the element that had so deeply offended his sensibilities.

What about the mural could have provoked the archbishop’s feelings in this way?

The work can still be seen today in Mexico, and an analysis of its contents reveals an abundance of potential sources of antagonism. The mural is framed on the left side by two

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2 This pattern of reinterpretation is evident in numerous places in Rivera’s mural, but some of the more glaring examples can be found in the figures who are themselves absent from the historical panorama represented by *Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central.* Particularly striking are the omissions of founding fathers Padre Hidalgo and José María Morelos. The entirety of the mural can be examined online through the auspices of the Museo-Mural Diego Rivera at http://www.museomuraldiegorivera.mx/.
figures.\(^3\) One is Hernán Cortés, who is depicted with his hands covered in the blood of his conquest. His nefarious enterprise stands in solidarity with that of the other dark figure that accompanies him, Juan de Zumárraga (1468-1548), the first bishop and archbishop of New Spain. Zumárraga was responsible for the first of the tortures and murders that the Spanish Inquisition would wreak upon the peoples of the Americas. His image is surmounted by the ravages of his cruelty, and we are confronted with the flagellated body of Mariana Violante de Carvajal (arrived in Mexico in 1583, executed in 1601)\(^4\) just before she is committed to the flames for charges of crypto-Judaism. Just behind her, four bodies violently perish, victims of the *garrote vil*.\(^5\) Nevertheless, it was not one of these images of religious zealotry that provoked the ire of the archbishop.

The true culprit can no longer be seen because Rivera himself removed it in 1956. Up until that point the artist had been unrelenting: he would not remove the words *Dios no existe* that had so offended the archbishop. Those incendiary words were painted on a scroll held in the hand of Ignacio Ramírez (1818-1879), “el Nigromante,” a remarkable firebrand who led the charge of radical Liberal politics in mid-19\(^{th}\) century Mexico. As the first public figure ever to be commemorated with a statue in the Federal District’s Paseo de la Reforma, Ramírez’s legacy earned him a place in the mural next to Benito Juárez and

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\(^3\) Rivera’s mural is too massive to be easily captured in one image, but the portion of the mural featuring Ramírez and Altamirano serves as a frontispiece to the present work. A larger picture of the mural has also been included in the appendix to this work.


\(^5\) The Real Academia Española provides the following description of the garrotte, or *garrote vil*, utilized by the Inquisition: “Procedimiento para ejecutar a un condenado comprimiéndole la garganta con una soga retorcida con un palo, con un aro metálico u oprimiéndole la nuca con un tornillo.” “*garrote.*” Entry 2. *Diccionario esencial de la lengua española*. 22nd ed. 2006. N. pag. Real Academia Española. *lema.rae.es*. Web. 9 Sept. 2015.
Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Just as had often been the case during his life, his message of radical reform had again been reduced to a single, sinister claim that nevertheless challenged the very foundations of popular sentiment in Mexico.
Sentiment, Provocation, Education

Ignacio Ramírez was deeply concerned with educating the Mexican citizenry. He shares this didactic determination with two other giants of Mexican thought, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827) and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834-1893), both of whom also wielded the pen to achieve their pedagogical projects. Lizardi, Ramírez and Altamirano sought to make an enduring impact through literature. This investigation will show how sentiment plays a pivotal role in the didactic literary works of Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano. In a manner not dissimilar to Rivera’s mural, Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano all attempt to penetrate the minds of their audiences by first resonating with the sentiments of their hearts.

Rivera’s Sueño provoked a public scandal and was subject to a religious backlash, particularly from groups of Catholic students who eventually invaded the hotel and defaced the mural by cutting out the text no existe, leaving Dios as the only remnant of Ramírez’s message. That very same night Diego Rivera led a group of 100 radical artists and thinkers, including David Alfaro Siqueiros, José Clemente Orozco, Dr. Atl, and Frida Kahlo, to the Hotel del Prado. Rivera restored the text on Ramírez’s scroll while Dr. Arturo Arnaiz y Freg shouted “Death to the Archbishops who bless whorehouses and beauty salons!” The restoration of the mural was celebrated that night in the Hotel del Prado, where a granddaughter of Ignacio Ramírez’s stood on a table and lauded the principles of emancipatory reform and freedom of expression for which el Nigromante had relentlessly struggled.
Like his most famous student, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, Ramírez believed in the Liberal principle of popular education and utilized the newspaper to smash superstition and demagoguery. Joining with his liberal comrades Guillermo Prieto (1818-1897) and Manuel Payno (1810-1894), Ramírez published the satirical newspaper *Don Simplicio* in 1845. As Emilio Arellano reports, the following year *Don Simplicio* served as a platform from which (the then twenty-eight-year-old) Ramírez would engage in vociferous debate about the future of the country with Lucas Alamán (1792-1853). Alamán was Ramírez’s senior by 26 years, but he took the young polemicist seriously and wasted no time in firing back from his position at Mexico’s *El Tiempo*, the dominant organ of Conservative political and social thought in the period. The conflict came to a head in a debate between the two titans. The winner was determined based on the number of copies sold of each newspaper: *Don Simplicio* emerged as the victor.

The response from the ecclesiastical and landed interests that backed *El Tiempo* was immediate, and reprisals came in rapid succession: the final issue of *Don Simplicio* was published as a blank sheet on the 23rd of April of that year; one of its editors, Vicente García Torres, was forced into exile; the remaining issues of *Don Simplicio* were burned by the government; and finally, Ramírez, Prieto, and Payno were all imprisoned. The three of them must have remained there for months, for they celebrated Ramírez’s birthday together on June 22nd of that year. It was then that he received “tres panes de dulce y un envoltorio de papel que guardaba una libreta con ensayos y escritos de su ideólogo favorito,

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9 Cf. *ibid.*
el verdadero iniciador de la reforma, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, fechados en 1823.”

As this birthday present intimates, Ramírez saw José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1776-1827), the first major figure analyzed in this investigation, as his legitimate precursor and conciudadano, and he lauded Lizardi’s efforts as an emancipatory reformer of the rotting vestiges of colonial Mexican society:

El Pensador Mexicano fue el diablo para la época colonial, en nuestra patria; Hidalgo, el guerrero, fue una máquina de combate; Lizardi, el analizador, fue el rayo que á un mismo tiempo destuye e ilumina: Hidalgo rompió las cabezas; Lizardi las arreglo de nuevo. (Original emphasis)

As the tendency thus far would suggest, Lizardi was also persecuted by the combined powers of Church and State. With the eruption of Independence, Lizardi found himself cast adrift in a torrent of rapid but begrudging social change. In 1812, he was struggling to maintain his infirm wife and six children, but he jumped at the opportunity afforded by the establishment of freedom of expression in the newly-promulgated Constitution of Cadiz to launch his own political newspaper, El Pensador Mexicano. Only four days had passed since the publication of the decree of freedom of expression in New Spain when the first issue appeared on October 9, 1812. In the ensuing issues, Lizardi advocated for the role of the press in society and governance, and, as Spell observes, by the ninth issue of El Pensador Mexicano, he even attempted to intervene with the now-infamous viceroy Venegas in favor of recently-arrested revolutionary priests.

Lizardi could hardly be accused of subterfuge or conspiracy: he had submitted issues of *El Pensador Mexicano* to both Father J. M. Sartorio and another civil officer for approval before publication, and he had even hand-delivered a copy of the ninth issue to the viceroy on Venegas’s saint’s day.\(^\text{14}\) Despite his good intentions, the reaction of the center of power to these perceived provocations earned him a six-month prison term, which period proved sufficient to leave his family destitute.\(^\text{15}\) The freedom of the press on which he had relied was ignored by the viceroy, and Spell records Lizardi’s testimony before the court:

> When brought before the officials and required to testify, on the morning following his arrest, Lizardi at first answered facetiously, saying that the authors of the troublesome article were two ladies, “una de respeto y otra plebeya.” When required to make himself clearer on this point, he admitted that he was the author of the ninth number of *El Pensador Mexicano* as well [as] the preceding eight; but that the first lady meant the Constitution of Cádiz, which permitted him to write on political matters, and the second, his own ignorance, which had persuaded him to believe that the viceroy would not be angered by a request to revoke an edict distasteful to the people.\(^\text{16}\)

If Lizardi had thought that an appeal to popular sentiment would justify him before the viceroy’s Council of Safety, he was proven mistaken, and his comments in a letter pleading his case several months later reveal his recognition of the deep split in popular sentiment generated by the Independence movement:

> Three days later he wrote again insisting that others—Torres, Bustamante, and Peredo—had written against the same edict; that in spite of the freedom of the press, his article had been approved by a worthy and well-known person; that it could not have divided public opinion, because there already existed, at the time he wrote it, a difference of opinion […]\(^\text{17}\)

The sentimental education of “the people” later advocated by Lizardi’s novels would first have to reckon with this diversity of feelings and opinions.

\(^\text{16}\) *Ibid.*
Lizardi was forced to confront the divisions within the sentiments of the people that he strived to educate. But it was Ramírez’s successor, “el Maestro” Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, who went the furthest in his efforts to reconcile that division. The trajectory of Altamirano’s career is distinct from that of Lizardi or Ramírez. Lizardi died in relative obscurity, and Ramírez suffered severe punishments for his ideas, a form of castigation which Altamirano generally managed to avoid. Instead, the official hagiography of el Maestro most frequently emphasizes his struggle to rise from humble beginnings in the pueblo of Tixtla to the forefront of national political life. Altamirano was instructed in the Liberal political tradition by Ignacio Ramírez, and like el Nigromante and el Pensador Mexicano before him, el Maestro contributed to the national literary imagination by publishing newspapers as well as reviews like the highly influential El Renacimiento (1869). In his novels, Altamirano follows a trail blazed by Lizardi: both authors’s novels constitute a sophisticated pedagogical apparatus. And all three thinkers are united by a further commonality: Lizardi and Altamirano’s novels, alongside Ramírez’s literary-theoretical and linguistic works, all aim to educate their audiences through an appeal to sentiment.

Sentiment, and specifically its manipulation for the realization of didactic objectives, serves as the common denominator of the works that I will explore here. Although sentiment is a feature of all three thinkers, the ways in which Lizardi, Ramírez and Altamirano deploy sentiment to achieve their ends remain distinct. For Lizardi, sentiment is a mode of understanding conditioned by our innate sympathies with our fellow man. For Ramírez, sentiment is a fundamental feature of the natural world and is bound up with and susceptible to the dynamics of language and the sign. For Altamirano,
sentiment is an ideological vehicle, a unifying structure capable of reconciling the wounds suffered by the nation in its fratricidal wars.

The heterogeneity of sentimental perspective and praxis evident in the works of Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano is symptomatic of the historical and conceptual polyvalence of the word sentiment. Today, sentiment is often first associated with the “drippingly-sentimental” narrative devices prominently featured in soap operas and telenovelas. Nevertheless, pursuing the question of sentiment to its origins shows that that term has since time immemorial accompanied inquiry into some of the most fundamental questions of human life: How should I feel?; What do I feel?; How can we feel each other? From these questions this investigation draws another that addresses the history of nation-building in 19th century Mexico: how do we come to feel like part of a nation? Or said otherwise, how is a feeling of national community produced through the sentimental work of literature?
A History of Violence

The endemic volatility of the Mexican 19th Century makes it necessary to approach the political and social life of the period in *media res*. From 1810 to the 1870s, the attempt to transition from the institutions that had determined the nature of colonial rule in New Spain to those promised in the Constitution of 1857\(^{18}\) seemed interminable. An exemplary Mexican Conservative thinker, Emilio Rabasa (1856-1930), neatly summarizes the Conservative take on the political situation following Independence. Writing toward the end of the century, Rabasa described the grave consequences of that period as “*la bola*,” a cycle of unrelenting antagonism capable of undermining all institutions and obliterating the nation’s political and economic possibilities.\(^{19}\) The true chaos of the socio-political scene is evident in the fact that the presidency would change hands some 75 times between

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\(^{18}\) The Constitution of 1824 was the founding document of the First Mexican Republic. Resembling the Constitution of the United States of America in many ways, it laid the groundwork for a federal republic of states and a bicameral legislature. However, it stopped short of the ambitions of Liberal Republican forces in three major ways: religious intolerance toward all faiths but Roman Catholicism was established, provisions were made to cede dictatorial powers to the president in times of a loosely defined “emergency,” and the Church and the military maintained the unique economic and legal privileges that they had enjoyed since the Colonial Period. The Constitution of 1824 was progressively abrogated by the impositions of the illegitimate Centralist governments that struggled for national hegemony throughout the 1830s and 1840s. Because of this struggle, Valentín Gómez Farías, one of the most significant architects of Mexican Liberalism, would occupy the presidency no less than five times between 1833 and 1847. Conservative attempts at restructuring the nation in the 1836 *Siete Leyes* and the 1843 *Bases Orgánicas* would lead to repeated, failed attempts to reestablish the Constitution of 1824. But where the 1824 document had compromised with Conservatives, the Constitution of 1857, to which Ignacio Ramírez was one of the primary contributors, relentlessly asserted those initial Liberal dreams. Its three primary legislative initiatives, the *Ley Juárez*, the *Ley Iglesias*, and the *Ley Lerdo*, collectively known as the *Leyes de Reforma*, respectively abolished ecclesiastical and military judicial privilege, reallocated religious and corporate property, and regulated what had previously been obligatory religious “donations.” Ignacio Ramírez would strongly oppose the *Ley Lerdo* because of the disproportionately negative effect he correctly foresaw it having on Mexico’s indigenous *ejido* communities where properties were also corporately held and worked communally. The realization of the program enshrined in the Constitution of 1857 would eventually lead to another bloody chapter in Mexican history, namely, the War of Reform.

1821 and 1876. Although the Mexican masses bore the brunt of the suffering brought on by the internecine struggles of the period, that suffering was itself generated by a complex amalgamation of political maneuvers representing a variety of interests both foreign and domestic. The glut of bloodletting would repeat itself in conflicts including the First Franco-Mexican War (November 1838-March 1839, also known as the Pastry War), the Mexican Invasion (1846-1848), the War of Reform (1857-1861), and the Second Franco-Mexican War (December 1861-June 1867). The antagonism fueling the bola of social conflict would continue to explode periodically, most notably in 1910 with the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution.

The Mexican 19th Century, however, is more than a locus of seemingly-eternal transition; the very notion of what could be considered “eternal” was also at stake. The systems of governance that had constantly strived and failed to become meaningfully “national” in the preceding years possessed a litany of putatively “eternal” features, to wit: slavish deference to ecclesiastical authority and wealth; an inability to control the dissidence, infighting, and frequent pronouncements of regional caciques; a manifest lack of central authority or effective governmental policy on the national level; and the widespread disenfranchisement and chronic neglect of the vast majority of the country’s predominantly rural and indigenous population. Conservative writers like Rabasa commonly argued that the dangers implicit in trying to resolve those problems were often as great as or greater than that entailed by the problems themselves. Like their Conservative peers, Liberal thinkers also recognized the necessity of dealing with the

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nation’s bloody past. However, their response to that necessity included a vision of a distinctly Liberal future that would emerge out of those trying times.

That future was long time coming. By mid-century, the Liberal attempt at wresting power from the grip of the Church and the Conservative sectors of society—the same groups that had rallied under the banner of “religión y fueros” in reaction to Liberal reforms—acted as the catalyst for a civil war that exacted a terrible price.\(^{21}\) Painting a vivid picture of civil turmoil, Rabasa decries a socio-political field bereft of the sort of possibilities that can only emerge in an environment of stability, peace, and orderly advance:

¡Miserable bola, sí! La arrastran tantas pasiones como cabecillas y soldados la constituyen; en el uno es la venganza ruín; en el otro una ambición mezquina; en aquel el ansia de figurar; en éste la de sobreponerse á un enemigo. \(Y\) \textit{ni un sólo pensamiento común, ni un principio que aliente á las conciencias. }Su teatro es el rincón de un distrito lejano; sus héroes hombres que, quizá aceptándola de buena fe, se dejan la que tenían, hecha girones en los zarzales del bosque. El trabajo honrado se suspende; la garrocha se necesita para la pelea y el buey para alimento de aquella bestia feroz: los campos se talan, los bosques se incendian, los hogares se despojan, sin más ley que la voluntad de un cacique brutal; se cosechan al fin lágrimas, desesperación y hambre [...]

Rabasa’s critique laments the dearth of unifying thoughts and principles that gives rise to \textit{la bola}. In doing so, he also recognizes the necessity of finding some ground for unity and fellow-feeling in order to assure the orderly progress of the nation. While Conservative thinkers had little beyond Catholic religious sentiment to offer as a potential unifying force, Liberal thinkers instead set about forging a sentimental community through innovative appeals to popular patriotic sentiment.


Writing some three decades earlier, in a discourse delivered in Tlalpan on September 15, 1857, Juan Díaz Covarrubias (1837-1859), a burgeoning young creole poet who would soon be sacrificed in the massacre of Tacubaya by French forces under the orders of Leonardo Márquez, had also lamented the wrath that had been visited upon Mexico and urged his audience to ponder: “En dónde están los elementos de la prosperidad de México?” Covarrubias embodies the Liberal answer to the quandary noted by Conservatives. Whereas Rabasa’s account of national conflict casts the struggle for Reform as a blind and wanton rush for power deprived of any unifying sentiment, principle, or purpose, Covarrubias’s youthful enthusiasm still permits him to dream of fulfilling the “elements of prosperity” that he mentions into a reality. Covarrubias affirms that those elements are already present in a sort of sentimental union unthinkable from the Conservative perspective:

[Estos elementos] están en la paz, la unión y el trabajo, esa trinidad social que da reposo á las naciones, que ata á sus hijos con el dulce lazo de la ternura y las afecciones patrias, y los hace marchar con identidad de voluntades al progreso. (My emphasis)

In sharp contrast to Conservative writers like Rabasa, Covarrubias’s Discourse predicts the coming of a blessed modernity as compensation for the continued hope and

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23 This slaughter earned Márquez the infamous title of the “tiger” or “hiena of Tacubaya.” Covarrubias was acting as a field medic at the time of his capture and was executed by firing squad alongside his dear friend, Manuel Mateos, who had also shown promise as a young author. For the purposes of this investigation, it should also be noted that Manuel Mateos was the brother of noteworthy poet Juan Antonio Mateos Lozada, and that Ignacio Ramírez was an uncle of the Mateos boys. The story of that execution was memorialized by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano in a short piece that is to this day generally included in the front-matter of editions of Covarrubias’s most well-known work, Gil Gómez: Insurgente (1858). Altamirano lavishes the young author with praise for his spirit and bravery, and the emotional staging of Covarrubias’s final moments, while remaining solidly within Liberal ideological coordinates, presents a christologically-charged civic martyrdom. Cf. Altamirano, Ignacio Manuel. Los mártires de Tacubaya in Covarrubias, Juan Díaz Gil Gómez: Insurgente p. XXVII – XXXII. Print.


25 Ibid.
sacrifice of the Mexican people and projects a vision of the future that unabashedly synthesizes salvific religious metaphor with the hope for civic renewal:

¿Qué es el porvenir para la virtud? Es la vida en esa República de la eternidad que se llama cielo y está al otro lado del sepulcro. ¿Qué son la fraternidad y la igualdad? Es la vida en ese cielo de la tierra que se llama República y está antes del sepulcro.  

Couched in a religious register that might have rendered it a punishable offense only 40 years earlier, this eschatological vision is a strong indicator of the transition of putatively “eternal” preconceptions underlying the Mexican social order. Covarrubias’s vision also deploys a dichotomic representation of the social struggle similar to what would come to be employed in the officially-endorsed recasting of the majority of the political figures of that epoch. The distortions immanent in this moralized state history produced opposing angelic and infernal political pantheons, each populated by ideologically-filtered images fit for public emulation or execration. But despite making his own contribution to that manichean political division, Covarrubias nevertheless admits that his vision is hardly universally accepted or desired, and that the hearts of the Mexican people are rife with

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27 In support of this point, it should be remembered that the Inquisition remained active in Mexico until 1820. Additionally, it should be emphasized that many of the fundamental tenants of Liberal Republicanism had been explicitly anathematized by Pope Pius IX in his 1864 Syllabus of Errors. A few examples of the heretical statements associated with “Modern Liberalism” and condemned therein are illustrative in this regard:

**X. ERRORS HAVING REFERENCE TO MODERN LIBERALISM**

77. In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship. –Allocution "Nemo vestrum," July 26, 1855.

78. Hence it has been wisely decided by law, in some Catholic countries, that persons coming to reside therein shall enjoy the public exercise of their own peculiar worship. –Allocution "Acerbissimum," Sept. 27, 1852.

79. Moreover, it is false that the civil liberty of every form of worship, and the full power, given to all, of overtly and publicly manifesting any opinions whatsoever and thoughts, conduce more easily to corrupt the morals and minds of the people, and to propagate the pest of indifferentism. –Allocution "Nunquam fore," Dec. 15, 1856.

80. The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization. –Allocution "Jamdudum cernimus," March 18, 1861.

internal divisions, the fracturing effects of which extend even into the sacrosanct space of the family:

_La lucha civil no ha dejado crear ni un carácter, ni unas costumbres nacionales_, desarrollando una sociedad mixta de lo más estragante, aristocracia arlequín, aristocracia “polichinela” que en sus costumbres, su idioma, sus inclinaciones y hasta en su traje, imita o procura imitar a diferentes sociedades de Europa, sin dejar fijar un sello de originalidad que indique un existir político, apasible, uniforme y progresador. _La diversidad de opiniones ha ido hasta el corazón de las familias a establecer la diversidad de costumbres, y no es raro encontrar una familia viciada, cuyos miembros difieren de la manera más extraña._

(My emphasis)

**Recognition** of this internal division provokes a revelatory contradiction in Covarrubias’s _Discurso_ in Tlalpan. While the _Discurso_ claims explicit authorization by the mandate of a “sentimiento popular” to address “el pueblo mi hermano,” it also undermines that same authority by pointing out divisions within the hearts of the Mexican people. The text concludes on a paradoxical note regarding the same sort of lack of principle, morality and popular cohesion decried by Rabasa: “[…] El pueblo no forma parte del pueblo.”

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28 The quoted passage goes on to detail these internal divisions more specifically and vivaciously: “Una madre que guarda aún y se arraiga a las preocupaciones del gobierno virreinal; un padre, que lanzado completamente al torbellino de las revoluciones, descuida la educación de sus hijos: unas jóvenes que imitan el lujo y el desenfreno escandaloso de las sociedades parisiense; un joven que se reconcentra inútil en las escéntricas ideas de los ingleses; niños que con tan funesto ejemplo a los diez años ya tienen opiniones diversas y ya se inclinan a afiliarse en un partido de los que dividen al país; criados víctimas, que por el estado de servilismo en que se les tiene, no se diferencian de los desdichados hijos de Africa o de los salvajes de nuestros desiertos.” Covarrubias, Juan Díaz. _Obras Completas: Discurso cívico pronunciado en la ciudad de Tlalpam la noche del 15 de Septiembre de 1857 por el ciudadano Juan Díaz Covarrubias_. Vol. 8. Mexico: Tipografía de Manuel Castro, 1860. 14. Print.

29 The first paragraph of the discourse given in Tlalpan truly sets the tone for the rhetorical strategy that plays out in the ensuing work: “¿De qué manera corresponder al llamamiento de la patria? ¿Cómo hacerme digno de la confianza que hoy el pueblo deposita en mí? Yo quisiera al presentarme en este sitio, donde el sentimiento popular me coloca, traer algo más que mis esperanzas de mexicano y mis creencias de joven. Yo quisiera ser uno de esos hombres de genio, cuyas palabras, semejantes a los rayos de luna que se cuelgan sobre la extensión del cementerio, iluminando blandamente la oscuridad del mismo sepulcro, derrama las luces del consuelo, de la esperanza y de la fe en el corazón de los pueblos. Pero yo, en esta noche, aniversario glorioso, sólo podré recordar al pueblo mi hermano los pasados días de nuestras victorias, juntos levantaremos una plegaria, plegaria tierna como del alma, a la memoria de nuestros muertos héroes, ya que juntos guardamos en el rincón más recóndito de ellas las reminiscencias de días de triunfos, perdidos en la noche de los tiempos. Porque ¿en qué corazón de patriota, no encuentran un eco los nombres de esos héroes? Porque ¿qué mexicano no vive con la vida de sus recuerdos?” (My emphasis). _Op. cit._ 3.

National Literature and Sentimental Community

The establishment of universal public education was the centerpiece of the Liberal party’s response to the pueblo’s lack of participation in and identification with national political life.\(^{31}\) The realization of that lofty goal would in great part continue to elude the grasp of subsequent governments. Nevertheless, that didactic impulse was also canalized in other directions, and it generated literary phenomena united in the goal of fashioning the fabric of a coherent national narrative.\(^{32}\) The drive to inculcate the sentiments of citizenry and a shared hope for a unified national community in those tumultuous times was anticipated in Lizardi’s novels, forwarded by Ramírez’s thinking and honed by Altamirano’s novels. The full significance of the work of these three authors can only be fully grasped after first bringing into focus the way that sentiment functions in their works.

“Sentiment” and its linguistic ancestors (e.g. πάθη, passions, appetites, feelings, \textit{et al.}) have been inflected in a variety of ways throughout the history of thinking about feeling. The examination of sentiment and concern for its control date back as far as the works of Plato. Chapter 1 of this investigation traces the history of sentiment from Plato’s consideration of the emotions to the political consideration of sentiment and sympathy in David Hume and Adam Smith. Reviewing the history of sentiment reveals that, despite being diversely conceptualized and theorized, sentimental phenomena have played an indispensable role in humanity’s historical attempts to understand its place in the world.

\(^{31}\) Brading summarizes this crucial facet of the ideology of the second generation of thinkers to take up the Liberal standard in Mexico thusly: “Public education was the Liberal panacea for their country’s ills, both social and civic.” Brading, David A. \textit{The First America: the Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots and the Liberal state, 1492-1867}. New York: Cambridge UP, 1993. 660. Print.\(^{32}\) As argued in Chapter 2 of the present investigation, the work of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi signifies the national inauguration and first flowering of the “literary phenomena” that I mention here.
From considerations of how we have knowledge about ourselves and the world to questions about how we can know and effect the feelings of others, the historical conversation on sentiment provides Lizardi, Ramírez and Altamirano with an embarrassment of lexical and conceptual riches to be refashioned and strategically redeployed in their literary-pedagogical projects.

Sentiment is about more than just raw sensation, and the way that we feel informs our understanding and often betrays hidden motivations. The question of how we should feel and how to discern the feelings of others becomes a matter of unparalleled importance in the 19th Century as Liberal thinkers attempted to transmute the national “imagined community” into a “sentimental community” centered on patriotic fellow-feeling and a history of shared suffering. However, the first attempts at reckoning with that question, launched by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, predate the establishment of Mexico as a sovereign nation. Chapter 2 of this investigation shows how Lizardi’s three major novels, *El periquillo sarniento*, *La Quijotita y su prima*, and *Don Catrin de la Fachenda* work in tandem to provide a model of unifying social sentiment by instructing their audience in the proper use of sympathy and sentimental discernment. Lizardi’s credentials as a radical intellectual have been questioned by the critical tradition, but his tactical appeal to sentimental understanding makes him an undeniable precursor to the didactic works that would try to inspire the body politic with a feeling of a national “sentimental community” in the years following Independence.

Like representative democracy, the body politic *qua* “sentimental community” is a paradoxical notion: however the sentiments of a community are expressed in the abstract, the connection to the embodied sentiments of that community’s particular members can be
difficult to ascertain. Whereas Lizardi had attempted to provide a model to be followed by all right-thinking people (namely, his *hombre de bien*), Ignacio Ramírez instead attempts to bypass the prejudices of his readers by approaching the question of sentiment from a radically experimental perspective. That perspective is shaped by his thoroughgoing materialism, a factor which joins with his atheism to color Ramírez’s reputation as a dangerous and provocative thinker. Ramírez’s literary-theoretical and linguistic writings have frequently been overshadowed by his monumental presence as a statesman, polemicist, and educator. Chapter 3 of this investigation attempts to remedy that fateful omission by demonstrating how Ramírez’s thought on language and literature coincides with and contributes to the development of his project of radical, egalitarian reform in all domains of knowledge and society.

Ignacio Manuel Altamirano’s novels carry Ramírez’s literary didacticism from theory to practice. Chapter 4 of this investigation both shows how *Clemencia, La navidad en las montañas*, and *El Zarco* are all connected by a common sentimental project and explores how Altamirano attempts to effect the reconciliation of the nation and produce a unified national sentiment by clothing the virtues of Republicanism in the trappings of popular Catholic religiosity. As is the case in the works of Lizardi and Ramírez, Altamirano’s novels aim to educate their audience so that they might properly discern and develop true moral, as well as *patriotic*, sentiments. Those feelings, in turn, were to pave the way toward the establishment of a national family of the sort extolled in 1824 by Guadalupe Victoria, the first President of Mexico:

[…] Que los menos avisados políticos, esos hombres que por la ligera observación de los sucesos ejercen el monopolio de la crítica, extraviaron sus cálculos por apariencias dudosas, y fallaron que la anarquía nos iba conduciendo gradualmente a la ruina de las libertades y a la caída de la Independencia misma, que estimaban incierta y precaria.
La historia de las revoluciones acaecidas en todas las partes del globo, en diversos tiempos, pudo convencerlos de que los fenómenos se reproducen en ellas sin cesar, y de que el entusiasmo por las reformas radicales, cuando se liga con las fibras del corazón, es fecundo en prodigios y emplea útilmente hasta los recursos que no alcanzó la prudencia humana. (My emphasis)

Altamirano dreams of a utopian future where Mexico is unified into a new sentimental community, but dreaming can be a dangerous affair, and Altamirano’s celebration of reconciliation is haunted by the inexorable specter of a judgment day that could again befall the nation at any moment. This leads to the conclusion of this investigation, where Altamirano’s final novel, *El Zarco* is analyzed as a symptom of the final sentimental breakdown of *el Maestro’s* attempts at national reconciliation.

In the works of Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano, the search for national unity is wedded to the literary production of a binding sentimental community. More than just imagined, this community must be sensed, felt, and desired. It must inspire loyalty, enthusiasm, perserverance, brotherhood and sisterhood. Literature, they wagered, could instruct the new citizenry in its rights and obligations. It could provide a sense of a shared history and destiny in a time of great political strife and division. Moreover, and most importantly, it could help readers determine which sentiments were genuine and desirable and which were false, divisive, and regressive. That the didactic literary projects of those thinkers ultimately failed in their aims does not change the pressing character of the problem that they confronted. As the rising political demagoguery and hate-mongering of our own time continues to demonstrate, the most massive mounds of evidence can be obscured through the skilled solicitation of sentiment. Rivera’s mural stands as a testament to the perils entailed by the passionate invocation of the sentiments of the past. This

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investigation examines how Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano brandished literature to brave those perils in the hopes of establishing a national sentimental community.

Changing our minds is not the same as changing the way we feel, but neither can occur without the aid of the other. Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano all recognized that the heart was a royal road to the mind, and they all exploited that discovery in different ways. In doing so, they act as a reminder today that, if it is to be credible, the national community must be more than an imagined community. It must also be a felt one.
Chapter 1

“Do You Feel What I Feel?”: A Very Brief History of the Problem and Possibilities of “Sentiment”

“Le sentiment national, par exemple, n’est-il pas à lui seul toute une religion? Telle heure peut sonner où la foi au pays, le sentiment patriotique, profondément exalté, fait tout à coup d’un jeune homme qui s’ignorait lui-même, un Tyrtée, rallie d’innombrables âmes avec le cri d’une seule, et donne à la parole d’un adolescent l’étrange puissance d’émouvoir tout un peuple.”
– Victor Hugo

“— Dear sensibility! Source inexhausted of all that’s precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! Thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw – and ‘tis thou who lifts him up to HEAVEN— eternal fount of feelings— ‘tis here I trace thee – and this is thy divinity which stirs within me – not, that in some sad and sickening moments, ‘my soul shrinks back upon herself, and startles at destruction’ – mere pomp of words! – but that I feel some generous joys and generous cares beyond myself – all comes from thee, great – great Sensorium of the world! which vibrates, if a hair of our heads but falls upon the ground, in the remotest desert of thy creation.”
– Laurence Sterne

“And only because the ‘senses’ belong ontologically to an entity whose kind of Being is Being-in-the-world with a state-of-mind, can they be ‘touched’ by anything or ‘have a sense for’ something in such a way that what touches them shows itself in an affect. Under the strongest pressure and resistance, nothing like an affect would come about, and the resistance itself would remain essentially undiscovered, if Being-in-the-world, with its state-of-mind, had not already submitted itself to having entities within-the-world “matter” to it in a way which its moods have outlined in advance.”
– Martin Heidegger

“Ce n'est pas tour de rassis entendement, de nous juger simplement par nos actions de dehors : il faut sonder jusqu’au dedans, et voir par quels ressorts se donne le branle. Mais d'autant que c'est une hasardeuse et haute entreprise, je voudrais que moins de gens s'en mêlassent.”
– Michel de Montaigne
1.0 Introduction to the Specter of Sentiment

Because of its amorphous connotations, interpreting the role of sentiment in nation-building is a fraught affair. The objective of this chapter is to provide a provisional history of sentiment in order to ground subsequent investigation into the literary use of sentiment in the didactic works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, Ignacio Ramírez, and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Section 1.0 begins analysis of the mutual-imbrication of popular sentiment and nationalism. Section 1.1 extends that analysis to contemporary theories of nationalism and the nation-state. In Section 1.2 the question of sentiment returns to its origins in the Ancient world, while Section 1.3 continues tracing that interrogation to the European Enlightenment. Section 1.4 focuses on the historical evolution of the word sentiment and other related terms. Section 1.5 presents a focused examination of the didactic possibilities of sentiment in the theories of David Hume and Adam Smith.

One doesn’t have to look far afield to find “sentiment” in 19th century Mexican history. After all, one of the founding documents of the nation, promulgated by José María Morelos at the Congress of Chilpancingo on September 14, 1813, was entitled Los sentimientos de la nación in the revolutionary priest’s own handwriting. Consisting of 23 articles, the disparate character of the items enumerated in that document reflects the rampant polysemy that the term “sentiment” has accumulated throughout history. Los sentimientos consists of a litany of revolutionary prescriptions, declarations of rights, confirmations of prejudices, articles of faith and calls to action. It asserts that América is independent; declares intolerance of all but the Catholic religion; recognizes the principle of popular sovereignty; and establishes the division of legislative, executive, and judicial powers and their functions. It succinctly demands that employment only be granted to
americanos and severely curbs foreign immigration, while at the same time abolishing slavery and torture, and reinforcing the sanctity of private property. Finally, Article 23 concludes the document by enshrining both the official cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the nation’s Independence Day (16 September, 1810). The manifest convergence of religious and nationalist sentiments in Article 23 is indicative of a heterogeneity that permeates the contents of the entire document. That heterogeneity also extends to the temporalities that Los sentimientos invokes. In the same stroke of the pen it calls forth the past (the remembrance of Independence Day and Hidalgo), the present (the immediate present of the burgeoning nation), and the future (in which Independence is already a fait accompli and can legitimately ground the rights and institutions that the document envisions).

Indeed, as Felipe Garrido has argued, Los sentimientos acts as a sort of symptomatic nexus manifesting the struggles of the period. The document encapsulates both the particular exigencies of its moment and the germ of utopia so earnestly cultivated by Mexican Liberals in the 19th and 20th Centuries. The evolution and mounting intensity of those exigencies coincided with the federal government’s continuing inability to convert political promises into meaningful social change at the national level. The urgency of the political situation drove Liberal thinkers to confront a series of questions that would give shape to the nation-building project already underway. Giving shape to a new national

34 Garrido writes that: “De los Sentimientos resultan anacrónicos los que reiteran la intolerancia religiosa, inevitable entonces, cuando respetar las creencias de los demás era apenas una idea avanzada. El resto de los incisos integra los principios básicos no sólo del Decreto constitucional de Apatzingán y de las constituciones de 1857 y 1917, sino de las que podamos darnos en el futuro. Morelos presentó al Congreso de Chilpancingo una propuesta para el México que nacia; sus Sentimientos de la Nación se mantienen vigentes para la patria del porvenir.” Cf. Morelos y Pavón, José M. Sentimientos de la Nación. 2nd ed. Mexico City: Conaculta, 2010. 109. Print.
community was more than just a question of winning votes and establishing new legal and economic institutions. Guadalupe Victoria (1786-1843), the first president of the First Mexican Republic (1824-1835), recognized this fact in a speech given during his investiture on October 10, 1824. Having expressed his humble gratitude for the esteem of his compatriots, Victoria then transforms an intimate account of his personal experience into a paean to the triumph of popular sovereignty:

Mis ojos afortunadamente alcanzaron á ver la libertad, la redención y la completa ventura de la Patria, se fijaron tiempo había en los ilustres ciudadanos que con su sangre, sus talentos y fatigas rompieron la cadena de tres siglos y han dado existencia á un pueblo heroico, dejando á la posteridad su gloria, su nombre y sus ejemplos […] Con la docilidad que he escuchado hasta aquí la voz de la ley, emitida por los funcionarios de la Nación libre, me preparaba á sufrir aun la muerte misma en sostén y obedecimiento del virtuoso mexicano designado por los votos y los corazones […] Yo quise, y este fue el más ardiente de mis deseos, que la suprema autoridad, la firme adhesión á los principios y la más absoluta deferencia á la voluntad general, marcasen mi carácter y mi fe política.35 (My emphasis)

Victoria insisted that the nation derived its legitimacy from both the ballot box and the hearts of the people, and the speech he gave on December 24 of the same year to close the Constitutional Congress attempts to explain precisely how the sentiments of the people had been converted into a heartfelt democratic movement.

Victoria’s speech begins by restating the obvious. The carnage of the struggle against Colonial domination had created undeniable rifts in Mexican society:

Yo concedo francamente á los que pretendian ahogarnos en las olas de una demagogia turbulenta y desorganizadora, que señalaron con destreza y oportunidad el punto más débil de defensa, y cuando se vacilaba en la adopción de forma de Gobierno, existía alguna predisposición para ensangrentar las opiniones, robustecer los celos y los odios y dilacerar nuestra fraternal benevolencia.

El fanatismo y la intolerancia política, esas hidras que tanto multipican sus cabezas, vinieron al apoyo de los malvados, y las mutuas recriminaciones turbaron la paz de las familias. El puñal de la venganza traspasó los corazones, y se vió con sentimiento de los buenos, que algunos

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As Victoria sees it, those rifts could only have been the product of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nation’s destiny. The opponents of Independence suffered from a sentimental deficit that made them blind to the true nature of liberty:

Nevertheless, even if some had been deceived by their own vicious sentiments, “the pueblos” as a whole had not been led astray. To the contrary, Victoria asserted that the pueblos were naturally patriotic. Indeed, it was an innate sense of patriotism that had instinctually led the people to entrust the Constitutional Congress and the government it had created with the power to realize their desires and resolve any remaining inequities among the nascent collective:

The Constitutional Congress had accepted this transcendental gesture on the part of the people and immediately set to work at remedying the evils that menaced the country. In doing so, it also managed to transform the spirit of partisanship into a unified “national spirit”:

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36 _Op. cit._ 30
37 _Ibid_
38 _Ibid_
Guadalupe Victoria declares that the time for war has finally ceased, and whereas the fight for the freedom of the *Patria* had previously been nourished with the blood of the country’s martyrs, the new Republic would now be sustained through the union of the people. Here again, those that question that unity are held to be too ignorant or prejudiced to perceive the inner greatness of the Mexican people:

> Uno de los medios más poderosos y eficaces de que se valieron nuestros detractores para alejar el momento en que, sistematizado el orden, asegurada la paz interior y conformes los ánimos en sostener la unión como la principal columna del edificio social, se hallase esta Nación en el caso de aparecer con dignidad, fue sin duda el de suponer en los mexicanos una tendencia irresistible á los tumultos y las insurrecciones.  

In sharp contradistinction to the nation’s “detractors,” Victoria cites the pueblo’s enthusiastic embrace of the Republic as undeniable evidence that the masses of the people also shared the Liberal dream for the future of the national community:

> Pero el mejor, el verdadero, el más expresivo elogio del libro inmortal, del sistema razonado que ha organizado nuestra sociedad, y es también su principio conservador, me atrevo á decir que debe buscarse en el entusiasmo con que lo han acogido los pueblos. Ellos, calculadores de su conveniencia, desprecian las viles y aun las miserables arterías de que se valen algunos para anunciar funestos trastornos y la necesidad de revoluciones.

This is the point where Victoria’s narrative gamble breaks down. Despite having proclaimed the Congress’s successful transubstantiation of the sentiments of the people into a national community, the president is forced to concede that detractors still persist and popular opinion still remains divided. The nation’s transformation would be unconvincing and untenable until the situation had been rectified.

Guadalupe Victoria’s speech, however, cannot afford to second guess national reality at the same time that it strives to affirm it. Instead, the president assures all right-

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41 Op. cit. 32.
thinking Mexicans that soon their just sentiments will be rewarded as they finally feel the
effects of the victory of Liberal principle. And those foreign and abroad who had doubted
the nationalist gospel would be suitably exposed and condemned; more than enemies of
the state, they were now enemies of freedom and reason:

A nuestros ojos aparecen los felices resultados que ha producido la ley fundamental.
Compárense tiempos con tiempos, y las lágrimas de gozo y las bendiciones de todos los que sienten
con vivo anhelo las dichas de su Patria, reducirán á su justa infamia las críticas abominables de
los enemigos de la libertad y de la razón.42 (My emphasis)

The above citation is the penultimate paragraph of Victoria’s speech. With these words he
brings paradoxical closure to the formal assertion of the sovereign Mexican nation. His
speech upon acceptance of the presidency had emphasized the pre-existing, natural, and
instinctual unity of the people, but in the president’s second speech, the image of those
proto-national communal ties continues to be haunted by the specter of dissenting
sentiments and partisan opinion. The State would no longer willfully countenance its
Conservative apostates. There had to be a way to convert the recalcitrant and profligate to
the ‘righteous doctrine’ of Liberal principle and Republican sentiment. Success in
changing governments would in great part depend on a widespread change of hearts and
minds.

The difficulties implicit in squaring the principled exercise of popular sovereignty
with the sentiments of the people themselves—however those people might be variously
defined— are not unique to the politics of nation-building in 19th century Mexico. The
following section shows that concern for sentiment, and specifically “nationalist”
sentiment, is a central feature of the emergence of the modern nation state.

42 Ibid
1.1 Imagining Communities: Nationalism and National Sentiment

The question of how to form a nation entails the need to respond to the pressing demands of life as a community. Since the advent of the modern nationalist paradigm in the 19th Century, theorists like Ernest Renan (1823-1892) had argued that the stuff of nations is fashioned from a volatile mélange of fact, fiction, and feeling. To become a people in any meaningful sense of the word meant arriving at a shared belief in one’s identity as a citizen of the nation. It also meant recognizing one’s fellow citizens, their rights, and one’s obligations to them as members of the national family. Learning how to respect those rights in another and how to fulfill one’s social obligations often required people to reconsider their closely-held beliefs and prejudices. Finally, it was necessary to tell a credible story about how all of this change had suddenly become possible, and more importantly, why such radical change was both necessary and desirable.

While Renan had himself directed a focused inquiry into the gestation and origination of nations, he also forcefully asserted the practical benefits of maintaining a healthy level of ignorance with regard to the truth of the events that found them:

L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la formation d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. L'investigation historique, en effet, remet en lumière les faits de violence qui se sont passés à l'origine de toutes les formations politiques, même de celles dont les conséquences ont été le plus bienfaisantes. L’unité se fait toujours brutalement.43

This consideration leads Renan to propound his famous definition of the nation: “Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses.”44 What such a definition implies is today a

commonplace in theorizations of nationalism, namely, that the origin of the nation state and its concomitant ideological paradigm are socially-constructed. That any particular individual might be able to forgive and forget is not enough to produce a feeling of social unity. National communities are grounded in an agreement that is sustained by the participation of the citizenry in a diversity of everyday practices that reinforce the fabric of the national narrative and lend credibility to the story that it tells.

As Renan elaborates on this definition, the nation takes on the air of the divine and serves as a narrative locus where the national community conjoins various stories of its past, present and future. That narrative conjuncture then allows the nation’s people to constitute themselves as the members of a national community through the adoption of a common understanding of each member’s communal identity. Adopting that common identity allows members of the community to fashion new, national modes of solidarity through the recollection and recognition of the common suffering of their past, the possibility of their unity in the present, and their belief in a glorious national future:

Une nation est une âme, un principe spirituel. Deux choses qui, vrai dire, n'en font qu'une constituent cette âme, ce principe spirituel. L'une est dans le passé, l'autre dans le présent. L'une est la possession en commun d'un riche legs de souvenirs; l'autre est le consentement actuel, le désir de vivre ensemble, la volonté de continuer faire valoir l'héritage qu'on a reçu indivis. L'homme, messieurs, ne s'improvise pas. La nation, comme l'individu, est l'aboutissant d'un long passé d'efforts, de sacrifices et de dévouements. Le culte des ancêtres est de tous le plus légitime; les ancêtres nous ont faits ce que nous sommes. Un passé héroïque, des grands hommes, de la gloire (j'entends de la véritable), voilà le capital social sur lequel on assied une idée nationale. Avoir des gloires communes dans le passé, une volonté commune dans le présent; avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore, voilà la condition essentielle pour être un peuple. On aime en proportion des sacrifices qu'on a consentis, des maux qu'on a soufferts; On aime la maison qu'on a bâtie et qu'on transmet. Le chant spartiate: “Nous sommes ce que vous fûtes, nous serons ce que vous êtes ” est dans sa simplicité l'hymne abrégé de toute patrie.

Dans le passé, un héritage de gloire et de regrets à partager, dans l'avenir un même programme à réaliser ; avoir souffert, joui, espéré ensemble, voilà ce qui vaut mieux que des douanes communes et des frontières conformes aux idées stratégiques ; voilà ce que l'on comprend malgré les diversités de race et de langue. Je disais tout à l'heure “avoir souffert ensemble “; oui, la souffrance en commun unit plus que la joie. En fait de souvenirs nationaux, les deuils valent mieux
que les triomphes ; car ils imposent des devoirs ; ils commandent l'effort en commun.\textsuperscript{45} (My emphasis)

Although critical theory has largely dismissed Renan due to the racism that frequently mars his accounts of the historical advance of different peoples, this particular insight into the construction of community is nevertheless still persistent in discussions of the nature and origins of nationalism throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century.\textsuperscript{46} Despite their radically different theoretical positions, Étienne Balibar largely coincides with Renan in recognizing the constructed nature of the nation form and the powerful ideological paradigm that enshrouds it:

The myth of origins and national continuity, which we can easily see being set in place in the contemporary history of the ‘young’ nations (such as India or Algeria) which emerged with the end of colonialism, but which we have a tendency to forget has also been fabricated over recent centuries in the case of the ‘old’ nations, is therefore an effective ideological form, in which the imaginary singularity of national formations is constructed daily, by moving back from the present into the past.\textsuperscript{47}

As Balibar suggests, it is the daily work of a nation’s people to maintain and reinforce the ideological framework of collective remembrance and forgetting that Renan sees as the heart of the nation-building process. But Balibar rightly questions the putative social harmony and obliteration of distinction among citizens that Renan attributes to the successful foundation of the nation state. Balibar does argue that the emergence of nation-states from their “pre-history” inevitably gives rise to stories that narrate how that emergence had been ‘necessary’ since time immemorial.\textsuperscript{48} However, he also points out that efforts at ideological reconciliation through narration are unable to totally occlude the

\textsuperscript{46} The general recognition of the racism implicit in Renan’s account originated with Edward Said’s critique of the same in his landmark work, Orientalism. Nevertheless, some critics have recently problematized such an assessment by appealing to the complex evolution of Renan’s thought over time and his consistent rejection of biological racism later in life. Cf. Priest, Robert D. "Ernst Renan's Race Problem." The Historical Journal 58.01 (2015): 309-30. Print.
\textsuperscript{48} Op. Cit. 88.
fundamental contradictions inherent in the nation state: “It is the characteristic feature of states of all types to represent the order they institute as eternal, though practice shows that more or less the opposite is the case.”

Nationalist efforts at imagining a solution to social turmoil take shape through two mutually-imbricated processes. The idea of the nation must be produced and accommodated to the imagination of its subjects, but those subjects themselves must also be remade in national form so that the idea of the nation can be reproduced by them and transmitted to posterity. The interaction of these two processes makes manifest the very same contradiction that it seeks to resolve between the nation and its subjects, and in doing so it gives rise to a notoriously fungible entity, “the people”:

A social formation only reproduces itself as a nation to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as homo nationalis from cradle to grave, at the same time as he or she is instituted as homo economicus, politicus, religiosus. […] In the case of national formations, the imaginary which inscribes itself in the real in this way is that of the 'people'. It is that of a community which recognizes itself in advance in the institution of the state, which recognizes that state as 'its own' in opposition to other states and, in particular, inscribes its political struggles within the horizon of that state. […] But such a people does not exist naturally, and even when it is tendentially constituted, it does not exist for all time. No modern nation possesses a given 'ethnic' basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle. And, moreover, no modern nation, however 'egalitarian' it may be, corresponds to the extinction of class conflicts. The fundamental problem is therefore to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community. Or again, it is to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes, 'as a people', that is, as the basis and origin of political power.

In the 19th Century the notion of “popular sovereignty” enjoyed a newfound dominance that based itself in just such a conception of “the people,” and the struggle to define that term accompanied political endeavors to establish novel forms of governance and community identity. Nevertheless, all such projects must inevitably deal with the immanent contradictions of the nation form. Indeed, as Balibar notes, the problematic

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49 Ibid.
relationship between the idea of the nation and the realities experienced by its citizenry is simply a manifestation of the contradictions immanent in the lexical collision of “nation” and “state” in the notion of a “national state”:

Let us begin as we must with the concept of the state. Two contradictory "truths" are asserted. On the one hand, it is said that the modern state is a nation-state, or a national state. On the other hand, it is said that there is a persistent imperfect match between "state" and "nation," in varying degrees to be sure, but never totally absent. In short, the states tend to become nations, but the nations do not always form states, or at least the states do not cover all their "sociological" aspects. [...] In our modern usage (which was crystallized or labeled in the period of the bourgeois revolutions, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century), the rise of the nations in history is presented as a succession of state formations or of attempts at state formation. Correlatively, it was by becoming “national” that the states transformed themselves, more or less completely, into what we call the modern state, with its ideology and collective sovereignty; its juridical and administrative rationality; its particular mode of regulating social conflicts, especially class conflicts; and its ‘strategic’ objective of managing its territorial resources and population to enhance its economic and military power. It is this very correlation which contains the germs of the ambivalence in the concept ‘nation-state,’ which means that its unity is constantly split into two opposing aspects. By positing its own existence, the nation-state presupposes its own subjects. And yet, in doing so it remains subject to its own notional contradictions: it is incapable of concealing the disparity between its representation of the ideal national subject and a reality constituted by a plurality of heterogeneous subjective positions. Nevertheless, Balibar rightly notes that this contradiction generally contributes to the longevity of national ideological structures because of the efforts at narrative reconciliation generated by its persistent, volatile presence:

[...] In other words, no matter whether the construction of a nation-state ‘succeeds’ or whether it ‘fails,’ or whether it is held in check (for a period that may be quite long), there is asserted to be a preestablished harmony between a “national” society and a “modern” state and yet simultaneously the relative autonomy of each of these. Furthermore, each of these (the state, the nation) can serve the other as the opposite pole of the unity which society needs to overcome its own antagonisms.

Balibar’s presentation of the tension between “nation” and “state” captures much of the antagonism inherent in the creation of the national community, but those tensions also exist prior to the re-creation of the community as “national.” One of the names for

that site of original communal antagonism is “sentiment,” and it plays an essential role in Benedict Anderson’s account of the rise of nationalism. Anderson provides a “definition of the nation” that remains vital in contemporary history and political theory: “[the nation] is an imagined community— and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”

Anderson’s definition of the nation invites two further questions: what are the “limits” that Anderson imposes on the process of nation-building?; and furthermore, what does it mean to say that a nation is imagined as “sovereign”? Balibar’s argument provides an answer to the latter question: the nation is imagined to be sovereign through the production and maintenance of its abstract representation, namely, “the people.” The former question as to the limits of that imagination, however, remains elusive, although Anderson does point toward a possible answer on a number of occasions in the text.

The question of the limits of the imagined community requires consideration of the factors that serve to unify the community both prior to and during the historical unfolding of a particular process of nation-building. Anderson’s most explicit definition of the limitations of the nation as an “imagined community” focuses on the simple fact that nations must be limited for two reasons: first, all nations must be limited to a specific territory because it is impossible to imagine one which could itself alone encompass all the territories of the earth; secondly, because the nation must therefore be conceived as one nation among others, it therefore becomes necessary for that nation to maintain an identity distinct from and opposed to the identities constructed by other nations. 

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54 Op cit. 7.
inventing a narrative of the emergence and destiny of the nation also requires an account of the role of that nation as one both engaged with and different from many others.

To say that there are logical constraints on the ways in which nations can be imagined is not the same as explaining how communal feeling is translated into the sentiments necessary for grounding a national community. Anderson’s argument is directed toward an assessment of how the community comes to be limited and the means through which this occurs, but he fails to explain why anyone would feel interested in engaging in that initial act of imagination. Furthermore, if the mediation of any institution requires some degree of imaginary complicity and interaction on the part of those subject to it, then the community of New Spain had already been caught up in a mass act of collective imaginary identification during the previous colonial regime, not to mention the persistence of communal ideas and practices from the pre-colonial period. To insist otherwise is to risk the summary cancellation of the subjectivity of the peoples of the Americas prior to the national independence movements of the 19th Century. And if those peoples had already imaginatively constructed a sense of community prior to their nationalization, how and why should they be persuaded to do so in a new and perhaps uncomfortably alien way?

Published in the same year as Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* matches Anderson’s terminological contribution with a theoretical model that leans heavily upon the concept of “national sentiment.” The two

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works arguably set the scene for Balibar’s elaboration of the theme seven years later. Gellner begins *Nations and Nationalism* with a concise definition of nationalism: “Nationalism is *primarily* a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (My emphasis). But if Gellner is content to let his “nationalist principle” enjoy primacy in the process of nation-building, the formulation of his theory also requires an appeal to the concept of “national sentiment” in order to sustain the leading principle of his nationalist *prima philosophia*. This is necessary because the substance of the national unit, and consequently, what it would mean for it to bear a relationship of congruency to anything else, remains undefined. Gellner’s supplementary definition directly follows the first one and aims to remedy this situation by further concretizing his account of the factors involved in the genesis of nations:

Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of this principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.  

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56 Immanuel Wallerstein, the translator of Balibar’s works with whom Balibar also co-published the anthology *Race, Nation, Class* in 1990, already writes of ‘the nation toward which we have ‘nationalist sentiments’ ‘ in his chapter “Social Conflict in Post-Independence Black Africa: The Concepts of Race and Status-Group Reconsidered.” Balibar’s chapter “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’?” also seems to take the notion of “national sentiment” for granted when he insists that “in France too we are more and more often hearing ‘reasonable’ figures who have no connection with any extremist movements explaining that ‘it is anti-racism that creates racism’ by its agitation and its manner of ‘provoking’ the mass of the citizenry’s national sentiments.”  It of interest that in the footnote to the previous citation Balibar omits the notion of “nationalist sentiment” from his list of the themes treated in the passage from which it is drawn. Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’?” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.* Trans. Chris Turner. New York: Verso, 1991. 23. Print. Balibar’s own perspective can be seen as a partial reconciliation of Gellner’s and Anderson’s positions, as demonstrated by the following citation: “Let us dispense right away with the antitheses traditionally attached to that notion, the first of which is the antithesis between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’ community. Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past). But this comes down to accepting that, under certain conditions, only imaginary communities are real.” Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. “The Nation Form: History and Ideology.” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.* Trans. Chris Turner. New York: Verso, 1991. 93. Print.


Surprisingly, the word “sentiment” returns to its former concealment in Gellner’s work almost as soon as it emerges in the above-cited passage, and this even though it still plays an integral part in what he presents as the most egregious form of a “violation of national sentiment.” What follows shows that Gellner is already comfortable deploying the word without further theoretical ado, but a certain sleight-of-hand transpires. Gellner provides another account of the origins of national unity, one that, in spite of being parsed in terms of “calculation” instead of “imagination,” echoes Gellner’s assertion of the impossibility of conceiving of a global nation:

But over and above these considerations there are others, tied to the specific nature of the world we happen to live in, which militate against any impartial, general, sweetly reasonable nationalism. To put it in the simplest possible terms: there is a very large number of potential nations on earth. Our planet also contains room for a certain number (of potential nations) [that] is probably much, much larger than that of possible viable states. If this argument or calculation is correct, not all nationalisms can be satisfied, at any rate at the same time. The satisfaction of some spells the frustration of others.

This second supplementary definition proves determinative for Gellner’s theory, but the notion of “sentiment” then vanishes from his account. That disappearing act is symptomatic of a general tendency to neglect the function of sentiment in nation-building, and careful scrutiny of Gellner’s argument shows that his failure to clearly conceptualize the term sentiment presents serious difficulties for his account of the origin and emergence of the modern nation state.

Gellner indicates that “national sentiment” is not merely a component part of “nationalism.” It is first presented as a modality of nationalism itself, as evinced by the

59 This first definition already belies Gellner’s assumption of “ethnicity” as basic to the composition of national identity: “But there is one particular form of the violation of the nationalist principle to which nationalist sentiment is quite particularly sensitive: if the rulers of the political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled, this, for nationalists, constitutes a quite outstandingly intolerable breach of political propriety. This can occur either through the incorporation of the national territory in a larger empire, or by the local domination of an alien group. Ibid.

60 Op. Cit. 2.
text’s equivocal conceptualization of “nationalism” as “a political principle,” “as a sentiment,” or “as a movement.” These last two terms, “sentiment” and “movement,” are of particular interest because their deployment enacts a strange displacement that anticipates sentiment’s subsequent excision from Gellner’s argument. Although at first glance the three modalities seem distinct, a closer look demonstrates that Gellner actually conflates the latter two, “movement” and “sentiment,” only to then subordinate them to the primacy of his “nationalist principle.” Furthermore, Gellner explicitly identifies “nationalist sentiment” with anger while at the same time signaling it as the motivating force for “nationalist movements.”

This position was surely a sensible one to entertain in the moment when Gellner was writing: the analysis of conflict in the Balkans that spurred his thesis invites generalization of the intuition that nationalism primarily emerges from a community’s sense of rage in the face of oppression and internal division. Perhaps this also explains the heavy emphasis placed on “ethnicity” within his theoretical paradigm. Either way, the problem with Gellner’s conceptualization is that it leaves no room for the plenitude of other sentiments involved in the process of nation-building. After all, how are we to account for the other sentiments that seem to play a role in imaginatively crafting the nation by persuasively coloring the narratives that sustain it? What of the panegyric of gratitude and mourning that accompanies the sacrifice of one’s comrades, or the love for friends and family that so frequently provides the local emotional backdrop for conflicts that are otherwise determined by external forces? And more importantly, even if rage were sufficient to engender the violent establishment of a new communal paradigm, what ends
could it serve after the question turns to the maintenance and cultivation of a shared imaginary and a national interaction of cultures?

Its emphasis on anger to the exclusion of other emotions causes Gellner’s theory to erase consideration of the sentiment of benevolence or “fellow-feeling” from the lexicon that he adopts. Nevertheless, the notion of sentiment had already been steeped in a richly-theorized and contested tradition before Gellner silently reappropriated it for his own model. While that tradition also discusses anger as a manifestation of sentiment, with the passage of time it shifts emphasis to understanding the sentiments of fellow-feeling, empathy and sympathy. Modern theories of nationalism pass over consideration of these benevolent sentiments at their own peril: the historical evolution of the concept and meanings of “sentiment” and its accompanying terms must be given its due. By interpreting “nationalist sentiment” through the emotion of anger, Gellner takes a decisive stance in a conversation regarding “sentiment” that precedes his own claim by centuries.61 The much-contested legacy of that conversation is readily traceable to its outbreak as a subject of vigorous inquiry in 17th century Europe. But understanding the stakes of that conversation and the way it develops requires that investigation of “sentiment” begin much earlier, with a consideration of the πάθη in Platonic and Aristotelean philosophy. Retracing the historical evolution of sentiment renews the significance of that term and broadens its potential interpretations. Furthermore, as I will argue throughout this investigation, focusing on how sentiment is understood and interpreted opens up a new perspective on

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61 Balibar’s theory also briefly gestures in the direction of sentiment in his discussion of nationalism: “Incontestably, national ideology involves ideal signifiers (first and foremost the very name of the nation or 'fatherland') on to which may be transferred the sense of the sacred and the affects of love, respect, sacrifice and fear which have cemented religious communities.” Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. “The Nation Form: History and Ideology.” Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities. Trans. Chris Turner. New York: Verso, 1991. 94. Print.
the function of sentiment in the literary works of José Joaquin Fernández de Lizardi, Ignacio Ramírez, and Ignacio Manuel Altamirano.
1.2 **A Brief History of Sentiment: One Question**

Because it is a Socratic dialogue on epistemology that strives to first interrogate what we do not know, Plato’s *Theaetetus* (ca. 369) is a particularly suitable point of departure for this excursus into the vicissitudes of the history of sentiment. There Socrates distinguishes between αἴσθησις (the perceptions of the senses, such as sight, touch, hearing, and smell, as well as the intellectual ability of discernment (φρόνησις)) and ἐπιστήμη (acquaintance with a matter, understanding, skill or proficiency). The semantic proximity of the two words is obvious, so it is easy to understand why both words are frequently translated into English as “knowledge.”

Indeed, knowledge and knowing have been at the heart of interrogations regarding our feelings since the golden age of Hellenic civilization, and Plato makes an appropriate contribution to the first moment of what would become a conversation about sentiment. More specifically, Socrates argues that although our bodies might seem to be the locus of sense perception, it is the soul (ψύχω) and not the body (σώμα) that apprehends and interprets the meaning of sensations. Nevertheless, it is also with Plato that the notion of a substantial separation of the soul and body would temporarily fall out of favor in the discourse of sentiment in the Ancient World. It would resurface again in St. Augustine’s ruminations on the subject, but even then much of the work of the Bishop of Hippo was markedly Aristotelean, which is to say, not Platonic.

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63 Nevertheless, as Christoph Henke, has indicated certain features of Plato’s account in the *Theaetetus* have survived to present day, including the notion of the kinship of aesthetic and moral judgments and “the two thousand year-old notion prevailing from Aristotle until the end of Renaissance times, that the common sense is a sensory faculty (or distinct organ) in the brain, prefigures eighteenth-century public discourses of a rational common sense and its ethical-aesthetic implications.” Cf. Henke, Christoph. "Before the Aesthetic Turn: The Common Sense Union of Ethics and Aesthetics in Shaftesbury and Pope." *Anglia - Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 129.1-2 (2011). *De Gruyter.* 62. Web. 1 Mar. 2015.
Amy Schmitter argues that Aristotle set the tone for discussion of the emotions in a way that remained foundational until after the revival of Neo-Stoic philosophy in 16th-century France by Justus Lipsius (1547).\(^{64}\) Aristotle begins his consideration of the intertwining human capacities to feel and to know by observing a phenomenon he called πάθος. The philosopher takes up the issue in two separate works, *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics* (4th Century BCE). The latter work defines the πάθη as “all those feelings that change men as to affect their judgments, and that are also attended by pain and pleasure.”\(^{65}\) This definition makes apparent a level of intermingling between σώμα and ψύχω that would have made little sense within the paradigm of Platonic idealism. Furthermore, Aristotle’s philosophy here strangely parallels Gellner’s account of nationalism inasmuch as they both present anger as their first example of sentiment or feeling.\(^{66}\)

Aristotle’s account of the πάθη is a departure from the teachings of Plato, and this fact is evident in their respective accounts of rhetoric, poetry, and the ethics of human emotion. Plato’s antipathy toward the persuasive, distortionary influence of the emotions on human actions and judgment is typified in his commentary on “the ancient quarrel between poets and philosophers” in Book X of the *Politeia*. Charles L. Griswold provides a concise account of how and why that antipathy is expressed therein:

> By contrast, the tragic imitators excel at portraying the psychic conflicts of people who are suffering and who do not even attempt to respond philosophically. Since their audience consists of people whose own selves are in that sort of condition too, imitators and audience are locked into a

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sort of mutually reinforcing picture of the human condition. Both are captured by that part of themselves given to the non-rational or irrational; both are most interested in the condition of internal conflict. The poet ‘awakens this part of the soul and nourishes it,’ producing a disordered psychic regime or constitution; [...] The ‘childish’ part of the soul that revels in the poet's pictures cannot distinguish truth from reality; it uncritically grants the poet's authority to tell it like it is. Onlookers become emotively involved in the poet's drama.

Another remarkable passage follows: “Listen and consider. When even the best of us hear Homer or any other of the tragic poets imitating one of the heroes in mourning and making quite an extended speech with lamentation, or, if you like, singing and beating his breast, you know that we enjoy it and that we give ourselves over to following the imitation; suffering along [‘sympaschontes’, a word related to another Greek word, ‘sympatheia’] with the hero in all seriousness, we praise as a good poet the man who most puts us in this state.” So the danger posed by poetry is great, for it appeals to something to which even the best—the most philosophical—are liable, and induces a dream-like, uncritical state in which we lose ourselves in the emotions in question (above all, in sorrow, grief, anger, resentment).

The ultimate result of the situation that Griswold describes is a Platonic figuration of poetry and rhetoric as contagiously persuasive factors that must be controlled in order to preserve the order of society. This concern with control is fueled by a further conviction as to the permeability of the aesthetic and ethical realms:

To put the point with a slight risk of anachronism (since Plato does not have a term corresponding to our “aesthetics”), he does not think that aesthetics is separable from ethics. He does not separate knowledge of beauty and knowledge of good. It is as though the pleasure we take in the representation of sorrow on the stage will—because it is pleasure in that which the representation represents (and not just a representation on the stage or in a poem)—transmute into pleasure in the expression of sorrow in life. And that is not only an ethical effect, but a bad one, for Plato. These are ingredients of his disagreements on the subject with Aristotle, as well as with myriad thinkers since then.

But Aristotle spotted great potential where Plato seemed to detect only peril. In opposition to his predecessor, Aristotle contended that appeals to the emotions were important, and like our modern notion of following a “gut reaction,” could even function in some instances to allow a person to ‘feel’ their way to the truth of an argument or situation. El filósofo further elaborated on the πάθη by predominantly associating them

with the less turbulent emotions and situating them among states/dispositions (ἕξις) and the various faculties as one of three primary categories found in the soul where they, alongside the appetites, also frequently served as a motive for action.\textsuperscript{70} For this reason Schmitter concludes that “it will be easiest, as well as consistent with the bulk of Aristotle’s analyses, to treat πάθος as more or less equivalent to desire, or appetite in the broad sense.”\textsuperscript{71} Beyond emphasizing the tenacious persistence of the Aristotelean viewpoint over the ensuing two millennia, all that remains is to signal a final distinction between Aristotle and Plato. Whereas Plato had held that it was the soul that perceived and interpreted the movements of the bodily senses, Aristotle further divorces his anthropology from Platonic metaphysics by resituating the soul halfway inside the body; in this way the soul becomes capable of participating both internally within the human and externally in the world, and this provokes a perspectival shift regarding the corporeal limits of epistemology.\textsuperscript{72}

The notion of πάθος continued to evolve after Plato and Aristotle, and by the time it arrived among the Roman Stoics, the question of translating the language of Greek philosophy into Latin began to generate a new variety of terms useful for describing the emotions. Schmitter observes that while many of the Stoics followed Cicero (107-44 BCE) in translating πάθος as perturbatio, or “external disturbance,” others preferred to translate it as passio, and Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE) employed the term affectus in his own work.\textsuperscript{73} Continuing her observations, Schmitter also notes that unlike the Greeks that had come before them, the Stoics had little tolerance for the exaltation of emotion:

\textsuperscript{70} Op. cit. 40.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. The association of Aristotle’s pathe with desire might be a bridge too far, especially since, as Schmitter notes, his characterization of the pathe holds that they are predominantly passive. Cf. Op. cit. 39.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Op. cit. 45.
Stoic ethics identifies the good life with virtue and both the good life and virtue with self-sufficiency, i.e., that which is intrinsically good, proper to us and fully within our control. The passions, however, are responses to external events, outside of our control, and so antithetical to virtue and happiness. To be prey to the passions is to violate the basic outlines of our nature –indeed of the rational shape of nature as a whole, to which we should submit as law and fate.\textsuperscript{74}

As the foregoing passage shows, the disdain characteristic of the Stoic approach to the emotions caused them to forgo the sort of consideration that Aristotle was willing to grant them. After all, if the passions are external forces beyond our control, then they are also necessarily beyond the possibility of our cultivating them, a possibility that Aristotle himself had affirmed.\textsuperscript{75}

Passing through the Stoics, πάθη, a term itself already variously understood as affectus, passio and perturbatio, undergoes another significant transformation as the question of feeling meets with Galen’s (130-200 CE) pioneering studies of medicine and human physiology in the 2nd Century CE. Few before or since have left their mark upon the development of human understanding in a more significant way than the physician from Pergamon. The system that Galen elaborates is forbiddingly complex, but Schmitter’s concise account of the emotions in his theory provides a useful summarization of Galen’s own exhaustive treatises:

Galen adopted many Stoic physical, metaphysical, epistemological and ethical views on the \textit{pathe}. But he also drew off an independent Hippocratic tradition for treating the humours and the physiology of the emotions and produced an influential account of the “spirits.” Whereas most early Stoics adopted a unitary view of the soul, Galen favored Plato’s tri-partite model, for which he assigned various functions to different parts of the body. Reason is located in the brain, emotion (particularly anger) in the heart, and desire in the liver. Each of these organs produces particular spirits, the substance of which was a rarified fluid constituted of blood and pneuma, and which governed specific biological functions (sense perception and movement, blood flow and bodily temperature; and nutrition and metabolism). Galen’s map thus provided a physiological basis for what became a commonplace distinction between ‘angry’ (irascible) emotions directed at overcoming obstacles, and simple ‘desiring’ (concupiscible) emotions […] Almost all of the many later authors who considered physiological aspects of the emotions owe their basic framework to the Galenic and Stoic traditions.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Op. cit. 45-46.
\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Op. cit. 43-44.
\textsuperscript{76} Op. cit. 48-49.
Two elements of the above-cited passage prove to be integral to the development of the notion of “sentiment” after Galen. Firstly, Galen’s incorporation of the emotions into a physiological conception of the body subject to humors and temperaments inaugurates a trend that would reach its apogee in 18th century Europe.  Secondly, here again, as in Plato and Gellner, anger and desire appear as the primary passions, and the pair of πάθη are recategorized as “irascible” and “concupiscible” emotions, categories which themselves appear to date back to Plato’s Timaeus.

Augustine (354-430 CE) serves as a bridge between Hellenistic and Neoplatonic thinking on the sentiments. His usage of the term passio, from which our “passion” is derived, is indicative of the pervasive influence of his thinking, an influence that would still be strongly felt in Descartes time. The word “passion” is derived from the deponent verb patior, a fact that confirms its status as a continuation of the Aristotelean conceptualization of the πάθη as fundamentally passive. Augustine’s understanding of the human animal as a body-soul composite is also a renewal of the Aristotelian tradition, and he holds, as does Plato, that the passions, sentiments, and faculties are arranged hierarchically and are susceptible to disorder. Furthermore, Augustine holds that

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77 I explore the ramifications of a similar physiological conception of the sentiments in my treatment of the literary works of Ignacio Ramírez in Chapter 3 of this investigation.
78 Op. cit. 56. The parallel with Gellner here can also be carried further. While Gellner focuses on the anger that proceeds the overcoming of obstacles to the formation of the nation-state, he also mentions the feeling of satisfaction that results from the post-national feeling of having realized the nationalist endeavor in principle. In this Gellner reflects the division of sentiment into concupiscible passions (those aroused by the potential satiation of a desire) and irascible passions (those that motivate us to overcome obstacles in order to realize a difficult or elusive desire) in Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, and others.
80 I owe this particular insight to a private conversation with Troy Tower.
humanity’s internal hierarchy is mirrored by a divine hierarchy permeating the whole of creation and ordered by the presence of God as the essence of the Good.\textsuperscript{83} Consequently, a disorder of the human passions was a moral issue and could have eternal consequences. Having begun on a far more positive note, Augustine’s thinking changes significantly over time. Toward the end of his career, he paints a rather grim portrait of the moral plight of humanity, one which he considers to be the product of original sin and human weakness of will.\textsuperscript{84} This later Augustine denounces the alliance of the passions and the will (\textit{voluntas}) and warns against the many ways in which they conspire against right reason in order to deceive and confound the believer. Only by the aid of grace could reason overcome the siren song of the senses and proceed to a salvific union with the transcendent presence of God.\textsuperscript{85} The passions of the senses had become such a formidable adversary that Augustine would eventually argue that only divine grace could offer any hope of rescue and reunion with God, a privilege he conceded only to an elect minority of souls.\textsuperscript{86} Those who failed to master the sentiments of their hearts would join the miserable legions of the \textit{massa damnata}.\textsuperscript{87}

Elements of Augustine’s thought found a place in Thomas Aquinas’s (1225-1274) corpus, as did many of the innovations from the discussion of feelings, emotions, and passions inherited by the Bishop of Hippo. Aquinas’s philosophy enjoyed hegemony among Scholastic thinkers well into the Renaissance. As had been the case with the Arabic preservation of Aristotelean philosophy through Al-Kindi (801-873) and Ibn Rushd (1126-
the Thomist tradition ended up preserving much of the contradictory intuitions of the ancient world regarding the relationship between feeling, emotion, and reason, as well as the relationship between the body and the soul. The legacy of the Ancient conversation regarding what would later come to be conceptualized as “sentiment” is conspicuous in a number of places in Aquinas’ account, including his continuation and refinement of the vocabulary of the concupiscible and irascible passions. Aquinas forwards his own version of a set of phenomena that here, as later in Descartes, will be dubbed the “passions of the soul,” and assigns them to a “soul-body” composite reminiscent of Aristotle’s own predilection toward situating the ψύχω in a liminal space both internal and external to the σώμα. 88

The interest that Aristotle expressed in the liminal character of feeling and emotion is forwarded and transformed by Aquinas in a way that introduces a rift between the passions and reason at the same time that it joins them as a “soul-body composite.” 89 As Schmitter signals, this antagonism is the product of Aquinas’ insistence on separating the apparently “unchanging,” “apprehensive” faculties of perception and understanding from the fickle, will-driven, “rational appetitive” faculties. This maneuver allows Aquinas to reserve an explanatory role for the passions in the interaction between the body and the soul:

For these reasons and despite calling them passions of the soul, Aquinas held that passions belong to the soul-body composite, for a body is required for something to undergo change that can constitute corruption. Passions do indeed belong to the soul as well, but ‘accidentally,’ insofar as the soul informs, and is a cause and end of the body. 90

89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
Aquinas follows Aristotle in emphasizing the passive character of the passions and categorizes them in terms of the by then traditional division between “concupiscible” and “irascible” passions. Moreover, he also reformulates the notion of emotion in terms of the interaction with an object. Aquinas presents the four fundamental passions of hope (spes), desperation (desperatio), fear (timor) and daring (audacia) as distinct motions of proximity toward different sorts of objects of desire. By adding motion into his description of emotion, Aquinas anticipates 18th century literary developments of sentiment that utilize sentimental rapture and transport to explore the nature of private and communal feeling.

Echoing Aristotle once again, Aquinas’s description of the action of the passions includes a systematic taxonomy of their particular combinations that squares well with the Galenic account of humors and temperaments. Schmitter notes that Aristotle specifically treats the complex πάθη of appetite, anger, calm, fear, confidence, indignation, friendship, enmity, kindness, unkindness, shame, shamelessness, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, and pity, which list of emotions bears a remarkable likeness to the Thomist taxonomy of the passions of the soul:

Aquinas borrowed yet other principles from the Aristotelean classification of physical motions to produce a taxonomy of eleven basic kinds of passions. Crossing good and evil with three different kinds of motion describing the movement of the appetite produces six concupiscible passions: love [amor] and hate [odium]; desire [desiderium, concupiscientia] and aversion [fuga]; joy [delectatio, or its internal subspecies, gaudium] and pain [dolor and for internal pain, tristitia]. The specific irascible passions are produced by multiplying the nature of their objects with the direction of the motions with respect to those objects to produce the four passions of hope [spes] and desperation [desperatio], fear [timor] and daring [audacia]. To these, Aquinas added the rather special case of anger [ira], which presupposes a concupiscible passion of pain, and is a resolute appetite to remove the present source of pain. Unlike Aristotle, Aquinas denied that anger has a contrary.

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92 Ibid.
Schmitter’s observation of Aquinas’s recalcitrance before the possibility of pairing love and hate as equivalent passions also exposes Aquinas’s debt to the Christian emphasis on the primacy of love and Augustine’s reduction of all passions to different manifestations of (albeit sometimes distorted and perverse) love. By incorporating diverse elements of Aristotelean physics and epistemology with Galenic physiology and Augustinian ethical and moral insights, Aquinas synthesized a discourse on the emotions that permeated the European intellectual landscape. The dual understanding that he propounded of the passions as both phenomenally available to cogitation and synonymous with the physiological action of the organs and “animal spirits” of the body proved prophetic in as much as it heralded a future split between scientific and spiritual interrogation. The next section of this investigation explores how that division evolved into an epic moral conflict after the collision of the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and René Descartes (1596-1650) at the dawning of Modern European Philosophy. The Ancient world had seen sentiment develop into an epistemological, theological and moral issue, and that issue only increased in complexity with the passage of time. Modern attempts at plotting sentiment would be transformed by the pressing social concerns created by the toppling of the Old and inauguration of the New that soon consumed the European continent.

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1.3 **A Brief History of Sentiment: Two Bodies**

A fault line lay pulsating beneath the foundation of European Enlightenment thinking. Thomas Aquinas’s account of the actions of the passions had successfully repressed the antagonism between the body and the soul for a time, but the increasing destabilization of their uneasy conjuncture is evidenced by the eruption of new lexical innovations regarding sentiment in many European languages.\(^{95}\) New words and new ideas emerged in a climate informed by the innovatory paradigms of empiricism and rationalism. The radical theories of René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes are, albeit for different reasons, both monuments to that tumultuous moment and landmarks in the history of the modern conception of “sentiment.” Descartes’s philosophy defied many of the dearly-held tenants of Ancient and Scholastic thought, but his substance dualism’s conceptualization of the relationship between body and soul nevertheless benefits from juxtaposition with his Greek predecessors.

Howard Robinson’s analysis of the history of dualism is useful here. Robinson notes that Plato’s conviction as to the ideal, and therefore immaterial, nature of the intellect led the thinker to separate the body and soul in the *Phaedo* in a way that left the nature of their interrelation ambiguous:

> One problem with Plato's dualism was that, though he speaks of the soul as imprisoned in the body, there is no clear account of what binds a particular soul to a particular body. Their difference in nature makes the union a mystery.\(^{96}\)

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\(^{95}\) Schmitter notes that the fractures in the foundations of the Thomist school were sometimes the result of internal shifts like that of the Neo-Scholasticism of Francesco Suárez. Cf. Schmitter, Amy M., "17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) 65. Web.

Aristotle took a different tack with regard to that same relationship. The result was equally problematic in spite of being far more elaborate, and Aristotle’s doctrine that the soul is the form of the body remains the subject of much and varied interpretation. Robinson argues that “this means that a particular person’s soul is no more than his nature as a human being. [...] Because this seems to make the soul into a property of the body, it led many interpreters, both ancient and modern, to interpret his theory as materialistic.”

The tension between the mind and body posited by Plato and problematized by Aristotle bears fruit in Descartes’s far more radical substance dualism. Descartes holds that the body and the soul are of two fundamentally different kinds, but although the separation that he imposes might seem *prima facie* identical to Plato’s separation, the possibilities opened up by Descartes’s position actually provoke a divorce where it had sought to engender reconciliation. Descartes posited that the soul was capable of controlling the body by exerting direct haptic manipulation of the pineal gland. As is apparent with the benefit of hindsight, the conjectural logic that Descartes offered to ground his claim that the pineal gland was the site of interconnection between the body and the soul was on the shakiest of logical foundations. Today the dismissive tone of certainty that accompanies the development of his hypothesis in 1640 causes it to read like a cautionary tale of intellectual hubris:

> My view is that this gland is the principal seat of the soul, and the place in which all our thoughts are formed. The reason I believe this is that I cannot find any part of the brain, except this, which is not double. Since we see only one thing with two eyes, and hear only one voice with two ears, and

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97 Robinson mentions controversial arguments regarding this doctrine from recent figures like Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty. Cf. *Ibid*.

98 *Ibid*.

99 As Robinson makes clear, a substance dualism as radical as Descartes’s would have simply been unintelligible in Aristotle’s time, as it depends upon a humanistic vocabulary that was centuries in the making. Cf. *Op. cit.* 8.

in short have never more than one thought at a time, it must necessarily be the case that the impressions which enter by the two eyes or by the two ears, and so on, unite with each other in some part of the body before being considered by the soul. Now it is impossible to find any such place in the whole head except this gland; moreover it is situated in the most suitable possible place for this purpose, in the middle of all the concavities; and it is supported and surrounded by the little branches of the carotid arteries which bring the spirits into the brain. […] Since it is the only solid part in the whole brain which is single, it must necessarily be the seat of the common sense, i.e., of thought, and consequently of the soul; for one cannot be separated from the other. The only alternative is to say that the soul is not joined immediately to any solid part of the body, but only to the animal spirits which are in its concavities, and which enter it and leave it continually like the water of a river. That would certainly be thought too absurd.101

It should be clear why Descartes’s erstwhile-unifying conceptual linchpin was soon rendered obsolete, but in the time it took for that solution to prove inadequate the damage was already done: Descartes capitalized on his tenuous separation of the soul from the body by furnishing an account of the embodied passions that instituted a mechanical paradigm akin to Galen’s more rudimentary physiological approach. Unbeknownst to the philosopher himself, this maneuver would subsequently create the space in which the passions of the soul came to be spoken of in two different dialects at the same time. On one level, Descartes’s description of the passions themselves reiterates the combinatory libidinal economies posited by thinkers from Aristotle to Galen to Thomas Aquinas. Schmitter indicates that Descartes still speaks of a system of “six primitive passions” (wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness), although he goes beyond his predecessors in also allowing the six basic passions to combine to yield “an unlimited number” of emotive combinations.102 And yet, his approach simultaneously makes it possible to think of the passions in functional terms. It is essential to point out that although Descartes’s theory assigns judgment of the ends of human action to the province of the soul or mind, the causal explanation for human action in and of itself increasingly solicits empirically-

driven, mechanical explanations for the phenomena of human psychology. Robinson argues that this motivated Descartes and his peers to seek out “not where interactions took place, but how two things so different as thought and extension could interact at all.” However, this course of investigation comes with an implicit caveat: interrogation of the passions is now conditioned from the outset by empiricist methodological presumptions about how to best arrive at truth. The trick, of course, is that the mechanics of the human anatomy and psychology are infinitely more susceptible to observation than the ever-elusive specter of the soul. Descartes’s preference for the question of “how?” over the question of “where?” in his epistemological engagement with the human discretely elevates the body to the top of his agenda at the same time that he foregoes concretization of the locus of his investigation.

Reflecting these contradictory tendencies, the elaboration of the conceptual vocabulary of the passions soon became a crucible wherein there comingled an admixture of the ethical and spiritual language of the emotions of the Greek, Roman and Medieval traditions with the nascent empirico-physiological vocabulary that would eventually foreclose the corporeal immanence of the soul as an avenue of scientific investigation. To borrow a metaphor from Georges Bataille, the collapse of the Cartesian pineal thesis left Descartes’s transformation of the traditional Aristotelean spirit-body composite, along with the two divergent discourses on sentiment and the passions that it had made possible, in the lurch between the “sickly incandescence” of a moral and ethical naturalism that became increasingly difficult to defend and the “durable orgasm” of a corporealized account of the

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sentiments. This latter, corporealized account was sufficient to meet the explanatory demands of scientific progress but had yet to fully confront its own progressive alienation from commonplace understandings of psychological and social phenomena. The ramifications of this process were expansive and eventuated in the generation of two different but interrelated conceptions of both the body and the emotions that the body makes manifest. One of those conceptions would serve as a site for the imaginary interpretation of emotions through ethical and sentimental contemplation. The former, spiritualized account would remain an abject reminder to consciousness of the fatal corporeal and perceptual limitations bearing upon humanity’s understanding of itself.

Bataille renders the festering wound resultant from the Cartesian incision between body and mind in suitably shocking terms in his bizarre evocation of Descartes’s “pineal eye”:

The eye, at the summit of the skull, opening on the incandescent sun in order to contemplate it in a sinister solitude, is not a product of the understanding, but is instead an immediate existence; it opens and blinds itself like a conflagration, or like a fever that eats the being, or more exactly, the head. And thus it plays the role of a fire in a house; the head, instead of locking up life as money is locked in a safe, spends it without counting, for, at the end of this erotic metamorphosis, the head has received the electric power of points. This great burning head is the image—and the disagreeable light of the notion of expenditure, beyond the still empty notion as it is elaborated on the basis of methodical analysis.

Descartes’s incision between the mind and the body was the work of a conceptual scalpel, to which Thomas Hobbes responded with the hatchet of a newly-emergent Anglo-Saxon skepticism. Where Descartes posited the distinct parts of the human at a healthy conceptual distance from each other, Hobbes discerned a far more perilous division in the hearts of people and the collective qua body politic.

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106 Ibid.
Like the four horsemen of John’s apocalypse, the appearance on the scene of the “beast of Malmesbury” signaled the advent of a new epoch of uncertainty in which the assumption of the natural benevolence of man, an architectural cornerstone of many of the new socio-theoretical models of the period, was repeatedly subjected to challenge and interrogation. Hobbes’s attack on the establishment stripped the Cartesian position of the metaphorical rags that had clothed its nakedness after the explanatory failure of the pineal hypothesis. He reconceptualized the passions of the soul, changing them from motions of an immaterial mind into the kinetic activity of the material body.\textsuperscript{107} In similar fashion, Hobbes holds that ideas are the product of sensations and not the contemplative object of the soul.\textsuperscript{108} Furthermore, in 1651, Hobbes’s \textit{Leviathan} fired a shot over the bow of naïve social mutualists with his infamous declaration of the dominant natural egotism of humanity and the necessity of controlling collective violence through submission to the unlimited sovereign power of an absolute authority.\textsuperscript{109} However, it is important to take into account that Hobbes’s notorious hypotheses regarding the social macrocosm are also reflected in the microcosm of his account of the passions. Just as social control requires submission to a dominant authority, the unruly passions must also be managed through the dominance of one of their own, a passion capable of prevailing over and channeling the others. Hobbes thought that coercive fear fit the bill perfectly.\textsuperscript{110} In this way the passions undergo yet another fateful change of significance as the language of emotion and

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sentiment comes to be employed in interrogations of the epistemological and normative foundations of political and social life. This semantic shift was exacerbated when Hobbes’s basic insights were disseminated in grossly-caricatured form through the provocations of the Dutch philosopher Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) in the first quarter of the 18th Century. Mandeville’s “Machiavellian egotism” further embittered moralists in many quarters against Hobbes’s claims and those of other accounts of the passions based in a similarly naturalist, empiricist ethics.111

The spread of John Locke’s (1632-1704) empiricist scientific epistemology made Hobbes’s radical materialist position more viable than ever before. As Nancy Yousef argues, this caused moral philosopher Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1670-1713), to vehemently oppose both Locke and Hobbes. Ashley-Cooper rejected the empiricists’s metaphysical assumptions and instead attempted to demonstrate the existence of an innate moral sense within humanity:

The central thesis of the Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit and The Moralists—that virtue is based in and derived from “affections” that are natural to the species—is tirelessly and exclusively advanced by appeals to what we cannot deny, cannot fail to see, cannot choose but feel. Shaftesbury’s remarkable claim that a “sense of right and wrong . . . [is] as natural to us as natural affection itself” rests on a number of related, often circular, assertions about nature, affection, and the good of individuals, the species, and the universe as a whole. The anti-empiricist (specifically anti-Lockean) core of the argument lies in its insistence on a “first principle in our constitution and make,” a foundation of “original and pure nature,” something “inborn,” “innate,” or “instinct” (defined as “that which nature teaches, exclusive of art, culture or discipline”). Shaftesbury deduces both the existence of impulses “so strong . . . that it would be absurdity not to think [them] natural” and the specific moral and emotional content of those impulses, from the observation that social life is natural to human beings.112

Shaftesbury’s projection of humanity’s internal moral sense forces his hand in his interaction with the ravages of Hobbes because he believes that his own observations of

human nature constitute incontrovertible evidence that Hobbes’s conjecture as to the innate selfishness of humanity is mistaken. Yousef showcases how Shaftesbury denounces Hobbes’s picture of a solitary and misanthropic pre-social humanity as an imaginary philosophical creation lacking roots in reality and in exchange offers up his own vision of the natural benevolence of mankind. The following passage provides an example of that vision:

A human infant is of all [other animals] the most helpless, weak, infirm. And wherefore should it not have been thus ordered? . . . does not this defect engage him the more strongly to society and force him to own that he is purposely, and not by accident, made rational and sociable and can no otherwise increase or subsist than in that social intercourse and community which is his natural state? 

Shaftesbury’s account combines ethical reflection with the notion of an innate human impulse toward benevolence, and thereby derives a description of the moral sentiments that attempts to explain how those same moral sentiments can be instrumentalized as a naturally-occurrent source of moral direction for judgments regarding society and the natural world. In doing so, he also tries to reverse the physiological reduction of psychological phenomena that Hobbes set in motion by reconceptualizing of the passions of the soul in terms of corporeal motion. Instead of accepting the terms of Hobbes’s argument, Shaftesbury instead recasts the body’s motor responses as moral responses to a morally-coded world capable of being deciphered through the application of humanity’s inner moral sense. 

The epistemological shift carried out by Shaftesbury entails the deployment of a battery of emotional terminology. Schmitter indicates that even though Shaftesbury seems

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to use the words “passion” and “affection” interchangeably, both terms are situated in opposition to the simple sorts of “sense-perceptions” or “impressions” that will later become a conceptual staple of the thought of Scottish philosophers David Hume (1711-1776) and Adam Smith (1723-1790).\textsuperscript{116} Significantly, Shaftesbury contends that sense-perceptions are essentially private, while the passions are defined by their potential to be communicated between different people. Additionally, the presence of “sympathy” as a focus of theorization in the English moralist’s theory reinforces the connection between Shaftesbury and the Scottish titans because of that term’s demonstrable importance in Hume’s treatises and its undisputed primacy in Smith’s \textit{The Theory of Moral Sentiments} (1759). Shaftesbury’s work also anticipated the Scottish Skeptic and the Father of Market Capitalism with its theory of aesthetics.\textsuperscript{117} Shaftesbury conflated the notions of analytic and moral judgment, but he also went further by categorizing the moral and the aesthetic as overlapping phenomenal domains. For Shaftesbury, our aesthetic and moral experiences are unified through what he calls “natural affection,” “an immediate emotive or sensual response to the object of perception in the perceiving subject.”\textsuperscript{118} In some sense this was a new twist on a classical intuition, especially since beauty and goodness had been closely associated in Plato’s idealism and a number of theories after it.

\textsuperscript{116} Space constraints force me to severely limit consideration of Hume and Smith for the moment, but both thinkers are undergo extensive comparative analysis in the final section of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{117} These parallels between Smith, Hume and Shaftesbury should nonetheless be taken with a grain of salt. This is the case because, while Shaftesbury explicitly opposes Hobbes’s conclusions, scholars have come to see much of Humean and Smithian philosophy as a far more nuanced engagement with Hobbesian themes. Cf. Duncan, Stewart, "Thomas Hobbes", \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy} (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) 28. Web.

Close on the heels of Shaftesbury came the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), a Scottish-Irish thinker whose father, like Hobbes’s own, had been a minister in the Church. Shaftesbury had propounded a hybrid model of “common sense” that was both purely rational and inerrantly moral, but Hutcheson redrew the line between the emotions and the senses yet again. His theory holds that the senses are involuntary mental determinations accompanied by pleasure and pain. Building upon this model, he asserts that affection or passion is a modification of the senses, but one stemming from the apprehension of objects that cause the mind to conceive of good or evil. Because the passions are conceived of in this receptive fashion, explaining what they receive makes room for Hutcheson to posit a proliferation of senses both strange and familiar to our contemporary lexicon, including an “external sense” (our common understanding of bodily sensation), an “internal sense” (constituted by the aesthetic and imaginative intelligences), a “public sense” (or sensus communis, a kind of fellow-feeling), a literal “sense of honor,” and a “moral sense” of a kind with that formulated in the work of Shaftesbury.119 All of these senses are capable of working in tandem and mutually influencing one another. Rather than relying on a model of emotional combinatorics to explain the diversity of emotional phenomena, Hutcheson instead shifts focus to the interaction of the various senses and the ways in which the reflection they facilitate is capable of modifying existing desires or aversions and generating new ones. This change in emphasis is emblematic of an attempt to return the spiritual body inadvertently dislocated by Descartes back to the foreground of the conversation on sentiment at a time when the mechanical corporeality of both the human body (the other body that Descartes had unwittingly exalted over the

spiritual body) and the world at large was increasingly fascinating for many of the great minds of the day.

Two of the senses posited by Hutcheson are of particular interest for my argument here, namely, the “moral sense” and the “public sense” of fellow-feeling. The first represents one instance of a trend toward reconceptualizing the previously ambiguously-located faculties of the mind within the coordinates of a physiological discourse. The second follows a similar pattern, but is more significant because the faculty it posits is essentially a bodily incarnation of the “general benevolence” that sustained the theories of moralists like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury. It is important to recognize the affinity between the “moral sense” and the “public sense” because, apart from being symptomatic of the same trend toward physiological embodiment, the exercise of both senses is subject to the mediating action of either productive, calm “affections” or violently counterproductive “passions.”

The affections and passions can be controlled through the habituation and refinement of their corresponding senses, and in this way Hutcheson reopens the way for pedagogical speculation regarding the didactic cultivation of the affections and control of the passions. In this he joins the company of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and a litany of other thinkers, all of whom had pondered the possibility or impossibility of cultivating the passions and moral sentiments from within the paradigms of their respective philosophies.

It seems that Hutcheson did his job all too well, for his exhaustive account of the senses managed to temporarily occlude the contradictory antagonism that had been

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121 Ibid.
constitutive of the conversation regarding sentiment ever since Descartes’s fatal incision. However, by temporarily excising this antagonism from the conversation, Hutcheson also deprived his system of interaction with difficult objections like those that had fueled the ardent debate among the moralists and the empiricists at its height. Without a polemic to force its evolution, Hutcheson’s theory bred itself out of existence, and those of other moral philosophers of his ilk soon followed suit. As Michael Bell argues, their decline was symptomatic of a generalized reaction to the question of sentiment in late 18th century Europe:

There is, then, a contradictory dynamic at the heart of sentimentalist fiction. The concentration of self-consciousness and intensity of feeling requires an overt rhetoric while the belief in immediacy requires a transparent access to the object. When Francis Hutcheson expounded in 1725 his notion of the ‘moral sense’ as a separate, innate faculty, he implied an immediate link between feelings and ethics. [...] Furthermore, since the notion of moral sense was entirely hypothetical it provided a blanket explanation which was likely to block closer examination, rather as in later physical theory belief in the ‘ether’ long prevented the right scientific questions being asked. The fictional mode and the assumed psychology were mutually reinforcing. Yet the self-fulfilling circularity of the ethical and literary psychology of sentiment suffered [...] from internal instability in both domains. [...] The sentimental ideology itself, with its unstable merging of feeling and principle, focused on the broader vulnerability of Deism. Even as it sought to supplement rational principle and theological authority it was uncomfortably close to a mere materialism. Not surprisingly, therefore, both the notion of moral sense and the literalistic responses to fiction were subjected to closer scrutiny and increasingly gave way to more complex and indirect models. 122

The question of sentiment did not disappear after the collapse of the systems of the moralist philosophers. Instead, two dialects of the language of sentiment were generated through the divergent theoretical specialization of the spiritual and corporeal conceptualizations of humanity (the two bodies to which the title of this section refers). The interaction of those dialects produced a vivacious conversation capable of the contortion and accommodation necessary to translate itself to a new domain where its evolution could continue unabated. As the citation from Bell suggests, that process of translation involved a migration from a

philosophico-scientific paradigm to one concerned with self-exploration and the demands and potential of literary expression.

The language of sentiment predated the literature with which it is now most commonly associated (e.g. Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768)), but its new artistic environs exercised an invigoratingly salubrious effect on the development of emotional vocabulary and the sentimental imagination. Having been unleashed, those unchecked imaginings predictably also gave rise to new attempts at controlling, canalizing, and capitalizing upon the persuasive motivational forces of the passions and the regulative intuitions of the moral sentiments. Said attempts would also revive the oft-recognized didactic potential of appeals to the passions and sentiments within a literary context, and with it the question of learning how to feel would be re-parsed to fit the historical and material conditions of the 18th and 19th Centuries. Accordingly, the question of how feeling works and what feelings are like is slowly transmuted into the question of what I feel and how I feel about myself. As was the case in the move from Descartes to Hobbes, this reflexive modality of feeling is then further extended to a consideration of the reciprocal relationships that obtain in a community: “How do I feel about *us*, where do I fit in, and how should I behave?”

Having arrived at the 18th Century, we stand at a moment when the conversation about the emotions and the passions from Plato to Hutcheson yields up an embarrassment of lexical riches ready to be deployed as a medium for sentimental exploration. That lexical wealth would also be pressed into the service of reflections on feeling and community in the newly-emergent nationalist discourses of the 19th Century. The question of how I feel then comes to include an interrogation regarding what it feels like to be a citizen and a
fellow-countryman and what sort of attitudes are appropriate or advantageous for life as imagined in the national community. Novel developments in philosophy, religion, and politics fostered the construction of new modes of social relations, and sentiment played an essential part in that process of construction. The next section of this chapter traces the rest of the trajectory from πάθος to “sentiment” in the 19th Century and reviews the multitude of other terms that emerged alongside that word as it populated a new theoretical space and made room for yet another evolution in the conversation regarding sentiment and its relation to the body and the soul.
1.4 A Brief History of Sentiment: Three Conversations

As the foregoing sections of this introduction to sentiment have shown, the language of sentiment is manifold and emerges from a plurality of conversations about feeling, beginning in the Ancient World. Descartes’s fateful incision into the Aristotelean body-soul composite was mirrored by a highly-productive conceptual divergence. Newly-minted conceptualizations of the sentiments were produced and gradually adorned with lexical innovations capable of facilitating novel expressions and explorations of sentiment and feeling. That process of lexical innovation was at the height of its dynamism in the intellectual life of 17th and 18th century Europe. Then, as now, the search to render our language regarding the sentiments more precise paradoxically also made space for confusion within the very discourse that it aimed to clarify.

Writing in 1967, critic Brian Wilkie surveyed an assortment of contemporary handbooks and manuals on literature and encountered a startlingly-uniform and superficial understanding of the term “sentimentality.” Of the twelve texts surveyed, two of them make no mention of “sentimentality,” while the remaining ten exhibit uniformity:

“[…] All define the term essentially the same way, with some but surprisingly little variation in wording, emphasis, and illustrative detail. All ten agree that sentimentality is the expression of feeling or the attempt to evoke feeling in excess of what the portrayed situation reasonably calls for. The common keynote is the idea of disproportion or excess.”

Wilkie notes that he employed a random sampling of textbooks for his survey, but he attempts to preempt methodological objections by noting that, “It may be objected that the definitions cited are not “scholarly,” since they are drawn from textbooks aimed at beginning students of literature. […] But it is not easy to find discussions of sentimentality on a higher and more sophisticated level […] Moreover, to cite textbook definitions is particularly useful because it is in textbooks that teachers and critics record their unrationized sense of what sentimentality is, the sense of the term that, presumably, they wish their students and readers to absorb.” Wilkie, Brian. "What Is Sentimentality?" College English 28.8 (1967). Jstor. 573. Web. 6 July 2015.

Wilkie then goes on to point out the obstacles implicit in defining the notion of “sentimentality” in this apparently-commonsensical way. One of his proposed solutions involves identifying the sentimental with a subset of types of emotion portrayed in sentimental literature instead of with the intensity of an emotion’s representation. On his account, only literature that presents a heightened sensitivity to “tender feelings” and the “softer emotions” is truly sentimental, whereas literature that represents the more violent passions is more properly considered “hard-boiled.” However, Wilkie is also careful to attenuate the possibility of exhaustively defining sentiment in this way, and specifically mentions the 18th century Anglophone debates on sentiment as a major source of the obfuscation that has led to both the popular conception of the sentimental that he attempts to problematize and the difficulty of defining “sentimentality” in his own time.

By 1999, the question that Wilkie once addressed was still persistent enough to cause critic June Howard to broach the topic anew. Beyond merely questioning the validity of the vocabulary of sentiment, she calls for a transdisciplinary renovation and realignment of the critical approach to “sentimentality.”

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125 Wilkie’s definition is laid out in the following passage. “At this point I am ready to argue that the definition of “sentimentality” as emotion inappropriate to the occasion is largely false or useless or both. At the very least the definition is not broad enough.” Cf. Op. cit. 568. It is also important to note the class-struggle dimension of the question of “sentimentality,” as Wilkie already did some 50 years ago: “But to call some works sentimental and others not on the basis of their artistry is to leave far behind the criterion of “emotion disproportionate to the occasion”; it is also to beg part of the question, since sentimentality is ordinarily held to be a cause of artistic failure and not simply a symptom of a work that happens to be poor for other reasons. […] my main point here is that our recognition of a work as sentimental depends more often than we generally acknowledge on our sense of social class.” Op. cit. 573.


Accordingly, the renovation advocated in her argument begins with a return to the 18th century debate over sentiment.\(^{129}\) Howard exposes the necessity of said renovation by showing that even recent attempts at reconceptualizing sentiment have continued to omit a fundamental reconsideration of the emotions themselves:

Steve Gordon writes: “I define a sentiment as a socially constructed pattern of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around a relationship to a social object, usually another person… [sic] Most of a culture’s vocabulary of named affective states are sentiments rather than emotions.” This formulation does not raise questions of authenticity; in fact, the processes by which culture crafts feelings are precisely what interest Gordon and others in the relatively new field of the sociology of emotions. Yet the opposition between sentiment and emotion is still correlated with an opposition between the social and the natural. Once again, the argument depends upon a category—emotion—that is left outside the analysis, taken for granted as a fundamental attribute of human beings.\(^{130}\) (My emphasis)

To this position Howard opposes that of another contemporary, namely, Michelle Z. Rosaldo’s “early call for ‘an anthropology of the self and feeling’”: “Emotions are thoughts somehow ‘felt’ in flushes, pulses, ‘movements’ of our livers, minds, hearts, stomachs, skin. They are embodied thoughts, thoughts steeped with the apprehension that ‘I am involved.’”\(^{131}\)

The two contrasting positions that Howard examines lead her to posit a third way between the corporeal, emotive body and the feeling of self as both individual and communitarian. She argues that the interrelation of sentimentality and emotion is not in the first instance a question of discursive overlap or categorical coincidence. To the contrary, the confusion and ambiguity characteristic of the two discourses on sentiment and the emotions should instead be understood as a site of antagonism where the

\(^{129}\) Howard’s renovation proposes a reconsideration of three primary areas essential to the discourse on sentimentality: “I argue that current work outside the boundary of the humanities can usefully revise our perspective on emotion itself; that the link between sentiment and eighteenth-century notions of sympathy and sensibility should be reclaimed; and that we should make a systematic distinction between sentiment and nineteenth-century domestic ideology, and reconstruct the history of their imbrication.” \textit{Ibid.}


\(^{131}\) \textit{Ibid.}
relationship between corporeal emotions and humane sentiments is culturally contested. It is in response to the need to investigate that antagonism that Howard proposes her third way in the following terms:

[…] Neither the socially-constructed nor the bodily nature of sentiment can distinguish it from emotion in general. Rather, expert ascriptions of sentimentality—like vernacular remarks—mark moments when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible. Many usages of the term are of this order, indicating that the conventionalized quality of some affective response has been noted without implying strong or systematic distinctions among artifacts or situations that evoke emotion. Even this relatively modest clarification has benefits […]. [This makes] it clear that characterizing something as sentimental should open, not close, a conversation. […] Further, the social construction of emotion becomes visible when attitudes about what sensations are appropriate […] clash. Although not always stigmatized, sentimentality is always suspect; the appearance of the term marks a site where values are contested.132 (My emphasis)

Inasmuch as it attempts to navigate between two position which themselves are anchored in the conceptual development I described in the previous section as the question of the “two bodies,” Howard’s third way maps to my investigation of the evolution of the language of sentiment thus far. The mechanico-emotional body (the site of the physiological action of the feelings and emotions) and the ethico-spiritual body (where the passions of the soul are made manifest) are both dependent upon overlapping discursive domains to furnish them with the concepts necessary to sustain their respective inquiries. As the passage from Aquinas to Descartes to Hume has already shown, these two bodies are sustained by a narrative that contests the question of their separation and the nature of their interrelation. The story of that antagonism, and specifically the way in which attempts to deal with it appeal to sentiment through literature, is a primary theme of the present investigation. But whereas my investigation centers on literary production in 19th century Mexico, most recent inquiries into the topic of sentiment instead direct their investigation toward the literary production of England or the United States.

Howard follows the well-established pattern of first directing inquiry into the sentimental to the narrow range of 18th century Anglophone literary production. Howard herself acknowledges as much, writing that:

A comprehensive view of sentiment cannot begin later than the eighteenth century. Critics of earlier generations routinely nodded to the British origins of sentimentalism. More recently, however, many Americanists have neglected the transatlantic and philosophical antecedents of the form.133 (My emphasis)

What I mean to emphasize in this section, however, is precisely how loaded the word “transatlantic” proves to be in the previous citation. It is true that England’s claim to a sentimental precedent is buttressed by the sudden appearance of the term “sentimental” in the title of Laurence Sterne’s A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy in 1768.134 As Tim Parnell notes regarding what he dubs “the Anglican discourse” in 18th century England,

[It] is among the most significant in the complex of discourses and ideas that informed the eighteenth-century ‘cult’, or culture, of sensibility. Partly because the so-called ‘sentimental’ novel develops from the 1740’s onwards, this culture is generally seen as a mid-century phenomenon. However, many of the debates about human nature that are central to the culture of sensibility, and with which novels as diverse as Richardson’s Clarissa (1747-1748), Fielding’s Tom Jones (1749), Goldsmith’s The Vicar of Wakefield (1766), and A Sentimental Journey engage, have their roots in the late seventeenth century.135

This leads Parnell to a conclusion that dovetails with the foregoing review of the evolution of the language of sentiment from Plato and Aristotle, to Descartes, Hobbes, Shaftesbury

133 Ibid. In spite of the limitations of her account that I am about to challenge, I should nevertheless state that my argument does agree with many of Howard’s conclusions regarding the development of sentiment in Europe through the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries: she argues that “there is a strong relationship between Enlightenment notions of moral sentiments and sympathy and nineteenth- and twentieth-century sentimentalism. Making that link helps us to understand the significance of contemporary usages.” (Op. cit. 69-70.)


and Hutcheson; Parnell argues that the response of the English “moral philosophers,” but also English and Scottish “political writers, novelists, and sermonists throughout the eighteenth century” can be understood as a response to Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. However, by limiting the conversation on the history of sentiment to the 17th and 18th Centuries in England, we gain a definition of sentimentality at too high a price. Heretofore I have argued that the modern meaning of “sentiment” can only be arrived at by first understanding something of its conceptual development from the Ancient World forward. The price paid for omitting the history of “sentiment” prior to the explosion of “sentimentality” in England is a loss of continuity with that ancient question. Having already traced the history of sentiment from Greece to England, it is then fitting that this investigation briefly expand on the “transatlantic” concerns that Howard suggests by quickly turning to the development of the language of sentiment in France. While the expansion of the sentimental-literary lexicon in England is deeply informed by ethical concerns and debate regarding the ethico-spiritual body, developments in France took a somewhat different turn and elaborated on a discourse regarding the mechanico-emotional body that Descartes’s incision had reinscribed.

As we have seen in the case of “nationalist sentiment,” the omission of the history of sentiment from the investigation of “sentimentality” also inadvertently precipitates consideration of “sentiment” itself out of the question. Along with restoring a sense of continuity with the conceptual development of the language of sentiment, looking to the French development of *sentiment* also allows for a return to the question of the mechanico-emotional conception of the body after Descartes. In this way a third conversation

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regarding that body and its inheritance, one now also concerned with literary sentiment, may be reclaimed. With it we also find the last piece of the puzzle presented by this introduction to the history of sentiment: the modern emergence and evolution of the word “sentiment” itself.

John S. Spink provides an especially useful contribution to the history of the development of the language of sentiment in France from the 17th Century on. Spink insightfully distinguishes between the distinct trajectories of the discourses on sentiment in 18th century England and France:

Elle [la psychologie de la “morale du sentiment”] fit son apparition, comme attitude envers le monde consciemment adoptée, dans le genre littéraire le plus goûté de l’époque, à savoir les livres de morale, tant ceux qui visaient surtout l’utilité, comme le Système du cœur (1704) de l’abbé Gamaches, que ceux qui cherchaient à mêler l’agréable à l’utile, comme le “Spectator” d’Addison et Steele (1711-1714). Sa terminologie était, ou bien d’origine française, comme le mot anglais sentiment lui-même, au sens de “passion de l’âme,” ou bien provenue du latin de Cicéron, et popularisée par la philosophie politique humanitaire et optimiste: les ouvrages de Pufendorf et de ses traducteurs, comme Barbeyrac, ont familiarisé l’Europe avec le langage de la bienveillance (française) et de la benevolence (anglaise). La terminologie qui est propre à la morale du sentiment a été courante en France avant de l’être en Angleterre. Elle se trouve toute développée dans le Système du cœur de Gamaches, ouvrage où la morale du sentiment est exposée systématiquement, avec des analyses psychologiques à l’appui.137 (My emphasis)

There is, however, a substantial flaw in Spink’s assertion of the French provenance of the word “sentiment” in English, one that matters when connecting the plurality of ancient and modern discourses on the language of sentiment and the word “sentiment” itself. Although it may be true that the popularization of an already sophisticated concept of “sentiment” originated from the introduction of the French sentiment into the intellectual milieu of 18th century England, this “introduction” at such a late date is more properly a “reintroduction,” because, as evidenced by the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, the term “sentiment” was already present in the English lexicon as “sentement” as early as the 1380s CE. Chaucer’s prefatory

remarks in the second tome of the *Troilus and Criseyde* (~1380) present the following example:

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
To ryme wel this book til I haue do;
Me nedeth here noon othere art to vse.
ffor-whi to euery lover I me excuse
That of no sentement I this endite,
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.\textsuperscript{138}

It may be objected at this point that, although the “sentments” spoken of here are clearly an ancestor of the modern English “sentiment,” it is not clear that the former word is meant to convey anything like the ambiguous and complex connotations of “sentiment” articulated by the later French and Anglophone moralist traditions. Nonetheless, it is precisely for that reason that connecting the history of the language of sentiment to the historical evolution of the word “sentiment” is so important, because the trail of “sentiment” doesn’t end with Chaucer’s “sentement.” The meaning of “sentement” in the cited passage from Chaucer can be determined when we remember two salient facts: his *Troilus and Criseyde*, a precursor of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), is itself a translation of Giovanni Boccaccio’s epic poem *Il Filostrato* (~1335); furthermore, Boccacio’s own usage of the term *sentimento* seems to cleave closely to its linguistic precursors, the medieval Latin *sentimentum*\textsuperscript{139} and its Roman predecessor, *sentīo*. Searching out the root of “sentiment” in *sentīo* reveals the ambiguous connotations that accompany the emergence of the word. Said ambiguities mirror those already treated in


this introduction with regard to the πάθη and the passions. Lewis’s *A Latin Dictionary* records several divergent but interrelated definitions for *sentío*:

I. Physically: A. In general, to discern by the senses; to feel, hear, see, etc.; to perceive, be sensible of (syn. *percepio*); B. In particular: 1. To perceive the effects (esp. the ill effects) of any thing; to feel, experience, suffer, undergo, endure; 2. In the elder Pliny, to be susceptible of, to be subject or liable to a disease; II. Mentally: A. Lit., to feel, perceive, observe, notice (syn. *intellego*); III. Transf. (in consequence of mental perception), to think, deem, judge, opine, imagine, suppose (syn.: *opinor*, *arbitror*); B. In particular, publicists’ and juridical, to give one’s opinion concerning any thing; to vote, declare, decide (syn. *censeo*).\(^{140}\)

The plurality of definitions of *sentío* parallels a phenomenon already seen in the case of πάθη, “the passions,” affectus, and other related terms, but what must be emphasized is the unique development of “sentiment” and its related terminology in the period of its initial overlap with notions traditionally invoked with regard to the emotions or the passions. My investigation here has already treated those latter notions, so what remains is to connect “sentiment” to that historical trajectory. This can be done by returning the present investigation of the language of sentiment to 17\(^{th}\) century England and France.

Where Spink begins his presentation of oft-neglected French contributions to the language of sentiment by making reference to the works of Étienne-Simon de Gamaches (better known as l’abbé de Gamaches, 1672-1756), James Chandler instead argues that the history of the language of sentiment in the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) Centuries should depart from a consideration of the work of English Latitudinarian thinker Henry More (1614-1687), whose work was shaped by a strong opposition to “the mechanistic theses of Descartes, the materialist-mechanist theses of Hobbes and the materialist theses of Spinoza.”\(^ {141}\) The foregoing sections of my investigation should also make clear why More’s opposition to both Descartes and Hobbes aligns his thought with that of Anglophone moralists like

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Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. More is of particular importance for the history of “sentiment” because of a note that he penned in 1647. That note contained the first instance of a word that proved essential to the discourse of the mechanico-emotional body, “sensorium”: “For there is first a tactuall conjunction as it were of the representative rayes of every thing, with our sensorium before we know that thing ourselves.”142 This word, sensorium, is a crucial one because its introduction into the discourse on the mechanico-emotional body transforms the two conversations on sentiment examined up to this point. It shows that Howard’s contraposition of Gordon and Zambrano’s respective understandings of sentiment and the emotions shows them to be extensions of the two conversations on the mechanico-emotional and ethico-spiritual bodies that emerge after Descartes’s incision into the body-soul composite. In similar fashion, the understanding propounded by More in reaction to the theories of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza represents an attempt to re-ground inquiry with respect to those two bodies, and itself is contested by another system of thought that arose in the wake of Descartes’s vivisection of the passions of the soul, namely, the Cartesian mechanicist vision of the abbé Gamaches.

More’s most important contribution to the evolution of the word “sentiment” is a single, but pioneering, terminological novelty: “sensorium.” More’s initial conceptualization of the sensorium is ostensibly compatible with the new materialism spearheaded by Hobbes’s work, but within three years that materialism comes to be supplemented by the addition of a number of immaterial, spiritual entities:

In his prose writings of the 1650’s, More redescribed his theory of the sensorium in non-materialist terms as part of his refutation of Hobbes and others […] More, however, like Ralph Cudworth and Joseph Glanville after him, supplemented such mechanism by adding incorporeal substances to explain things that they thought mechanism itself could not explain. In particular, “More invoked

142 Ibid.
individual souls, and the universal Spirit of Nature as the active principles required to drive the otherwise purely mechanical world."  

More’s attempt to maintain a separation between the soul and the mechanically-construed world fared little better than Descartes’s own and had similarly grave side effects. Chandler demonstrates how the “sensorium,” a manifold apparatus of perception immanent to the body posited as a compromise with the rising rational-empiricist intellectual tide, is rearticulated and emerges anew as the “vehicular body”:

More’s concession to the new mechanistic materialism was the acknowledgment that, while the soul was distinct from the body, it was nonetheless housed or ‘carried’ in a highly subtilized form of matter that registered perceptual vibration and effected locomotion: it was the human junction box, so to speak, between motion in and motion out. This subtilized body he called the soul’s ‘vehicle’, and he posited that this organ actually survived the death of the gross body. […] The vehicle is the soul’s primary medium, her innermost casing, her second nature. ‘The soul’, writes More, in language that would be cited by at least one later commentator, should be ‘consider’d as invested immediately with that tenuious [sic] matter which is her inward vehicle’. […] Taken as a whole, the doctrine that More developed in his ‘refutations’ of mechanist materialism came to be known as the vehicular hypothesis. This issue, under this name, was debated into and through the eighteenth century. […] The controversy persists through the period after Sterne wrote. Joseph Priestley references the debate somewhat more obliquely in the section ‘Of the Vehicle of the Soul’ as late as his 1782 Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit.  

In a full onset of a symptom first made manifest in the Cartesian imposition of schism within the body, the “vehicular hypothesis” makes More’s “second nature” into an incarnate body in its own right. Herein lies the paradox: in the attempt to preserve the integrity of the soul in the face of a pressing fascination with a body ever more susceptible to and productive for rational, empirical investigation, the soul itself is increasingly conceptualized in terms of embodied manifestation. As a consequence, ways of thinking of the soul are impressed with a corporeal form that acts like a carnival mirror, at once reflecting the feelings of the body while either radically transforming or distorting them. Never truly vacant, the place of the soul becomes the site of a question directed to two distinct but interconnected bodies.

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Alongside the Anglophone moral philosophers, Sterne’s “sentimental” literary modality and its subsequent interpreters would ensure the persistence of the ethico-spiritual body *qua* “vehicular body,” but it is the mechanico-emotive body that proves determinative for the history of the modern usage of the word “sentiment.” The word “sensorium” was an essential element in that process in England. In France, however, the abbé Gamaches made another important contribution to the history of “sentiment” by positing “sensibilité,” a notion that, as in the case of Henry More’s “sensorium,” attempted to provide a way of dealing with the challenges presented by rational-empiricist methodology:

Les livres des moralistes sont fortement marqués par l’influence de la pensée spéculative contemporaine. Celui de Gamaches est éclectique en ce sens qu’à l’analyse cartésienne des “passions de l’âme” et de leurs opérations l’auteur adjoint une conception de la sensibilité et de son activité qui était courante dans les classes de philosophie, et dans les ouvrages de penseurs, comme Locke en Angleterre, ou le comte de Boulainviller en France, qui avaient accueilli, parmi d’autres influences, celle de la philosophie sensualiste et matérialiste représentée par le nom de Gassendi.\(^\text{145}\)

Spink observes that, although his system borrows many of its fundamental concepts from Descartes’s oeuvre,\(^\text{146}\) Gamaches’s theory of *sensibilité* remains uniquely anti-Cartesian in spite of its existence in a turbid milieu of commentary on the phenomena of sentiment:

Pour Descartes et ses disciples, les “passions” ou “sentiments” sont des “idées”, c’est-à-dire, pour ces théoriciens, des représentations. Dans le cas des sentiments, ces représentations sont complexes et comprennent, en même temps qu’un objet quelconque, une agitation corporelle et le “moi” du sujet sentant. […] Descartes et Malebranche n’ont pas de sens à donner au mot “sensibilité.” Pour eux les sentiments sont des “pensées obscures” isolées. La notion de “sensibilité,” ou de capacité générale de sentir, convient mieux à des modes de pensée non-cartésiens, à savoir, la philosophie scolastique, et la philosophie sensualiste, qui avait gardé certaines notions de l’école, tout en se débarrassant des vieilles méthodes désuètes.\(^\text{147,148}\)


\(^{146}\) Ibid.

\(^{147}\) Op. cit. 41-42.

\(^{148}\) It is interesting to note, as Spink does, that father Malebranche himself contributed his own neological connotation to *conscience*, a term which itself is often a fellow-traveler with “sentiment”: “Malebranche en analyse longuement la structure et le mécanisme, qui comprend même une sorte de feed-back, grâce auquel une passion se nourrit d’elle-même. Il en décrit aussi l’aspect cognitif, employant pour en parler le mot conscience, néologisme en ce sens. Cette conscience est une pensée “obs obscure”, qu’on ne saurait comparer aux “idées claires” de la géométrie.” Op. cit. 42.
Gamaches’s sensibilité is first and foremost a conceptual, not a lexical innovation. In a manner similar to its emergence in English, the word is rooted in a conversation that begins with the importation of the word sentiment into French during the Middle Ages. In England the word “sentiment” would retain a meaning more or less synonymous with the connotations of “opinion” or “judgment” assigned to sentimentum in Medieval Latin. But as Marie Banfield and others have observed, despite the Medieval pedigree of “sentement” in Chaucer, when “sentimental” emerges in dictionaries at the end of the 18th Century, it appears as a term both novel and ill-defined.149 Banfield points out that James Barclay, compiler of the ambitiously-titled Complete and Universal Dictionary (1799), held “sentimental” to be “a word only recently introduced into the language. Associated with imaginative literature, sentimental is observed to have as yet no precise meaning.”150 Nevertheless, Banfield’s lexicological survey of 19th century dictionaries also reveals how quickly that lack of definition was replaced, first with an embarrassment of lexical riches, and then with a lexicon of embarrassment and contempt:

[...]Its definition, an ‘affecting turn of thought’, introduces an element of feeling. The word sentimental is included [in] the 1812 dictionary based on Johnson, where it maintains the intellectual emphasis, giving the definition ‘reflectful’ or ‘thoughtful’. [...] In the 1827 Dictionary of the English Language compiled from Johnson, sentiment is given a third meaning, that of ‘sensitivity’ or ‘feeling’. Thought and emotion are conflated in its definition of sentimental as ‘quick, intellectual feeling’. Sentimental it is observed is a modern word and is used pejoratively, denoting affectation ‘in a contemptuous sense’. The word sentimentality finds definition also in terms of affectation. The example, taken from Wharton’s History of the English People, is condemnatory: ‘She even has the false pity and sentimentality of many modern ladies’.151

The preceding history of sentiment makes it possible to situate the consequences of Banfield’s investigation within a wider context. Her argument indirectly justifies granting

150 Ibid
priority to early French developments of the language of sentiment. The English inherit a distilled version of the Latin sentĭo, whereas the French sentiment preserves and refines other connotations of sentĭo that only being to reemerge in England’s “sentiment” after the midpoint of the 18th Century. In England it was literature, best exemplified by Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey*, that tested the limits of sentimental expression and made demands on the popular lexicon. By contrast, in France the impetus behind the development of the language of sentiment was initially philosophical rather than literary.

Spink’s research demonstrates the different paths that “sentiment” followed in England and France. The following passage from his study concisely locates the roots of the French conversation on feeling:

En France, le mot “sentiment” avait, depuis le moyen âge, le sens d’impression physique ou morale, mais, dans la seconde moitié du dix-septième siècle, il commence à s’étendre à toutes les “passions de l’âme”, et on dit “les sentiments du cœur”. Au dix-huitième siècle, il s’appropriera presque toute l’aire sémantique du mot “passion”, ce dernier vocable se limitant de plus en plus aux passions excessives. Cette évolution sémantique se dessine déjà dans la *Recherche de la vérité* (1665—1667) de Malebranche, où l’auteur affirme que les passions ont quelque chose de plus corporel que les sentiments. Le mot français “sentiment” avait aussi le sens d’*opinion*, et l’on pouvait dire, sans risque d’ambiguïté, vers la fin du dix-septième siècle: “les sentiments des philosophes sur les sentiments du cœur”. Cet emploi était courant notamment lorsqu’il s’agissait des valeurs morales exprimées verbalement. [...] Employé ainsi, le mot “sentiment” approche, par le sens, du mot *sentence* (calqué sur le latin *sententia*), à la réserve qu’il implique un engagement de la part du locuteur que *sentence* n’implique pas. Au théâtre, en France, où les personnages s’exprimaient toujours avec correction, et même avec élégance, on doit supposer que les “sentiments” exprimés verbalement correspondent à des “sentiments” (“passions”) éprouvés effectivement, sauf dans le cas d’hypocrisie ou de flagornerie manifeste.

The differences apparent between the French and Anglophone conversations on sentiment and the discourses they serve to concretize can be partially explained by examining the vocabularies that they employ. The fact that the French ignored the English “sensorium,” and instead extended the conversation on *sentiment* through consideration of the word

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152 Ibid.
sensible proved determinative for the discourse on the language of sentiment in that country. It also allowed the French discourse to continue the conversation regarding the mechanico-emotional body initially conjured by Descartes.

Here again Spink’s research provides a useful picture of the development of sensible and its ongoing relation to both sentiment and sensibilité:

Spink’s description of the semantic evolution of sentiment and sensibilité bears an inverse correspondence to the development of the notion in England. As an example, Gamaches’s definition of sensibilité, occupying as it does a position of primacy at the beginning of the modern history of “sentiment,” emphasizes the notions of sympathy and the communicability of sentiment in a way that resonates with Anglophone developments a century later, toward the end of the vogue for the “sentimental” in England’s literary production. Gamaches holds that sensibilité is:

le fondement de toutes les dispositions de l’âme qu’il nous est avantageux de trouver dans les autres,” and argues that “c’est la sensibilité […] qui nous porte à agir de manière à être utiles à nos semblables. La raison ne constitue pas une force motrice; la sensibilité, par contre, dispose de nos forces; c’est une source d’énergie.”


78
The previous passage makes manifest an inversion of terms between the Anglophone and French conversations on feeling. The Anglophone conversation begins by attempting to embody morality in a sense of natural benevolence (Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in their opposition to Hobbes and Mandeville), only to subsequently decouple morality from transcendental principle and resituate it in the natural world (Hume and Locke). In doing so, the ethico-spiritual body comes to increasingly resemble the mechanico-emotional body that Descartes had left on the table after reaping its soul. This process culminates in Hume’s provocatively materialist account of perception and our experience of consciousness (including sentiments, passions, and emotions). The French conversation instead begins by trying to understand sentiment as a mode of embodiment within the senses, and ends by exalting the certainty of the sentiments over the senses of the body.\textsuperscript{156} Furthermore, the French conversation seriously engages with the concept of sympathy in the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century, while refined theoretical concepts of sentiment and sympathy do not come to prominence in Anglophone philosophy until the systems of Scottish thinkers like Adam Smith and David Hume in the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century.\textsuperscript{157}

Keeping all of this in mind, we may risk positing two distinct trajectories in the historical development of the language of sentiment from Descartes on: the French conversation after \emph{le philosophe} begins by emphasizing the cultivation of a discourse regarding what I have been calling the mechanico-emotive body, but it ends with a marked emphasis on the certainty of sensibility and the ability of the sentiments to discern the truth

\textsuperscript{157} Although they have only been mentioned up to this point, both Hume and Smith are extensively examined in the next section of this chapter.
or falsity of emotive identities. The Anglophone conversation instead begins with a fierce debate over the possibility of a moral certainty and natural benevolence rooted in the ethico-spiritual body, but transforms by the end of the 19th Century to favor a naturalist account of the sentiments of the mechanico-emotional body. Such an account proved apt for reappropriation into the political and scientific discourses that eventuated in that period. I do not suppose that these patterns are exhaustive of the phenomena or actors in either national tradition, but they offer sufficient grounds to justify my previous assertion of the general inversion of relations between the French and Anglophone conversations regarding sentiment. To summarize, then, the French discourse on the two bodies exhibits a movement away from concern with the mechanico-emotional body and toward the ethico-spiritual body, while the Anglophone discourse progressively moves away from concern with the ethico-spiritual body and toward the mechanico-emotional body. In this way, French thinkers on the one hand, and English and Scottish thinkers on the other, each made important contributions to the progressive development of the language of sentiment et al. in Modern Europe despite the ostensible divergence of their respective trajectories.

But the relationship between these two conversations is significant for another reason: in spite of their discrepancies, they both arrive at the need to respond to the same question, albeit from different angles. This convergence marks the progressive emergence of what I have previously alluded to as the “third conversation on feeling.” That

conversation still concerns the nature of sentiment, but it redeployes the vocabulary of sentiment in a discourse aimed at assessing and contesting the nature of the social collective. Spink expertly summarizes the passage from interrogating moral sentiment to examining collective sentiment in France from the mid-18th Century on:

Le sentiment est ici la sensibilité en action. Pour ces moralistes français des quarante premières années du dix-huitième siècle, il est surtout question d’établir le prestige de la sensibilité comme mobile et critère des actions des hommes. […] Les philosophes du milieu du siècle transporteront la discussion sur le plan de l’anthropologie et chercheront à saisir le moment où la sensibilité commence d’exister, soit chez l’homme “primitif”, soit chez l’enfant. C’est dans ce contexte que prendra tout son sens une expression qui jouera un rôle important dans la spéculaton des Philosophes — de Buffon, de Diderot et de Rousseau — à savoir l’expression “sentiment de l’existence”. Nous sommes là au seuil de la spéculaton moderne sur la naissance de la conscience et de la conscience de soi chez l’homme social. […] Née aux approches du dix-huitième siècle, cette nouvelle disposition d’esprit s’est donné, dans des ouvrages accessibles à un public français et britannique, publiés avant le Treatise of Human Nature (1739—1740) de Hume, une solide armature conceptuelle et terminologique.

Spink’s concluding mention of David Hume felicitously coincides with Howard’s similar recognition of the common social interrogation shared by English, Scottish, and French thinkers, all of them bracing in preparation for the social upheaval that would characterize the late 18th and early 19th Centuries. The common interrogations of those thinkers depart from a contestation of natural human benevolence, but they eventually arrive at a consideration of what it feels like to be in society and how we should feel about the people who share in the story we tell about ourselves. The following excerpts from Howard describe this transition:

Philosophers like Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau derive benevolence and, ultimately, morality in general from human faculties that dispose us to sympathize with others. For these thinkers, emotions, whether they are innate or produced by Lockean psychology, assume a central place in moral thought – they both lead to and manifest virtue. […] The eighteenth-century moral philosophers occupy an important place in the process by which moral sources are relocated inward. At the same time ordinary life comes to be affirmed as profoundly valuable. […] The notion of “sentiment” as used in eighteenth-century texts is a crucial element of this modern moral identity. It coordinates complex recognitions of the power of

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160 It is important that in this process we also seem to necessarily adopt an attitude toward those who enter into that story passively, marginally, or through absence only (that is to say, not at all).

The notion of \textit{sentiment} evolved in France in large part through the elaboration of the vocabulary of \textit{sensibilité}. The distinct elaboration of a similar thematics in England and Scotland was instead accompanied by the refinement of another specialized concept that informed the development of the notion of sentiment. That peculiarly English catalyst was the notion of “common sense.” Henke affirms that the notion of “common sense” extends back to the Ancient World, but he also emphasizes the unique character of its 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century articulations in Scotland and England:

\begin{quote}
Not only does Socrates’ ‘psyche’ anticipate what was afterwards conceptualised by Aristotle and the later scholastic tradition as the internal ‘common sense’ that unifies and interprets the various sensory data of the five external senses. Arguably this is also the first occurrence of the idea of a link between moral and aesthetic judgment, both of which are issued from the soul, or the common sense. In fact, the two thousand year-old notion prevailing from Aristotle until the end of Renaissance times, that the common sense is a sensory faculty (or even distinct organ) in the brain, prefigures eighteenth-century public discourses of a rational common sense and its ethical-aesthetic implications. [The moderating function ascribed to] the common sense in the brain has been preserved in the later notion of rational common sense as a moderator in ethical and aesthetic matters, where it is to even out extremes in thought and action, as well as to forego aberrations in aesthetic representation. It is in the course of the later seventeenth century, then, that the meaning of common sense fully evolves into a higher mental faculty.\footnote{Henke, Christoph. "Before the Aesthetic Turn: The Common Sense Union of Ethics and Aesthetics in Shaftesbury and Pope." \textit{Anglia - Zeitschrift für englische Philologie} 129.1-2 (2011). 62-63. De Gruyter. Web. 1 Mar. 2015.}
\end{quote}

These changes in the conceptualization of sentiment in England, alongside those made possible by the refinement of the notion of “common sense,” were largely the product of attempts to cope with the unsettling prospect of governing a society wracked with internecine antagonism and lacking any clear, transcendental source of authority.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Op. cit.} 63.}

Although the “innate moral sense” vigorously defended by philosophers like Shaftesbury would fall out of favor by the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, the notion of common sense would somehow escape a similar fate. Common Sense secured a place in the Lockean,
Humean and Smithian epistemologies that eventually dominated the worldview of the moral philosophers in England and Scotland and provided a counterweight to the utopian political visions of French thinkers like Rousseau who dubiously regarded appeals to reason. This both made way for the third conversation about the mechanico-emotional and ethico-spiritual bodies and sustained a renewed inquiry into the social and collective aspects of sentiment.

The character of humanity had been presupposed in different ways after Descartes divorced the body and soul at the beginning of the modern history of sentiment, and this had often obscured interrogation of the individual’s reciprocal relationship to society. To that effect, it should be remembered that it was Hobbes’s successful problematization of any facile notion of human nature, and specifically humanity as naturally benevolent, that prompted much of the reaction of his moralist and empirico-rationalist opponents. But by the late 18th Century, the way was wide-open again for the nature of humanity to be radically challenged and for the status quo of social relations to be considered anew. Those new considerations would shape the way that “national sentiment” and “national community” would be imaginatively constructed in the 19th Century. They would also assure that notions like “sentiment,” “passion,” “common sense,” “sensibility,” “fellow-feeling,” and “affect” would play a continuing role in the imaginative construction of self, considered both within and beyond its communal relations.

For all the limitations of his imperialist perspective, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) did not fail to recognize the importance of the sentiments and the emotions for the nascent

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164 Op. cit. 64, 70.
social and civil movements of his day. Chandler reports that, if John Barrell is to be believed, Burke was also a particularly adroit advocate of the manipulation of sentiment for political ends:

‘Of all loyalists,’ writes Barrell, Burke ‘was the fondest of the extreme rhetorical effects which could be achieved by inviting his audience in parliament, and his readers outside, to join him in the thrills, the terror, the tears provoked by imagining the king’s death.’

David Dwan’s description of Burke’s perspective reveals the staunch Conservative’s insistence on the same sort of innate moral sense seen in the earlier works of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson:

In 1790, Edmund Burke defended the virtues of sentiment against the “conquering empire of light and reason.” If France had succumbed to this new empire, it was some consolation to Burke that the English had preserved most of their natural feelings: “we still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals.” […] In 1770, he maintained that it was “very rare indeed for men to be wrong in their feelings concerning public misconduct; as rare to be right in their speculation upon the cause of it.” According to Burke, it was “not reason but feeling” which drove men, and wise legislators should accommodate this fact. The passions were not simply the object of political deliberation. They were also its motivation and ground. When, on the other hand, politicians alienated their feelings in the name of reason the results were often disastrous; it bred a form of political autism, which by the 1790s was gradually laying waste to Europe.

At the same time that Burke resuscitates the ethico-spiritual body and its accompanying discourse, David Hume and Adam Smith redeploy a naturalist rendering of the elements of “sentiment” derived from the discourse on the mechanico-emotional body. Hume and Smith both exerted a considerable impact on future thinking about nation-building and social organization. Their respective conceptualizations of sentiment and sympathy continue to resonate with our talk about feelings today. As we will see, their experimental accounts of the dynamics of sentiment also allow us to begin making sense of the didactic

literary strategies that will be examined throughout the remaining chapters of this investigation.

Expanding beyond the constraints of the Ancient and Post-Cartesian conversations on sentiment, a third permutation of those conversations emerges. This third conversation on sentiment translates concern for the antagonism between the two bodies into analysis of social antagonism, and in doing so the question of the two bodies is remade as a question of how to produce the *body politic*. Nevertheless, this third conversation is still informed by the conceptual inheritance of the word “sentiment” and its lexical precursors. The next section of this investigation examines how Hume and Smith’s respective theorizations of sentiment and sympathy decisively contribute to that third conversation by providing a framework for imagining communities both local and national. That framework and its limitations will then be juxtaposed with José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s sentimental literary didacticism in Chapter 2 of this investigation.
1.5 A Sentimental Education: David Hume and Adam Smith on the Problems of Teaching Feeling

Every nation tells stories of its origins. In order to be convincing, national narratives need to resonate with the desires and aspirations of the people whose collective story they purport to recount. They need to make a lasting sentimental impact. After the European Enlightenment, those stories progressively began to incorporate novel notions of freedom, sovereignty, and individual rights. Such ideas did not necessarily emerge naturally, nor were they always pre-existent or acceptable in the communities that they were now to bind together. People had to arrive at some sort of understanding of those ideas if the national community was going to exist in any meaningful way. New behaviors, ideas, and ways of looking at the world would have to be acquired through instruction. Mexican Liberals would argue throughout the 19th Century that education was the foremost guarantor of the establishment and preservation of the national body politic. The nation’s obligation to educate its citizenry demanded that national statecraft feature a popular didactic component.

The very concept of didacticism logically entails that both the message to be imparted via instruction and the most efficacious way of inculcating that message be considered. This second field of concern, in which the manner of instruction becomes the focus, can also be considered in two ways. Firstly, didactic thinking can concern itself with how a message ought to be organized in order to be received in the manner desired. Secondly, it can also inquire into how the recipients of the message might be persuaded or prevailed upon to interest themselves in the acquisition of any instruction whatsoever. This latter sort of consideration concentrates on how to make instruction seem desirable to its
target audience. The philosophies of David Hume and Adam Smith provide a framework
that tries to explain how and why an appeal to sentiment can transform a didactic message
by rendering it more palatable and acceptable to the sensibilities of a particular audience.

The concept of didacticism defined above is general enough to be compatible with
all sorts of learning because the four divisions of concern mentioned above precisely map
to the prerequisite elements of teaching, namely, a teacher, a student, and something to be
taught. I have accordingly presented those divisions as applying to the question of
didacticism without regard to the domain of knowledge from which instruction may be
drawn. In doing so, I have also implied another claim, namely, that sentiment plays an
integral part in didactic processes regardless of the type of message being taught. A student
must first want to learn before she can learn, a fact acknowledged in an adage readily
understood by frustrated teachers of all stripes: “You can lead a horse to water, but you
can’t make ‘em drink.” Given that this applies to learning generally, and also given that
the aim of ethical inquiry is learning how to live (in what ways to act and in accordance
with what understandings or principles), it follows that the success of ethical didacticism
is also in some way reliant upon a form of sentimental mediation. Even discussions of vice
and virtue that presume to deny and execrate the sensual world still have to appeal to the
sentiments in order to make their moral messages stick. This realization prompted David
Hume to assert that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can
never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.”167

University Press, 2000. 2.3.3.4 266. Print.
Hume’s declaration shook the foundations of moral philosophy, which had long granted preeminence to the reasoned control of the passions. Indeed, it is one thing to say that reason is incapable of adequately controlling the passions, and quite another to claim, as Hume seems to imply, that the passions should exert dominance over reason itself. However, a careful unpacking of Hume’s argument shows that this latter implication is actually a red herring. The Scottish Skeptic is trying to make a different, didactically-informed point.

In a first approach, Hume’s notorious statement would seem to be arguing in favor of two distinct but interrelated claims: firstly, that the passions and reason are locked in some sort of contest; and secondly, that the result of that contest is or ought to be the overcoming of reason by the passions. Such an interpretation would seem justifiable granted the historical moment in which Hume is writing. The notion of the competition between the passions and reason was already widely accepted at the beginning of the 18th Century. Nevertheless, understanding Hume’s claim demands that it be read in its own context, and the line immediately preceding it proves to be essential to its interpretation: “We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason.” Rightly understood, this oft-omitted line shows that Hume is not arguing that the passions ought to be the victor in their contest with reason for control of the will. To the contrary, it is the very notion of said contest that must be put into question.

168 David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton specifically cite the work of French philosophers Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), and Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) as examples of the general acceptance of the view that places the passions into contention with reason, albeit with different results in the case of each of those thinkers. Op. cit. 170.
169 Op. cit. 2.3.3.4 266.
170 In staking out his position to the contrary, Hume acknowledges that the notion of the combat between reason and the passions is both widely held and deeply rooted: “Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and
On Hume’s argument, it is a mistake to think that reason and the passions could be at odds. An attentive accounting of their respective functions within the psychological economy of the human being instead demonstrates that they are fundamentally different phenomena incapable of being opposed to one another. Our passions or feelings are simply of a different kind than our reason, and both elements contribute differently to the way we experience the world. For Hume, the most basic element of our experience in the world is the impression, and the passions are for him a sort of impression as well.\(^{171}\) Reason, however, is not an impression; reason is a function of the understanding that orders the impressions that we receive in a meaningful way. That meaning, in turn, is dependent upon the way that we are disposed toward the situations that we encounter, and this in such a way that our general disposition affects our understanding of all the objects situated therein.\(^{172}\) Although this understanding may utilize reasoning to dispose the world according to our concerns, it is nevertheless powerless to cause us to act upon any part of that world. Hume argues that for this motivation to occur it is necessary that the passions provide us with a desire, an impetus to realize any of the manifold possibilities that the understanding presents to us as meaningful and worthy of concern. This means that reason

\(^{171}\) More specifically, Hume considers the passions to be “impressions of reflection.” Hume groups impressions into two basic groups, “impressions of sensation” and “impressions of reflection,” and asserts that his investigation will be primarily concerned with the latter, as the former sort of impression “arises in the soul originally, from unknown causes.” Impressions of reflection are “copied in the mind” through the work of the imagination and the memory, and continue on in our experience as “ideas.” Thusly ideas, too, are a sort of impression. This is important because, just as impressions may combine to generate diverse effects or even compound themselves, ideas, already being impressions themselves, may also act upon those impressions. The passions are one of the sorts of impressions that can be produced through the interaction of impression and idea. Hume thusly provides a ground for thinking the interaction of passion and idea, while at the same time making way for the possibility of a didactic transformation of the articulation of the passions through sentiment. \textit{Op. cit.} 1.1.2.1. 11.

\(^{172}\) \textit{Op. cit.} 2.3.3.3. 266.
alone can never be a motivator to action because its role lies elsewhere: rather than pushing us into action, reason facilitates the carrying-out of an action toward its desired end. The role of reason in action is therefore one of articulation, not of motivation.

The upswing of Hume’s argumentation for the question of didacticism is that sentiment comes to be doubly-implicated. On the one hand, if we are concerned with ethics, we will not be able to ignore the role of sentiment in providing motivation for the sort of actions that ethical thinking takes as its object of inquiry. Similarly, if our concerns are instead didactic in a more general sense, than we must necessarily again look to first effectuate motivation via sentiment. Even at this more general level of engagement (that of any instruction whatsoever), the passions remain the only source of motivation to action, learning and instruction being no exception within the general theory. This does not mean that reason has no role to play in didacticism. After all, it is through the learning process that new methods and modes of reasoning are acquired. But because they are of fundamentally different kinds, the passions and reason need to be bridged by a third phenomenon, a space wherein reason is driven forward by the passions while the passions themselves change to reflect the discovery of new facts and feelings. Sentiment names the contested site wherein the passions and reason come to be mutually-imbricated through understanding and interpretation.

Sentiment is not equivalent to the passions or reason, but instead serves as a constantly-contested middle ground wherein feelings and judgment coincide. Sentimental didacticism, an approach that aims at educating the sentiments, accordingly directs itself toward both the passions and reason. Works of sentimental didacticism must stimulate the passions in order to provide sufficient motivation for the desired lesson to be received.
However, it also has to make a sentimental appeal that allows us to recognize and change our way of thinking. It is not enough to simply awaken the desire to learn in a student; reason also has to aid in determining how to realize that desire. Reason helps to ensure that the desired lesson is learned in the desired way. Hume’s provocative claim expresses the complex interrelationship between reason and the passions. But while Hume successfully exposes the common conflation of the passions and reason, his account reaches a deadlock when it takes up the question of how the sentiments are to be educated.

This deadlock arises because, as Hume argues, although reasoning and discernment may change the way we understand a situation, that same sort of reasoning is wholly incapable of bringing about the replacement or substitution of the feelings that originally motivated our interest in the situation. Let us suppose, for example, that some person, Juanito, realizes that he has been robbed of a large sum of money. Enraged and out for vengeance, he sets out in search of his neighborhood rival, Fulano, who he mistakenly expects of having done the deed. But let us then suppose that, when Juanito finally confronts Fulano, Fulano pleads his case so expertly that Juanito realizes he is off the mark. Someone else, possibly Mengano, was surely the true culprit. Now, the question is, what is the next probable step for Juanito? His understanding of the situation has changed, but we can safely assume that this hotheaded individual—after all, he has just finished confronting Fulano out of mere conjecture—will immediately proceed to fulfill his passionate motivation through a confrontation with Mengano. Juanito has learned new information, the situation has shifted, but it is unlikely that he will feel much different now. A different, sentimental intervention would be necessary to change Juanito’s feelings. In this case, reasons are probably impotent.
We should also consider another case, one more closely connected with Hume’s concern for aesthetic taste. If we naturally find something to be good or beautiful, reflection may lead us to discover some series of reasons that seem to justify our initial perceptions as to the goodness or beauty of that object. If, however, our initial sensibilities are such that we find a situation to be odious or ugly, it is likely that no series of reasons to the contrary will be sufficient to replace that initial feeling with its opposite. In this way, reason can provide justifications for our feelings, but reasons alone can never supplant those feelings and cause them to be substituted for different ones. According to Hume, this situation emerges because we are actually dealing with two distinct standards of judgment:

Thus the distinct boundaries and offices of REASON and of TASTE are easily ascertained. The former conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood: the latter gives the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. The one discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition and diminution: the other has a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation. Reason being cool and disengaged, is no motive to action, and directs only the impulse received from appetite or inclination, by showing us the means of attaining happiness or avoiding misery: Taste, as it gives pleasure or pain, and thereby constitutes happiness or misery, becomes a motive to action, and is the first spring or impulse to desire and volition. From circumstances and relations, known or supposed, the former leads us to the discovery of the concealed and unknown: after all circumstances and relations are laid before us, the latter makes us feel from the whole a new sentiment of blame or approbation. Taste, then, and not reason, is the only means through which an initial, passionate impetus may be modified. Hume insists that reason has no sway here, as it can only reckon with relations of things in the world and determine the truth or falsity of a set of circumstances. Instead, reason helps to determine whether the conclusions that a feeling pushes us toward are commensurate (or not) with the realization of a desire. In so doing, it does nothing to overturn the initial passionate impetus that we experience as a feeling. Reason modifies the ideas that accompany that feeling in order to direct it, in a movement of sentimental

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canalization, toward the object with which it desires to satiate itself.\footnote{Idem. \textit{A Treatise of Human Nature}. Ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 2.3.3.6. 267. Print.} Reflecting on a feeling can change the way that the meaning of a feeling is interpreted, but the fact remains that, for Hume, a change in sensibility and the consequent reaction of the passions is only made possible through a change in taste. This causes Hume’s general epistemology of impressions to run headlong into the popular didactic aims of subsequent authors like Lizardi, Ramírez, and Altamirano. By preferring taste to reason, Hume opens a path toward the possibility of sentimental education, but the way is exceedingly narrow and only available to an elite subset of people with exceedingly refined faculties. This is evident in Hume’s landmark aesthetic treatise, “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757).\footnote{It should be noted that this presents no problem for Hume’s thought, as he departs from the premise that our ethical and aesthetic sensibilities are both grounded in impressions which are necessarily of a kind and determined in the first instance with regard to their utility, or the pleasure or displeasure that they produce. \textit{Op. cit.} 1.1.1.1. 7.}

At first glance, Hume’s account of taste seems to admit a great degree of relativism. He notes that, even within the limited confines of intimate circles of friends, any observer will soon detect a noticeable difference of taste within the group. This claim seems even more ecumenical when he adds that this apparent diversity of taste should lead people to be loath to exalt their own particular taste over that of their peers.\footnote{Hume’s definition of taste follows: “The great variety of Taste, as well as of opinion, which prevails in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one’s observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are able to remark a difference of taste in the narrow circle of their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated under the same government, and have early imbibed the same prejudices. But those, who can enlarge their view to contemplate distant nations and remote ages, are still more surprized at the great inconsistence and contrariety. We are apt to call barbarous whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension: But soon find the epithet of reproach retorted on us. And the highest arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled, on observing an equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest of sentiment, to pronounce positively in its own favour.” Hume, David. "Of the Standard of Taste." Ed. Julie C. Van Camp. California State University Long Beach, 23 Nov. 2006. 1. Web. 9 Jan. 2014. <http://www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r15.html>.
} However, the apparent magnanimity of this first observation must be weighed against what Hume considers an
equally evident state of affairs, namely, that it also appears natural to seek a more objective standard of taste by which this diversity of opinion might be reconciled. This leads Hume to forward what is something of a paradox in the light of the diversity admitted to in his initial claim, for if it is sometimes apparent that tastes are naturally disperse, there are nevertheless instances in which it seems most natural to concede that some opinions must be superior to others, as in the case where objects evincing great worth are compared to others that seem totally incapable of rivaling them in any way.

So, how is this paradox to be resolved? Hume’s answer cleverly straddles both claims, asserting that it is true that opinions may be incredibly varied, but that some opinions are nevertheless more worthy than others, and this because they stem from a more refined sensibility. Hume expounds on this notion of sensibility, listing among its primary features a delicate refinement and union of the organs of sense, an imperturbable serenity of mind, careful attention to the object being assessed, a keen sense of recollection, and an absolute freedom from prejudice. Although still speaking in an aesthetic vein, Hume

177 “It is natural for us to seek a Standard of Taste; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.” Op. cit. ¶ 6.
178 “But though this axiom, by passing into a proverb, seems to have attained the sanction of common sense; there is certainly a species of common sense which opposes it, at least serves to modify and restrain it. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as Teneriffe, or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous. The principle of the natural equality of tastes is then totally forgot, and while we admit it on some occasions, where the objects seem near an equality, it appears an extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where objects so disproportioned are compared together. Op. cit. ¶ 8.
179 “But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect
then goes on to ground the possibility of the refinement of taste in a practice of observation that parallels his account of the principle of the association of ideas in his elaboration of a general epistemology in *A Treatise of Human Nature*. The argument, *en nuce*, is that practice makes perfect, and that repeated and attentive observation of a phenomenon, be it beauty or deformity, vice or virtue, can eventually lead to a refinement of the perceptions of such phenomena and render them more susceptible to distinction. Through practiced observation, the ideas attendant upon— but not equivalent to— the passions themselves become more refined and more capable of sentimentally canalizing the passions toward their proper object. Hume does provide an account of how such sentimental refinement can occur, but he is careful to rein in his claim by asserting that examples of perfection through that process are indeed most rare.

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180 But though there be naturally a wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than practice in a particular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The taste cannot perceive the several excellences of the performance; much less distinguish the particular character of each excellency, and ascertain its quality and degree. If it pronounce the whole in general to be beautiful or deformed, it is the utmost that can be expected; and even this judgment, a person, so unpracticed, will be apt to deliver with great hesitation and reserve. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. A clear and distinct sentiment attends him through the whole survey of the objects; and he discerns that very degree and kind of approbation or displeasure, which each part is naturally fitted to produce. The mist dissipates, which seemed formerly to hang over the object: the organ acquires greater perfection in its operations; and can pronounce, without danger of mistake, concerning the merits of every performance. In a word, the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired by the same means, in the judging of it.”

181 “Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous. [...] Under some or other of these imperfections, the generality of men labour; and hence a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle...
This conclusion, eminently elitist in nature, betrays the limited applicability of Hume’s notion of taste through sentimental refinement to the question of popular education. Only the chosen few would be able to achieve the sort of unprejudiced, contemplative refinement of sentiment forwarded by Humean thinking. Educating a national citizenry instead requires a didactic methodology capable of making new ideas relatable and comprehensible to a wide diversity of audiences, each of which possess their own historical and cultural particularities. Nevertheless, Hume’s question as to how to determine which opinions and feelings should be authorized as exemplary models is a persistent one. Even if we insist that education be available to all of the people of a nation, isn’t it still necessary to employ the notion of a model citizen? What figures are most exemplary, and which are most propitious for social emulation? Hume’s account seems unable to answer these questions.

The problem that emerges in Hume is that his account of sentiment, and its conceptual underpinnings based in his notion of taste, are simply too isolated from the realm of everyday social interaction. There are good reasons for this to be the way that it is. Hume refuses to lash his philosophy to the social world through appeals to authority or speculative notions of community. Rather than first addressing the social in the fashion of what he calls the “selfish philosophies” of his social-contractarian contemporaries (Hobbes, Locke, and Mandeville, for example), Hume attempts to find a common ground for the examination of human nature by taking Nature itself as his point of departure. Hume’s philosophy attempts to attain to a universal level of applicability through the

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critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty. Op. cit. ¶ 23.
recognition that we all gain whatever understanding we have of the world through a source that is held in common, namely, the impressions of our senses. Furthermore, because Hume presupposes that our organs of sense are to a significant extent uniform in their functioning across the spectrum of humanity, he concludes that the understanding derived from sense impressions is sufficiently universal to make claims regarding them generally applicable to human experience at large. In this way, Hume begins with individual experience and then uses the commonalities emergent there to try to boot-strap his way into a functional and organically-emergent notion of community.

This approach, however, fails to account for the fact that sentiments themselves are the sort of thing that can be shared in their particular manifestations. If we follow Hume’s argumentation alone, it remains unclear how two people possessed of different sentiments could ever come to a shared understanding of each other’s sentiments. This is even more problematic when it comes to fostering national community, where the objective is to find a unifying common ground in shared sentiment. What demands explanation, then, is how, in the encounter with another person who feels differently than I do, I can actually feel moved by sentiments towards which I am not initially inclined by my own experience of the world and even come to partially or fully partake of those same sentiments.

Hume does have a response to this quandary: like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson before him, Hume’s solution is found in positing a basic sort of benevolence toward the whole of society as a fundamental feature ingrained within human beings. For Hume, that benevolence solves the problem of why humans are naturally concerned with the world beyond themselves and allows for moral sentiment to be grounded in something other than the principle of self-love that underpins the “selfish philosophical systems.” Nevertheless,
natural benevolence fails to explain how someone who is not already an exemplar of refined sensibilities might come to understand and adopt new sentiments without the sort of practiced, unprejudiced observation that Hume’s theory requires. Hume’s theory cannot approach the collective creation and popular cultivation of sentiment. Rather than simply being a question of how to realize optimal personal development, the problem of how to transform sentiment through education is essentially a social question concerned with how community might be established through the mutual communion of just sentiments.

Whereas Hume’s thinking stops short of the sentimental education of the collective, Adam Smith’s theory of the moral sentiments directly engages with the problem of how to understand and propagate feelings of sentimental community. Smith, in his departure from Hume, opens up a new avenue toward sentimental transformation by grounding his moral epistemology in the possibility of a more direct form of sentimental communication, namely, sympathy.

Smith’s discussion of sympathy begins with a commonplace observation: “We often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others.” This occurs even though we might neither be sad before our encounter with the sorrow of the other nor have any personal reason to feel sad or share in their sadness. He then extends this claim beyond sadness to all of the sentiments and the passions that produce them. In a move beyond the limitations of

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183 "Neither is it those circumstances only, which create pain or sorrow, that call forth our fellow-feeling. Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than that with their happiness. We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties; and we heartily go along with their resentment against those perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them. In every
the sort of refined sensibility necessitated by Hume’s theory, Smith argues that the ability
to share in the sentiments of others is present in all people, and this in spite of differences
in their respective sensibilities and capacities for feeling. For Smith, the possibility of
sympathetic feeling is characteristic of human existence even though its potential may
remain latent and unrealized in many people.\textsuperscript{184}

It is important to note precisely what it is that Smith claims here, because although
a manifestation of sentiment may directly produce a corresponding sentiment in the
observer, this does not equate to claiming that the sentiment thereby produced in the
observer is identical to the sentiment that prompts its production. Rather, a sentiment
produced in this way still requires interpretation via the imagination of the one who feels
it.\textsuperscript{185} The imaginary interpretation of sentiment can therefore result in the manifestation of
a rather different sort of sentiment depending upon how the observer interprets the
sentiment observed and the circumstances from which it springs. The salient difference

\textsuperscript{184} “That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any
instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means
confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The
greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.” \textit{Op. cit.} 14-15.

\textsuperscript{185} “As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which
they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother
is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers.
They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can
form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than
by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses
only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation,
we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some
measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something
which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home
to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then
tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the
most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same
emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dulness of the conception.” Smith, Adam. \textit{The Theory of Moral
between Hume and Smith’s theories, then, is that Hume focuses on how sentiments arise from reflection on naturally-emergent passions, whereas Smith emphasizes how sentiments can stem from the observation of sentiments in others. The distinction is a fine one, and its consequences must be teased out here.

Hume focuses on the way the passions naturally give rise to sentiments, and his conviction that the passions are in no way subject to reason leads him to conclude that the passions themselves and the sentiments produced through reflection upon them can never be wrong per se. Sentiments can be unreasonable, meaning that the perception which gives rise to them can be flawed, but they cannot properly be wrong as the only standard against which they can be weighed is the very sentiments of the one who feels that way. The sentiments of each person, Hume argues, are only capable of being measured against the taste possessed by the person who is feeling them. Although Smith generally agrees with Hume’s epistemology of the sentiments, he adds an extra twist that makes all the difference: although it remains the case that all we ever experience are our own sentiments,

186 "What may at first occur on this head, is, that as nothing can be contrary to truth or reason, except what has a reference to it, and as the judgments of our understanding only have this reference, it must follow, that passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are accompany'd with some direct judgment or opinion. According to this principle, which is so obvious and natural, 'tis only in two senses, that any affection can be call'd unreasonable. First, When a passion, such as hope or fear, grief or joy, despair or security, is founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, When in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the design'd end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it. 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person wholly unknown to me. 'Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer even my own acknowledged lesser good to my greater, and have a more ardent affection for the former than the latter. A trivial good may, from certain circumstances, produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment; nor is there any thing more extraordinary in this, than in mechanics to see one pound weight raise up a hundred by the advantage of its situation. In short, a passion must be accompany'd with some false judgment, in order to its being unreasonable; and even then 'tis not the passion, properly speaking, which is unreasonable, but the judgment.” Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature. Ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 2.3.3.6. 267. Print.
Smith argues that through the action of sentiment, and granted the right conditions, we can make a copy of the sentiments of another person, and thereby accede to their position by putting ourselves in their place. This process, however, is not without its limits.

The realization of the sentimental copy that allows a person to place themselves in the shoes of another is limited by the imagination and opinions of the person making the copy. Even if a sentiment is copied in the most vivacious or conceptually-sound manner possible, in order for it to enter into the examination of the observer it must be adopted to the parameters of their own sentimental understanding, or as Smith puts it, “the case must be brought home to himself.” And this is where a sort of double-bind emerges in Smith’s theory, one which again brings the question close to the problem of communication entailed by Hume’s theory of sentiment and taste: bringing the case home to oneself requires an act of the imagination, but as that act of imagination stems from our own prejudices and opinions, we necessarily feel that sentiment in our own way. This means that the basic function of sympathy, alongside the correlate action of imaginative recreation, brings the sentiment home and allows us to participate in it, but our understanding and interpretation of that sentiment is in no way guaranteed to be identical to that of the person whose sentiment was initially observed.

In fact, the action of sympathy that makes it possible to first share that sentiment may end up rendering the sentiment itself rather unsympathetic to us. In such a case, one may arrive at an understanding of the sentiments of another, only to reject them as inappropriate either to the situation provoking them or in the degree to which they are

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manifested. Here again, a communicative gap emerges that cripples the possibility of sharing sentiment and thereby impedes the establishment of the sort of fellow-feeling necessary for grounding a national community as a sentimental community. Smith, for whom the possibility of shared sentiment serves as a sort of politico-social foundation, also shares this concern, and forwards a rather ingenious response by conjuring up an entity that serves as the key to his theoretical model: the “impartial spectator.”

With the impartial spectator, Smith looks to restore the communicability of sentiment by positing a third position, accessible to all, between the person whose sentiments are being copied (and therefore evaluated) and the spectator who produces that copy by bringing the case home to him or herself. For Smith, the appeal to the impartial spectator is available to all people through what he posits, in a way not unlike Hume’s thesis on benevolence, as a naturally-emergent sense of propriety. This sense of propriety is what informs the imaginative interpretation of sentiment that makes it possible to bring the case home to oneself.

Smith affirms that the only resources that our imagination can draw upon in the process of sympathizing are those of resultant from our own senses, but then forwards another possibility: using our natural understanding of propriety, and even if we are unable to escape our own subjective prejudices and opinions in our evaluation, we may all still imagine ourselves as being an impartial spectator outside the situation. In doing so, although our own sympathies remain obvious, we may nevertheless imagine what it would

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188 “Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them.” Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Ed. Amartya Sen and Ryan P. Hanley. New York: Penguin Books, 2009. 25. Print.
be like to be someone else, and inasmuch as this position may be attained to, at least to some degree, by everyone, it provides a shared ground for the evaluation of the propriety of a sentiment through a commonly shared lens of impartiality. Adopting that perspective requires no more effort, and perhaps even less, than the change of positions already entailed by our sympathetic bringing home of the case of another to ourselves. The difference is that the sentiments of the impartial spectator, when properly imagined and evaluated in accordance with the rules of natural propriety, are neither ours nor those of the person observed. Rather than pertaining to the spectator or the object of their observations, the sentiments of the impartial spectator never belong to anyone in particular, and hence may belong to everyone in general.

In discussing Hume and Smith, I have elaborated on a framework of sentiment, passions, sympathy, and reason that will serve as the groundwork for my analysis of the specifically literary didacticism deployed in the novels of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. As we have seen, Hume and Smith offer precise definitions of those terms and explanations of their functions, as well as innovations in ethical thinking about sentiment that set the tone for discussion of the topic in early 19th century Mexico. The next chapter of this investigation shifts from the history of sentiment to analysis of the way that Lizardi innovatively incorporated the sentimental insights of Hume and Smith into his own literary pedagogy. I will examine Lizardi’s didactic narrative innovations and argue that the ultimate failure of Lizardi’s attempt at popular education through literature also challenges and exposes the limitations of Hume and Smith’s theories of sentiment.
Chapter 2

Jose Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi: Didactic Sentiment and Divine Providence

“El maestro tiene por tarea esencial desarrollar el respeto y el amor a la verdad, la reflexión personal, los hábitos de libre examen al mismo tiempo que el espíritu de tolerancia; el sentimiento del derecho de la persona humana y de la dignidad, la conciencia de la responsabilidad individual al mismo tiempo que el sentimiento de la justicia y de la solidaridad y a la República”
– Gregorio Torres Quintero

“La escuela a principios de este siglo, la anterior a la Independencia, era pero mil veces, y el que quiera conocerla puede ocurrir a los escritores de aquella época, particularmente al Pensador mexicano, a ese iniciador atrevido a quien anatematizaron el clero y la tiranía, precisamente por haber revelado al pueblo los inmensos males que traía consigo el absurdo régimen colonial”
– Ignacio Manuel Altamirano

“So with sentimentality; a healthy tolerance of it may indicate a strong stomach rather than, as many people seem to believe, a weak one. Sugar is as much a fact of life as vomit; one is a soft fact and one a hard one, if you will, but both are facts.”
-Brian Wilkie

“Je sens mon cœur et je connais les hommes.”
-Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Confessions
2.0 A Novel in Search of an Audience: Lizardi’s Sentimental Didacticism

José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s literary activity emerges out of the fractured social milieu brought forth by the birth pangs of the fight for national sovereignty. His novels draw on the criollo imaginary to diagnose society’s ills and gradually formulate a sentimental-didactic project aimed at remedying the civic disunity and chaos that would only intensify throughout the struggle for Independence. Lizardi’s works sometimes seem to contradict their explicitly-avowed didactic objectives, but those contradictions are often merely a symptom of the fact that the author is writing in an environment rife with internecine division. Lizardi writes from his position in a proto-national community that stands astride two waters, with one current flowing into the colonial past of New Spain, and the other raging toward a still obscure, but decidedly independent and national future. The early 19th Century in Mexico is a historical juncture in which all aspects of society are destabilized and menaced by their own obsolescence. It is a time when all signs point toward the inexorable arrival of unpredictable changes to the social order. Lizardi searches for communal unity in that sea of uncertainty. That search expresses itself through literature, where it joins with Lizardi’s adherence to the Liberal principle of popular education to produce a project of sentimental didacticism that spans his three novels, *El periquillo sarniento*, *La Quijotita y su prima*, and *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*.189

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189 It should be noted that I exclude Lizardi’s other novel, *Noches tristes y día alegre*, from consideration here, as it represents a departure from the overall didactic project under examination, being at once an autobiography and pastiche of José Cadalso’s (1741-1782) *Noches lúgubres*: “El propio Fernández de Lizardi indica, en el prólogo a la edición, que elaboró la obra a imitación de la de don José Cadalso, lo que la sitúa desde el comienzo en el romanticismo. Esta tendencia quiebra el registro realista habitual en el resto de la producción del Pensador Mexicano.” Oviedo, Rocío, and Almudena Mejías, eds. *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*
Jefferson Rea Spell’s indispensable study, *The Life and Works of José Joaquin Fernández de Lizardi* (1931), records that Lizardi used literature to enter the intensifying political fray as early as September of 1811.190 Lizardi began his career with poetry,191 and his works were at first published almost exclusively as pamphlets.192 Later in his career he would continuously return to the ephemeral pamphlet form, but in times of desperation he

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191 Although Spell has claimed that Lizardi never published any of his poetry in the two major literary organs of the period, the primary one being the *Diario de México*, subsequent investigation of the history and contents of the *Diario* in Ruth Wold’s *El Diario de México, el primer cotidiano de Nueva España* has shown him to be incorrect on this point. As Wold demonstrates, Lizardi did in fact publish two poems in the *Diario*, first a fábula entitled “La abeja y el zángano” on February 14th, 1812 (Issue no. 2325), and then a décima entitled “Envite” and directed to the editor in the August 8th edition of the same year (no. 2510). Their omission from Spell’s study is certainly understandable granted that Wold’s study appeared a full 39 years after the publication of Spell’s pioneering biographical study, and becomes even more so when it is recognized that both of these poems bore only the initials of the author, “J.F. de L.” Nevertheless, and despite the fact that his publications in the *Diario* were very scarce, it is important to bring this fact to light because it allows for a deeper understanding of the controversy that came to surround Lizardi’s literary production even before the publication of *El periquillo*. As Wold’s research shows, Juan María Lacunza had harshly criticized one of Lizardi’s writings, “La verdad pelada,” even though it had not been published in the *Diario*, where the neoclassical poetry of Lacunza played a determinative role. In seeking to both critique Lizardi and deprive him of the acknowledgment that might have resulted from mentioning him directly, Lacunza named only the work under scrutiny while claiming that he was unaware of the author’s identity. The result of this slight was nothing short of a comedy of errors: since Lacunza had not named the author of “La verdad pelada,” his friend Anastasio Ochoa y Acuña, author of a work similarly titled “A la verdad pelada,” apparently thought that Lacunza was referring to him in his critique and submitted a reply to the *Diario*. In order to rectify this misconception, Lacunza was forced to again mention “La verdad pelada” and the mysterious author “J. F. de L.,” this time claiming that perhaps some decent poetry had been written under these initials, but that this was only because the initials themselves were so common. Lacunza then drove his point home again by saying that, in spite of this possibility, all of the poetry that he had read under those initials to date, obviously including that written by Lizardi, was terribly defective. Lizardi himself replied to this charge with a letter to the *Diario*, in which he asked Lacunza for a more specific critique of the poetic defects that he had found so glaring. Lacunza agreed, and launched a scrupulous and scathing critique of the defects of Lizardi’s poetry in the *Diario* in the winter of 1811. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that Lizardi had been befriended by Ochoa y Acuña, who had apparently recognized his literary talents. Lacunza then softened his critical stance, or at least asserted it in a less acerbic manner: “Incluso Juan María Lacunza, admirador de Ochoa, suavizó sus críticas a Lizardi.” Mencionó que tenía buenas ideas, pero que era una lástima que no revisase más su poesía […] En otra ocasión, escribió que ‘Hacer las cosas tan claras’ era uno de los escritos con menos defectos de J. F. de L.” Wold, Ruth. *El Diario de México: primer cotidiano de Nueva España*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1970. 76-78. Print. Spell, Jefferson R. *The Life and Works of José Joaquin Fernández de Lizardi*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1931. 16. Print.

192 Ibid
turned instead to the novel. Spell argues that Lizardi’s embrace of the pamphlet as a medium indicates the author’s dual determination to speak directly to the common people and to find a way to make a living while doing so. Even at this early stage, Lizardi’s didactic drive separates his work from the more decorous, neoclassical poetry advocated by the authors of the Mexican Arcadia through their primary organ of literary dissemination, *El Diario de México*. It is perhaps due to the manifestations of this didactic drive in his poetry that, just as in the case of his novels, critical evaluations of the author’s work would be split from the very beginning. Some condemned Lizardi’s work as shameful and vulgar, while others considered its didactic aims to be both productive and useful for society.

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193 Jefferson Rea Spell provides a careful accounting of the specific dates surrounding the publication of each of the parts of the *Periquillo*, and it is revealing with regard to the motivations behind the switch from pamphlet to novelistic form. Spell argues that it was in part the repeated suppression of his articles in 1815 that would eventually give rise to Lizardi’s brief preference for the novel. Accordingly, in December of 1815 the first mention of the *Periquillo* appeared in with a listing of the *Prospectus of the Life and Adventures of Periquillo Sarniento*. What followed was the rapid production of the novel in the form of installments, a process which continued until it was censored and suppressed: “From the Prologue through Chapter VI appeared in February, 1816; in April the second volume was promised; in July the first fifty pages of the third volume were printed. By this time the suspicions of at least one of the censorial board were aroused; and the fourth volume, due to the views antagonistic to slavery which it voiced, was promptly suppressed on November 29 of that year. This arbitrary act only served to increase the popularity of the first three volumes, for which, Lizardi tells us, as much as sixty pesos were paid.” It would not be until “a few years after Lizardi’s death in 1827” that the work would be published in its entirety. Spell, Jefferson R. *Bridging the Gap: Articles on Mexican Literature*. México: Editorial Libros de México, 1971. 146-48. Print.

194 Ruth Wold’s study of the *Diario de México* offers up a trove of data on the Mexican Arcadia. According to Wold, the Mexican Arcadia featured many prominent Mexican authors, including Manuel Martínez de Navarrete, Francisco Manuel Sánchez de Tagle, Anastasio Ochoa y Acuña, and Antonio José de Iriarte, and was dedicated to forwarding a neoclassical poetics stemming from a reaction, already made manifest in Spain, against *culteranismo* in general, and more specifically, *gongorismo*. In order to “restablecer el buen gusto literario,” the Mexican Arcadia, following the neoclassical reforms of Boileau in France, attempted to establish precise rules for the cultivation of all poetic genres. As Wold signals, the reforms attempted by the Mexican Arcadia paralleled those advocated by a parallel group in Spain composed of many of the poetic luminaries of the end of the 18th Century, including Nicasio Álvarez Cienfuegos, Juan Meléndez Valdés, Melchor Jovellanos, and Manuel José Quintana. Wold, Ruth. *El Diario de México: primer cotidiano de Nueva España*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1970. 18-19. Print.

195 “All of his poetry issued in these years is of a light satiric character, and in nearly every poem he held up to ridicule some type of the society about him. As a result, no sooner had the first pamphlet appeared than the attention of the critics was attracted to his work. Some characterized it as a disgrace to the country; others sympathized with his purpose and found the poetry praiseworthy.” Spell, Jefferson R. *The Life and Works of José Joaquin Fernández de Lizardi*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1931. 16. Print.
This initial split in critical opinion has been perpetuated until today, albeit in new forms and with attention being given to different elements and aspects of the author’s work. This can be seen by comparing critical evaluations of Lizardi’s literary production. In the first instance, it would be nearly impossible to find a more positive valorization of Lizardi’s work than that forwarded by Agustín Yáñez, a great Mexican novelist in his own right, in his preface to the 1940 UNAM edition of the collected *El pensador mexicano*. Yáñez speaks from his position at the culmination of the Mexican revolutionary project and fulminates against those who would negate and marginalize the value of Lizardi’s work on aesthetic grounds:

Los mastines alargados e infecundos de una crítica todo lo erudita que se quisiera, pero anémica de los valores humanos y sin arraigo en el subsuelo de la esencialidad mexicana, muerden y tiran de la esclavina y el olán, una raída capa del siglo diecinueve, patrimonio del más constante y, por ello, el más desgraciado escritor mexicano.  

Yáñez then explains the force behind this most disgraced of Mexican authors, arguing that Lizardi was one of the few to truly comprehend the meaning of the revolutionary spirit unleashed by the *Grito de Dolores* and the subsequent fight for independence from Spain. Yáñez exalts Lizardi’s work for accomplishing a similar movement toward national independence in the domain of literature: “La emancipación política ha puesto en vigor la voluntad de la independencia literaria; el hombre de la capa se atreve a definir y practicar esta otra forma de la soberanía […].” Considering the historical moment of enunciation sustaining this claim, and more specifically the importance of the concept of the *mestizaje* as the arbiter of a *Leitkultur* of modernization

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197 *Op. cit.* VIII.
and progress,\textsuperscript{198} it is also significant that Yáñez describes Lizardi’s battle-worn cape as *mestiza*:

De pronto, antes de explicarnos el hecho, admiremos como los recios tirones —y los hay de garras ponderosas— no han conseguido rasgar la urdimbre de la capa mestiza: mientras más se la tira, con mayores alardes revuela: insignia grávida por vientos fecundos.\textsuperscript{199}

Leaving no room for error as to the esteem merited by Lizardi’s contribution to the literary and social life of Mexico, Yáñez concludes with a eulogy to the “prophet and patriarch of the patria”:

La milagrosa prenda debe ser para la juventud Mexicana lo que para los reformadores de España ha sido el embozo de ‘Fígaro’: bandera y piragua –nuevo manto de Quetzalcoatl— que nos lleve a la tierra firme de nuestras realidades. Porque Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi —su dueño— es patriarca y profeta en el santoral de la Patria. Su ojo, heredero de magias aborígenes, vio lo que nosotros —a precio de fracasos— empezamos a vislumbrar; su oreja de criollo tuberculoso percibió lo que apenas —con rescate de sudor y de sangre— comenzamos a entender; su voz clamó urgencias que subsisten sobre el desierto de nuestra vida colectiva; y su mano nerviosa de conquistador agitó cuantos temas agitan ahora nuestras manos: el de la educación –tema central, hondo, reiterado, obsesionante en la obra de Fernández de Lizardi—, el problema del indio, el de las tierras, el de la superstición; los rencores que dividen a nuestros grupos sociales, el pauperismo, la justa distribución de la riqueza y las reivindicaciones en todos los órdenes, las virtudes, los vicios, la desviación de las vocaciones individuales y colectivas, los cacicazgos y la injusticia medular de nuestras instituciones.\textsuperscript{200}

But Yáñez’s shining assessment of Lizardi’s cultural legacy notwithstanding, his perspective only represents one extreme of the tradition of critical commentary on the author’s works. Exploring the opposite side of the spectrum sheds some light on why Lizardi’s contribution to national literary culture has often been misunderstood.

Yáñez’s perspective can be productively juxtaposed with the work of critic Marija Polič-Bobič. Writing in 1994, Polič-Bobič vehemently asserts a claim diametrically

\textsuperscript{198} Variations of this idea have been propounded by figures as diverse as Ignacio Manuel Altamirano and José Vasconcelos.

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Ibid.} Print. Yáñez’s reference to the Pensador’s “mestiza” cape is also an exemplary manifestation of the contradictions implicit in the politically-strategic deployment of Lizardi as a cultural icon. To see this we need look no further than Spell’s biography, which registers, as does Lizardi’s baptismal certificate, that the author “was of Spanish blood.” In effect, both Lizardi’s mother, Bárbara Gutiérrez, and his father, Manuel Hernández Lizardi, were born criollos following the understanding of the period. \textit{Viz.} S Spell, Jefferson R. The Life and Works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1931. 9-11. Print. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Yáñez seems aware, if unperturbed, by this apparent contradiction, as seen in his subsequent description of Lizardi as a “tuberculoso criollo.”

opposed to Yáñez’s praise of Lizardi some half a century earlier. Polič-Bobič reviews statistics regarding pamphlet distribution during the period and argues that they speak against the notion of any popular embrace of Lizardi:

[…] Sería precipitado concluir que la recepción ideológica de las novelas fuese el acontecimiento social y cultural central de la época. Los juicios de los centros de poder cultural contemporáneos tampoco le fueron favorables […] Sus escritos obviamente carecían de los atributos necesarios para ser promovidos como valor cultural nacional.201

Nevertheless, this latter claim regarding the unsuitability of Lizardi’s work for popular dissemination is hard to stomach, especially considering that Lizardi is explicitly cited as a precursor by luminaries of Mexican literature like Ignacio Ramírez, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, and of course, Agustín Yáñez. How, then, are we to reconcile Polič-Bobič’s dismissal of Lizardi’s impact with Yáñez’s ardent declaration that “la historia de nuestra literatura debe dividirse en dos períodos: antes y después de José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, cuya obra justifica y condiciona la existencia de las letras mexicanas”202

Lizardi’s novels hold the key to resolving this quandary, but first it is necessary to carefully examine how his sentimental didacticism functions and to clarify the aims of his literary project. It is impossible to understand why Lizardi deserves to be called a precursor of Mexican national literature without first reevaluating the author’s own literary corpus.

That Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism has not yet been recognized can be explained in part by the way in which many critics address his educational history, and by logical extension, the notions and conceptions that would have been available to the author.203 Polič-Bobič, for one, asserts that it was precisely Lizardi’s outmoded education

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203 María Isabel Larrea specifically mentions Benito Jerónimo Feijóo (1676-1764), José Cadalso (1741-1782), and Alain-Réné Lesage (1668-1747) as sources for Lizardi’s thought (Larrea, María Isabel. "El Periquillo Sarniento: Un relato ejemplar." Estudios filológicos 18 (1983). 74. Print.). Jefferson Rea Spell has
that sealed the fate of both his literary works and the didactic project elaborated therein.

She holds that Lizardi’s project is doomed to failure because it depends on ideas acquired through a formation in the tradition of 17th and 18th century French and Spanish moralists (e.g. François Fénélon and Benito Jerónimo Feijóo). Polić-Bobič claims that an education marked by the profound limitations of those systems would have necessarily isolated Lizardi’s thinking from contemporary literary, political, and philosophical advances in Europe. This leads Polić-Bobič to the following conclusions regarding Lizardi most famous novel, *El periquillo sarniento*:

> La novela pretende parecerse a la vida, como quieren y sugieren los pioneros de la crítica de la novela del postbarroco [sic], pero las coordenadas éticas y religiosas en que la historia debe encajar la colocan tan lejos del criterio de la verosimilitud como algunas de las viejas y enredadas historias de caballeros andantes. El deseo de Lizardi de contribuir a la formación del hombre nuevo americano es evidente, pero su propia formación mental, a través de la cual habla la herencia secular, le impide realizarlo. Se debe también a la formación mental, y no exclusivamente al desconocimiento de la novela de sus contemporáneos europeos o la falta de información, el que nuestro autor no se percatara de las premisas teóricas del texto ficcional planteadas con un siglo de anterioridad a sus textos. Viviendo en el aislamiento intelectual de los últimos momentos de la colonia cuya estructura, cargada de la herencia contrarreformista, tampoco pudo adaptarse a las innovaciones en el discurso ficcional europeo, llegó a crear una mezcla de la temática ‘aquí y ahora’ con los criterios antiguos, visibles en la tendencia hacia la moralización por medio del discurso ficcional. Toda la ‘erudición útil’ a que Lizardi reduce la problemática, en la cual sus críticos reconocen una mezcla de su formación ilustrada y la deseada ‘veracidad,’ o representación social, tienden a formar la imagen de los modelos de conducta necesarios para el arraigo de una moral que se presenta como simbiosis de lo viejo y lo nuevo. Periquillo Sarniento no se enreda en sus propias aventuras como un caballero andante por el gusto de contar (y leer) aventuras, sino para poder terminar con todas de un solo golpe que demuestra que ellas aparecen sólo para ser criticadas por igual, descuidando los matices caracterológicos que allí se perfilan.204

Policic-Bobič’s analysis makes it clear that, from her perspective, the way in which Lizardi’s didactic drive manifests itself in his works serves as a hindrance to his erstwhile project of realistically speaking to the burgeoning reality of the “hombre nuevo americano.” This

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vision of the limitations of Lizardi’s education must be opposed. Even if Polič-Bobič is correct about the sources available to him, Lizardi nevertheless manages to arrive at insights regarding the mutual imbrication of sentiment and didacticism that parallel David Hume and Adam Smith’s then cutting-edge theories of sentiment and the passions. Lizardi then harnessed those insights to create his own literary innovations and give birth to his project of sentimental didacticism.

*El periquillo sarniento* makes a show of its educational aims,205 and recognition of the didactic nature of Lizardi’s works is one of the few points on which all critics of his novels seem to converge.206 Some critics have rightly pointed out that the primary didactic motor of the novel is the way in which Periquillo’s life gives unity to the narrative, while others

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205 The text of the *Periquillo* confirms the didactic nature of the novel and the complexity of Lizardi’s didactic project. This is not a work of straightforward learning, but rather a far more subtle manner of instruction and inculcation: “Un libro de estos lo manosea con gusto el niño travieso, el joven disipado, la señorita modista y aun el picaro y torno descarado. Cuando estos individuos lo leen, lo menos en que piensan es sacar fruto de su lectura. Lo abren por curiosidad y lo leen con gusto, creyendo que sólo van a divertirse con los dichos y cuentecillos, y que éste fue el único objeto que se propuso su autor al escribirlo; pero cuando menos piensan, ya han bebido una porción de máximas morales que jamás hubieran leído escritas en un estilo serio y sentencioso. Estos libros son como las píldoras que se dan por encima para que se haga más pasadera la tríaca saludable que contienen. Como ninguno cree que tales libros hablan con él determinadamente, lee con gusto lo picante de la sátira y aun le acomoda originales que el autor no pensó; pero después que vuelve en sí del éxtasis delicioso de la diversión y reflexiona con seriedad que él es uno de los comprendidos en aquella crítica, lejos de incomodarse, procura tener presente la lección y se aprovecha de ella alguna vez.” (V: XI; 939)

have less fruitfully insisted that the multiple moralizing digressions, a hallmark of Lizardi’s didactic strategy, detract from the success or determine the failure of the novel. What both of these perspectives ignore is the way in which the manipulation of sentimental understanding underpins Lizardi’s didactic strategy. It is indeed important that the learning imparted to Periquillo occurs in the form of a life lived, and that the lessons learned therein are consistently hammered home through authorial interventions and edifying digressions, but these elements all prove to be epiphenomenal manifestations of the sentimental didacticism developed throughout Lizardi’s novels. In El periquillo sarniento, Lizardi’s didactic strategy attempts to simultaneously rearticulate the sentimental understanding of Periquillo and his readers.

The sentimental didacticism deployed in El periquillo sarniento responds to what turns out to be the most fundamental question of the novel: how can someone like Periquillo be saved from a profligate existence and reformed into a productive member of the community? Even more specifically, how can someone who is hardly an exemplar of

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207 The importance of the autobiographical form, paired with the centrality of the pelada protagonist Periquillo whose very name alludes to the picaresque form, seems to invite comparison with that literary genre. Nevertheless, granted the strict and historically-grounded definition of the picaresque genre provided by Harry Sieber and Francisco Rico, this temptation should be avoided (See Sieber, Harry. The Picaresque. London: Methuen, 1977. Print. See also Rico, Francisco. The Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Point of View. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Print.) Luis F. González-Cruz aptly explains the necessary distinction between the adventures of Periquillo and the picaresque genre: “El Periquillo Sarniento se ha clasificado comúnmente como novela picaresca. Así lo han hecho Arturo Torres Rios, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Jefferson Rea Spell, entre otros. Pero las semejanzas entre la obra del mexicano y la picaresca (la picaresca española, en general, y el Gil Blas, de Lesage, en particular) existen debido a que Lizardi adoptó el molde de la picaresca buscando la manera más efectiva y menos comprometadora para él, en aquel momento, de presentar los problemas sociales de su país: su verdadera intención no era escribir una novela picaresca a la manera del Lazarillo de Tormes, el Guzmán de Alfarache o el Gil Blas. Los protagonistas de sus novelas fueron los instrumentos utilizados por Lizardi para criticar la sociedad mexicana de la época y moralizar a su antojo (impedido como estaba de hacerlo en sus ensayos periodísticos). […] Perico, Quijotita y don Catrín corresponden a esta caracterización del “pelado” y no a la del “picaro” prototipo. De modo que, de entrada, se puede establecer una diferencia de finalidad y fundamento entre la picaresca y las obras de Lizardi […]” (González-Cruz, Luis F. "El Quijote Y Fernández De Lizardi: Revisión De Una Influencia." Cervantes. Su Obra Y Su Mundo : Actas Del I Congreso Internacional Sobre Cervantes. Ed. Manuel Criado Del Val. Madrid: EDI-6, 1981. 927-32. Print.)
refined moral sensibilities come to understand and adopt new sentiments contrary to the selfishness of his original disposition without the sort of practiced, unprejudiced observation required by Hume’s theory of sentimental refinement? As proven numerous times throughout the novel, Periquillo is little inclined toward the adoption of such a disposition. Hume’s theory of the reflective refinement of taste is poorly equipped to deal with a case like Periquillo’s, where sufficient reasons for a change in sentimental understanding are never lacking but also never seem to hit home.

*El periquillo sarniento* is the story of a rogue who finally finds redemption and becomes an *hombre de bien*, and Periquillo’s abject starting point necessitates an appeal to a different sentimental dynamic in order to achieve the sort of transformation that will allow him to attain that enlightened state. Lizardi advocates a proto-national sentimental model with global aspirations, so this state needs to be rendered *universally* desirable and acceptable. As evidenced by the action of Periquillo’s many benefactors throughout the novel, Lizardi’s vision of political society situates the *hombre de bien* as a global force for good capable of rescuing the downtrodden and providing society with civic unity and moral stability.208 The *hombre de bien* possesses impeccably just sentiments that are attuned to and carry out the providential work of the Divine Will. In executing the work of Providence, the *hombre de bien* becomes a lynchpin capable of restoring social harmony and fellow-feeling.

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Lizardi’s first novel advances the thesis that there are many Periquillos in every society, and all of them can benefit from the sentimental education imparted by the novel. Taking that thesis seriously has a decisive effect on the way that the aims of Lizardi’s didactic sentimentalism are formulated: while proposals for sentimental education like those found in Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” envision sentimental refinement as a path toward the optimal realization of one’s personal aesthetic and moral development, Lizardi’s engagement with the need for urgent sentimental transformation is primarily concerned with the role that the individual plays in the society that surrounds them. After all, it is only through participation in that society that Lizardi’s much-vaunted hombre de bien can set about unifying and harmonizing a community divided in its sentiments. The issue for Lizardi is not only one of how unifying communal sentiments might be developed; he also has to figure out how such sentiments might come to be shared by people in different phases of their sentimental education. This is why Periquillo begins his journey in the depths of depravity; if Lizardi’s technique is capable of saving someone like him, certainly no one can be said to be beyond the ameliorative reach of education. By framing Periquillo’s transformation in this way, the author tries to make his life into a lesson that is intelligible to and capable of being emulated by readers of the novel.

Having attempted to diagnose and anticipate the best way of reaching his audience, Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism must face yet another challenge, one that parallels the paradoxes of national identity examined in the first chapter of this investigation. The paradoxical nature of this challenge is made apparent from the very outset of El periquillo sarniento when Lizardi ironically characterizes his desired audience. Having failed to find a patron to whom he might dedicate the novel, Lizardi writes that he will instead follow
the advice of a friend and break with tradition by dedicating his work to the most important people of all, namely, anyone and everyone who can afford to buy it. 209 This decision to dedicate the work to the people themselves is followed by an ingenious elegy that again makes it clear that Lizardi desires for his work to have the widest audience possible, if only to save him from the printing costs that threaten to leave him bankrupt. 210

209 “¡Ay hombre!, ¿quiénes son?, dije yo lleno de gusto. Los lectores, me respondió el amigo. ¿A quiénes con más justicia debes dedicar tus tareas, sino a los que leen las obras a costa de su dinero? Pues ellos son los que costean la impresión, y por lo mismo sus Mecenas más seguros. Conque aliéntate, no seas bobo, dedícales a ellos tu trabajo y saldrás del cuidado. Le di las gracias a mi amigo; él se fue; yo tomé su consejo, y me propuse desde aquel momento dedicaros, Señores Lectores, la Vida del tan mentado Periquillo Sarniento, como lo hago. "Prólogo, advertencia y dedicatoria a los lectores." 93. At the end of the dedictory Lizardi goes all the way to the end with this notion, specifying that he hopes that everyone will not only buy the work, but will buy multiple copies. The author then suggests a number of alternative uses for the book that justify why each reader should purchase at least five or six copies for themselves: “Dignaos, pues, acogerla favorablemente, comprando cada uno seis o siete capítulos cada día, y suscribiéndonos por cinco o seis ejemplares a lo menos, aunque después os deis a Barrabás por haber empleado vuestro dinero en una cosa tan frionta y fastidiosa; aunque me critiquéis de arriba abajo, y aunque hagáis cartuchos o servilletas con los libros; que como costeéis la impresión con algunos polvos de añadidura, jamás me arrepentiré de haber seguido el consejo de mi amigo; antes desde ahora para entonces y desde entonces para ahora, os escojo y elijo para únicos Mecenas y protectores de cuantos mamarrachos escribierie, llenándoos de alabanzas como ahora, y pidiendo a Dios que os guarde muchos años, os dé dinero, y os permita emplearlo en beneficio de los autores, impresores, papeleros, comerciantes, encuadernadores y demás dependientes de vuestro gusto.” “Prólogo, advertencia y dedicatoria a los lectores.” 95.

210 Lizardi’s strategy for incorporating everyone into his potential audience has hilarious results when the time comes to present the requisite elegy to his new patrons. Granted that he cannot make his elegy specific, since his audience embraces anyone who can manage to pay for the book, the resultant praise is general to point of absurdity; the comedy that then ensues merits quotation in full: “Pero a u...
The necessity of reaching a broader audience than that circumscribed by Hume’s conception of sentimental refinement conditions the narrative structure of *El periquillo sarniento*. This can readily be seen in “El prólogo del Periquillo Sarmiento.” This section of the work is voiced by the elder Periquillo, who has already been transformed into Pedro Sarmiento, *hombre de bien*. Lying on his death bed, Pedro writes a final directive that clarifies how he wants the story of his life to be received. Pedro Sarmiento begins by specifying that his book was written with the instruction of his own children in mind in the hope that they might learn from his errors and avoid the calamities that his faulty understanding of life has caused him to suffer:

*Cuando escribo mi vida, es sólo con la sana intención de que mis hijos se instruyan en las materias sobre que los hablo […] En ella presento a mis hijos muchos de los escollos en donde más frecuentemente se estrella la mocedad cuando no se sabe dirigir, o desprecia los avisos de los pilotos experimentados.*"^{211}

Although Pedro is first concerned with the instruction of his own children, he nevertheless realizes that his wishes might be disregarded (as they in fact are by the person to whom he entrusts his manuscript, “un tal Lizardi,” alias “el Pensador Mexicano”),^{212} and he thusly prepares the work in a way that should make it accessible and useful to anyone who might stumble upon it. This is the reason why Pedro writes his own prologue to the work, and the way that he designates his audience makes it apparent that the divorce between Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism and an elitist Humean conception of taste and sentimental refinement is irreconcilable:

*… Esta obrita no es para los sabios, porque éstos no necesitan de mis pobres lecciones; pero sí puede ser útil para algunos muchachos que carezcan, tal vez, de mejores obras en que aprender, o también para algunos jóvenes (o no jóvenes) que sean amigos de leer novelitas y comedias; y como pueden faltarles*

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Lizardi’s desire to educate the largest audience possible is also registered in the structure and presentation of the work. The author explains that his novel has been written in a way meant to facilitate the understanding of such an audience by employing a number of strategies, including the omission or translation into Castilian of “los tropezones de latines” that frequently serve as stumbling blocks for readers lacking a substantial level of erudition. But the most important elements of Lizardi’s didactic armature are his authorial interventions and moralizing digressions. While some critics have seen these latter elements as the work’s greatest weakness, the author himself coyly signals that the digressions and interventions found throughout El periquillo sarniento and Lizardi’s other novels are instead integral to the project of sentimental didacticism elaborated therein:

Even while feigning the apologetic humility proper to an author’s presentation of his own work, Lizardi cannot help but defend the validity of his didactic strategy.

Summarizing the results of the investigation thus far, Lizardi uses a combination of linguistic selection, targeted authorial interventions, and moralizing digressions in order to

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214 Lizardi states that, in omitting Latin phrases from the work or insisting on translating them, he is following the advice of Italian historian and archaeologist Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750): “Al propio tiempo, para ahorrar a los lectores menos instruidos los tropezones de los latines, como él recuerda, dejo la traducción castellana en su lugar, y unas veces pongo el texto original entre las notas, otras sólo las citas, y algunas veces lo omito enteramente. De manera, que el lector en romance nada tiene que interrumpir con la secuela de la lectura, y el lector latino acaso se agradará de leer lo mismo en su idioma original.” Fernández de Lizardi, José Joaquín. “Advertencias generales a los lectores.” El periquillo sarniento. Ed. Carmen Ruiz Barrionuevo. 2nd ed. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2008. 99. Print.

215 Ibid.
accomplish the aims of his sentimental didacticism. The literary devices listed above all contribute to the overall functioning of Lizardi’s didactic strategy by manipulating and rearticulating the sentiments of the novel’s main character and the readers that follow his adventures. *El periquillo sarniento* lays the groundwork for that sentimental manipulation and rearticulation by deploying the language of sentiment and the passions. Such terms were central to the theoretical frameworks elaborated by David Hume and Adam Smith. But while David Hume’s account of sentimental education through practiced refinement invokes the same phenomena deployed in Lizardi’s didactic strategy, his philosophy nevertheless suffers from the limitations of his own elitist presuppositions. Lizardi surpasses Hume’s thinking by renewing the notion of sentimental education and reconfiguring it in a register compatible with the possibilities and demands of *popular* education.
2.1 *I Can See How You Feel:* Sentimental Manipulation and Discernment in *El periquillo sarniento*

The Mexican Liberal vision of the national community is constructed on a speculative bedrock, “the people.” That bedrock is in turn putatively constituted out of the sentiments of the nation’s citizenry. But here we run into a dilemma: how can a unifying sentiment be cultivated when public opinion stands starkly divided? And furthermore, how can the sentiments of former rivals be trusted sufficiently for solidarity and cooperation to be possible on the national level?

From the Liberal perspective, the situation at the beginning of the 19th Century had been difficult to interpret, and even those with the best of sentiments had sometimes been fooled by the threats and propaganda levied at Republican forces by the Church and the Spanish Crown. Indeed, Francisco Guerra, president of the Constitutional Congress of 1824, had warned of the threat of sentimental deception during the investiture of Guadalupe Victoria:

> Hoy que entra de nuevo el benemérito general D. Guadalupe Victoria, le recomiendo proceda con energía y viveza: viveza dije, porque abundan arbitrios para hacer que se equivoque el buen patriota y confunda al amigo del orden con el enemigo de la Independencia, de las libertades públicas y de la forma de Gobierno; y los hombres de mejor intención están más dispuestos a errar los caminos de la felicidad, que la misma naturaleza está brindando á la República.216 (My emphasis)

Recognizing that there could be no unity without the creation of a common ground of fellow-feeling, Lizardi set about formulating a didactic solution capable of sentimentally educating the nascent national citizenry. This would be accomplished by a process of provocation and examination of the sentiments of his readers enacted through the gradual

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sentimental education of the novel’s central character. The first and most significant stage of Lizardi’s didactic project is set forth in his most famous novel, *El periquillo sarniento*.

*El periquillo sarniento* repeatedly confronts both the eponymous protagonist and the reader with a variety of different manifestations of sentiment. As in Hume’s account of the practiced refinement of taste, this repetition furnishes Periquillo and his readers with situations that test their ability to discern between sentiments of different kinds. Moments of sentimental intensity also allow for reflection on one of the novel’s central themes: *las apariencias engañan*, and interpreting sentiment can be a treacherous affair.

The danger of sentimental deception is already a central concern in Tome I of the novel. By chapter VIII, Periquillo’s fair-weather friend Juan Largo has already succeeded in securing Periquillo’s confidence. Juan Largo then uses that trust against Periquillo, ensnaring him with the very sentiments that Juan Largo has just encouraged him to intimate:

> -Yo he notado que te gusta Ponciana, y que ella te quiere a ti. Vamos, dime la verdad; ya sabes que soy tu amigo y que jamás me has reservado secreto. Ella es bonita; tú tienes buen gusto, y yo te lo pregunto porque sé que puedo servir a tus deseos. La muchacha es mi prima y no me puedo casar con ella; y así me alegrara que disfrutara de su amor un amigo a quien yo quisiera tanto como a ti. ¿Quién habia de pensar que ésta era la red que me tendía este maldito para burlarse de mí a costa de mi honor? Pues así fue, porque yo, tan fácil como siempre, lo creí, y le dije: -Que tu prima es de mérito, es evidente; que yo la quiero, ni te lo puedo negar, pero tampoco puedo saber si ella me quiere o no, pues no tengo por dónde saberlo. -¿Cómo no? –dijo Januario. ¿Pues qué, nunca le has dicho tu sentimiento? -Jamás le he hablado de eso –le respondí.217 (My emphasis)

As the reader soon finds out, Juan Largo, the only character in the novel more morally incorrigible than its main character, has here again prepared a ruse for Periquillo. Thinking that she awaits him, our love-struck hero brazenly enters Ponciana’s bedroom and immediately gets more than he bargained for: already having been advised of the coming intruder by Juan Largo, Ponciana’s mother awaits within to smack Periquillo in the face.

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with a shoe before forcefully ejecting him from the premises.218 This lesson is only one of the many that will be necessary to prove to Periquillo that sharing in the company and sentiments of the untrustworthy is a dangerous business. Along with the narrator’s frequent moralizing interventions, those lessons reiterate the importance of exercising discretion when evaluating the sentimental manifestations of others. Such lessons are the primary component of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism. They permeate the entirety of the novel and effectuate the didactic cultivation of sentimental understanding at the heart of Lizardi’s novelistic project.

One of the most severe tests of Periquillo’s capacity for sentimental understanding occurs early in the first tome of the novel. In Chapter XIII Periquillo must reckon with the death of his father, and the ensuing scenes enact an object lesson in sentimental hypocrisy. The structure of the novel revolves around the sentimental education of Periquillo, so it is only fitting that he is the first character to have his hypocritical sentiments revealed. Upon learning of his father’s death, Periquillo initially experiences the suffering that would naturally be expected after such a loss. His tears seem to testify to the sentiments that overcome him as he thinks of his deceased father and the care and concern that he had always shown toward his wholly-undeserving son: “La Naturaleza apretó mi corazón, y mis lágrimas manifestaron en abundancia mis sentimientos.”219 However, despite their “natural” provenance, the reader must be careful not to mistake Periquillo’s tears for a genuine recognition of the error of his ways. Periquillo’s father’s dying wish was for his son to follow his advice regarding how to be a virtuous member of society. If Periquillo’s

sentiments for his late father were in fact genuine, they would probably entail something like a change of heart and embrace of the counsel that his father had struggled to impress upon his progeny. Now, the text does hint at the possibility of Periquillo responding genuinely to this tragedy: “Entonces se estremecía mi corazón sobremanera y no hacía más que besarla y humedecerla [la última carta de su padre] con mis lágrimas, pues aquellos pocos caracteres me acordaban el amor que siempre me había tenido, y su constante virtud que me había inspirado.” But if the reader is tempted to believe that his repentance is genuine, Periquillo’s actions immediately provide damning indications to the contrary. Shortly after summoning the strength to read his father’s final admonitions to seek out virtue and industry, his apparent misery and repentance evaporate, only to return in the form of a libertine appreciation of his newfound freedom from his father’s formerly-imposing presence:

Pasaron quince días en cuyo corto tiempo se me olvidaron en gran parte los sentimientos de la muerte de mi padre, los avisos de su carta (esto es, el primer espíritu de compunción con que la lei), y sólo me acordaba de mi apetecida libertad. Such hypocritical manifestations of sentiment are nonetheless hardly exclusive to the novel’s main character.

In fact, El periquillo is replete with negative exemplars of dubious behavior and sentimental deception. Lizardi tackles sentimental hypocrisy like a social disease, one deeply-rooted in the society and culture of his time. It is not just that many people fail to respond as morally as they should to sentimentally-charged situations; the problem also lies with those who theatrically feign shows of sentiment solely in order to comply with blindly-accepted cultural expectations that reflection often reveals as baseless and absurd.

\[220\] Ibid.
\[221\] Op. cit. I:XIII; 267
In this way, Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism brings two different considerations to the fore: *El periquillo sarniento* is concerned with both the appropriateness of feeling and the appropriateness of the way in which sentimental understanding interprets feeling.

As will be shown later in this chapter, Lizardi also strategically utilizes the specter of death throughout *El periquillo*. Each time mortality rears its head in the first four tomes of the novel, it puts the dysfunctional sentimental state of Periquillo and the society surrounding him on display. For example, in mourning the death of Periquillo’s father, Periquillo’s mother also falls prey to disingenuous sentiments, but in a way that significantly differs from Periquillo’s own jubilant hypocrisy. In a moment of cultural critique that resonates with Federico García Lorca’s later portrait of mourning and isolation in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936), Periquillo’s mother insists that mourning for her husband be unduly prolonged in order to serve as a proof of the truth of her agonizing sentiments:

> Ya ustedes verán que mi madre era de aquellas señoras antiguas que se persuaden a que el luto prueba el sentimiento por el difunto, y gradúan éste por la duración de aquél; pero ésta es una de las innumerables vulgaridades que mamamos con la primera leche de nuestras madres.\(^{222}\)

The narrator then probes deeper into the nature of mourning in order to illustrate how sentiment has been misappropriated in this particular case:

> Llegamos a los lutos, en los que, como visteis con mi madre, caben también los abusos. El luto no es más que una costumbre de vestirse de negro para manifestar nuestro sentimiento en la muerte de los deudos o amigos; pero este color, a merced de la dicha costumbre, es sólo señal, mas no prueba del sentimiento. ¿Cuántos infelices no se visten luto en la muerte de las personas que más aman, porque no lo tienen? Y su dolor es innegable. Al contrario, ¿cuántas viuditas jóvenes, cuántos hijos y sobrinos malos e interesables, que desearon la muerte del difunto por entrar en la posesión de sus bienes, no se vestirán unos lutos muy rigurosos a sí por seguir la costumbre como por persuadirnos que están penetrados del sentimiento que no conocen?\(^{223}\) (My emphasis)

\(^{222}\) *Op. cit.* I:XIII; 273

\(^{223}\) *Op. cit.* I:XIII; 285
The novel uses this example to argue that emphasizing the sentimental manifestations of mourning over the motivation for mourning is equivalent to mistaking an effect for its cause. One must be careful not to be deceived by the signs of mourning because those signs alone are incapable of confirming that the feelings that they are taken to convey are genuine. Periquillo’s crocodile tears for his father demonstrate that the signs of sentiment are no guarantee that the sentiments they seem to manifest are either genuine or motivated by the appropriate concerns.

The death of Periquillo’s father raises a series of problems. Firstly, some people might manifest their sentiments falsely or hypocritically. Secondly, as in the case of Periquillo’s mother, some people might be motivated by genuine feelings but still manifest their natural sentiments inappropriately because of their unthinking adherence to detrimental cultural expectations and norms. But there is still a third problem, namely, that a manifestation of sentiment inadequate to an emotionally intense moment like the mourning of a loved one might actually provoke counter-productive, damaging consequences. The following passage from *El periquillo* warns of the social dangers implicit in this third problem:

> Este asunto es muy serio. Lo suspenderemos mientras acabamos de refutar el abuso de hablar de los difuntos al tiempo de dar los pésames, porque si, como hemos dicho, uno de los objetos de estos pesamenteros es aliviar el sentimiento de los dolientes, parece que es un error que puede calificarse de impolítico el renovar los motivos de dolor a los deudos al tiempo mismo que pretendemos consolarlos.\(^{224}\)

This sort of culturally-sanctioned sentimental “abuse” is not unique to the colonial society of New Spain. To the contrary, the narrator argues that the destructive effects of cultural prejudices and preoccupations are felt in one way or another in all the nations of the world. This elevates the problem of sentimental manifestation to the level of universality. Having

\(^{224}\) *Op. cit.* I:XIII; 283-4
recognized the historical prevalence of this phenomenon, the text then extends its critique of sentimental propriety by analyzing the natural sentimental reactions of other cultures to that most universal of all phenomena, namely, death:

Es cierto que se debe sentir a los difuntos que amamos, y tanto más, cuanto más estrechas sean las relaciones de amistad o parentesco que nos unían con ellos. Este sentimiento es natural, y tan antiguo, que sabemos que las repúblicas más civilizadas que ha habido en el mundo, Grecia y Roma, no sólo usaban luto, sino que hacían aun demostraciones más tiernas que nosotros por sus muertos […] ¿Y acaso sólo los griegos y romanos hacían estos extremos de sentimiento en la muerte de sus deudos y amigos? No, hijos míos. Todas las naciones y en todos tiempos han expresado su dolor por esta causa. Los hebreos, los síриos, los caldeos y los hombres más remotos de la antigüedad manifestaban su sensibilidad con sus finados, ya de uno, ya de otro modo. Las naciones bárbaras sienten y expresan su sentimiento como las civilizadas.225 (My emphasis)

The text grounds its assertion of the universality of sentiment by affirming a claim already implied by the previous description of Periquillo’s tears for his father: all nations share this sentimental disposition toward the fact of death because those sentiments are naturally made manifest in such cases.

In the middle of the 18th Century, David Hume argued that the general uniformity of human sensibility made it possible to speak universally about observations drawn from human passions, reason, and sentiments. El periquillo arrives at the same insight from a different perspective: whereas Hume takes the uniformity of sentiment as an explanation for the apparent universality of certain cultural phenomena, Lizardi derives the possibility of common sentiment from the observation of what he presents as sentimental reactions and practices mirrored in all cultures. Far from making a case for cultural relativism, the text argues that this natural, sentimental commonality is no justification for inappropriately manifesting one’s sentiments. Quite to the contrary, Lizardi’s logic indicates that the universality of sentiment makes the misuse of those sentiments a similarly universal problem. The narrator’s argument accordingly asserts that all cultures must reckon with

the question of which sentiments to authorize and how said sentiments should be manifested. Having made his point, the narrator wastes no time in emphasizing that the culture of colonial New Spain is no exception to that rule:

While the foregoing passage reiterates the insistence that the sentiments under discussion are naturally emergent, it also adds an important addendum to the claim, namely, that the abuses and misappropriations of those sentiments may be checked by an appeal to the understanding of “todo hombre sensato.”

In a moment that threatens to undermine his otherwise unquestionable commitment to popular education, Lizardi’s appeal to the authorizing opinions of “all sensible men” is all too similar to Hume’s own notion of sentimental education as a possibility reserved for a small group of well-cultured elites. This similarity is not coincidental. Lizardi’s appeal to a sensible elite in this moment manifests the fundamental prejudices tacitly assumed during his assumption of didactic authority. Those prejudices also reflect the state of the Liberal criollo ideological paradigm that informs his writings. Said prejudices might ultimately doom Lizardi’s popular sentimental didacticism to failure, but that determination cannot be made without first understanding what his novels set out to accomplish. Lizardi’s failures are difficult to interpret unless they are contextualized.

226 Ibid.
alongside the things that his sentimental didacticism gets right. This can be done by first teasing out the differences between Hume and Lizardi’s respective understandings of sentiment and the passions. An examination of the language that Lizardi uses to talk about those phenomena makes their differences clear.

Hume’s theoretical framework provides a conceptual vocabulary that coincides closely enough with Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism to make their comparison productive. As in Hume’s philosophy, Lizardi’s didactic method shows that he too holds that sentiment, reason, and the passions are not equivalent phenomena. But the similarities between their conceptualizations of reason and the passions notwithstanding, the way Lizardi deploys the word “sentiment” differs in important ways from the role that it plays in Hume’s account.\textsuperscript{227} \textit{El periquillo} clearly distinguishes between these phenomena, and as might be guessed, the difference between the passions and sentiment emerges most sharply in the context of yet another critique of sentimental abuse.

In Chapter V of Tome III, the narrator critiques the culturally-sanctioned notion that young women, despite whatever aspirations they might have to the contrary, should be sent to become nuns in order to ensure their purity. In this example, a recurrent character, \textit{el trapiento},\textsuperscript{228} tells the tale of a maiden named Isabel. Isabel has recently had her dream of marriage shattered by her father. Although her young suitor is of acceptable social

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\textsuperscript{227} This becomes particularly clear when Lizardi deploys the term “sentiment” alongside other words descriptive of emotional states. Granted that there is no reason for redundancy, these terms reveal the implicit distinctions made in the text between sentiment and the (e)motions of the passions: “Entre la cólera y la desesperación, la tristeza y el sentimiento, me quedó en el zaguán, cavilando sobre el lance que acababa de pasar. Quisiera retirarme de aquellos recintos, que me debían ser tan odiosos […]” (Op. cit. V:I; 822-823). As will become clear in the rest of this chapter, whereas the terms “rage,” “desperation,” and “sadness” are clearly attributable to the passions, sentiment only enters in at the end, namely, in the moment of understanding where Periquillo realizes that, because of the onerous nature of his actions, he should hate the surroundings in which he finds himself because they only serve to remind him of his misdeeds.

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{El trapiento} first appears as part of a critique of the practice of primogeniture, only to return later as a benefactor, friend of Periquillo, and \textit{hombre de bien}.
\end{footnotesize}
standing and virtuous by all accounts, the perceived threat to his daughter’s purity drives her father to send his daughter to a convent against her will. The decision proves fatal: Isabel is overwhelmed by her passions and succumbs to death in short order. The passage describing her end explicitly distinguishes between the role of the passions and the role of sentiment in her demise.

Being a corporeal force, the passions directly act upon Isabel’s body and lead to her death in a manner not unlike what might be caused by any other physical infirmity: “El tumulto de las pasiones agitadas que se habían conjurado contra ella, pasando del espíritu al cuerpo, le causó una fiebre tan maligna y violenta, que en siete días la separó del número de los vivientes.”

But even though the text first argues that the passions are guilty of provoking the fever that leads to Isabel’s death, her own understanding of the situation, as revealed in a posthumously-received letter to her father, places the blame squarely upon the sentiments of desperation and hopelessness that befell her after her father’s unjust actions:

> Cuando me prometí por suya puse a Dios por testigo de mi verdad, y este juramento lo habría cumplido siempre, y lo cumpliera en el instante de expirar, a ser posible, mas ya son infructuosos estos deseos. Yo muero atormentada, no de fiebre, sino del sentimiento de no haberme unido con el objeto que más amé en este mundo […]”

(My emphasis)

As evident in the above passage, the language of El periquillo carefully separates the function of the passions from the function of the sentiments. The novel represents the passions as naturally-emergent forces capable of exerting a direct physiological influence on the body, whereas the word “sentiment” refers to a process of understanding feelings (the latter being generated by the movement of the passions). This distinction is fundamental to the sentimental didacticism elaborated in El periquillo. Having recognized

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230 Ibid.
that sentiment and the passions refer to two separate but closely-interrelated phenomenal domains, Lizardi focuses on how to solicit and reappropriate their interaction by using literature to provoke sentiment and the passions in tandem.

Rather than being identical to the passions, Lizardi conceptualizes sentiment as a moment of understanding that interprets the movement of the passions, with the implication being that interpretation is necessary because the way that we might regard our initial feelings with respect to a situation might prove to be inappropriate after sufficient reflection. In this way, sentiment acts to authorize an interpretation of that initial feeling, and sometimes this happens in a way that appears to run counter to what might be expected from naturally-emerging emotions. As Hume notes, the disparity between initial passionate reactions and the appropriate interpretations of those reactions is particularly apparent when matters of justice are under consideration.231 Felicitously, the Periquillo also presents one of its most striking accounts of the disparity between the passions and sentiment in precisely that context.

At the end of Tome III, Periquillo is released from yet another stint in prison, and a benefactor arranges for him to serve as a scribe for one of New Spain’s powerful subdelegates. As is to be expected, the subdelegate incarnates the corruption of the Spanish colonial authority, interesting himself in little other than the exploitation of the people through repeated, grave abuses of his power. The repercussions of the resulting orgy of

231 “One principal foundation of moral praise being supposed to lie in the usefulness of any quality or action, it is evident that REASON must enter for a considerable share in all decisions of this kind; since nothing but that faculty can instruct us in the tendency of qualities and actions, and point out their beneficial consequences to society and to their possessor. In many cases this is an affair liable to great controversy: doubts may arise; opposite interests may occur; and a preference must be given to one side, from very nice views, and a small overbalance of utility. This is particularly remarkable in questions with regard to justice; as is, indeed, natural to suppose, from that species of utility which attends this virtue.” Hume, David. An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. Ed. J.B. Schneewind. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983. 82-83. Print.
rapine and profiteering eventually find Periquillo condemned to military service in the
Philippines. After fulfilling the conditions of his sentence, Periquillo leaves Manila for
Acapulco, but fate has another journey in store for the young rogue. Periquillo narrowly
survives a shipwreck on his way home and washes up naked and penniless on the Chinese
island of Saucheofú. There he encounters the wise and sensible Limahotón, a mandarin
who is both brother and assistant to the “tután o virrey de la provincia.” Taking
advantage of the absence of witnesses to the contrary, Periquillo convinces Limahotón that
he too is a noble in his homeland. This ruse allows him to accompany Limahotón in his
offices and discussions. Their conversations illuminate the inner workings of the society
of Saucheofú, with specific attention given to the island’s legal and penal systems.

Substantial passages of the novel debate the general merits of that system and the
particulars of the punishments it prescribes. Those conversations join with narrative
interventions to qualify and situate what Periquillo is experiencing for the reader, and they
peak in intensity when Periquillo witnesses a series of public punishments that seem to him
(and the narrator) to be undeniably brutal.

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233 These discussions form part of a greater whole comprised of an ongoing comparison between Saucheofú
and the colonial government of New Spain. This comparison, alongside Lizardi’s critique of slavery, both
occur in Tome IV, the latter having been cited as the reason for the prohibition of the fourth volume in New
University of Pennsylvania, 1931. 31-32. Print. Periquillo’s stay in Saucheofú has been fruitfully compared
with other significant bodies of “utopian” literature, including Thomas Moore’s Utopia and Plato’s Politeia
(See Sainz de Medrano, Luis. "La utopía en El Periquillo Sarniento." DICENDA: Cuadernos de Filología
Hispánica 6 (1987). Print.).
234 “Ya juntos todos los jueces en un gran tablado, acompañados de los extranjeros decentes […] comenzaron
a salir de la cárcel como setenta reos entre los verdugos y ministros de justicia. Entonces los jueces volvieron
da registrar los procesos para ver si alguno de aquellos infelices tenía alguna leve disculpia con que escapar, y
no hallándola, hicieron señas de que se procediese a la ejecución, la que se comenzó, llenándonos de horror
todos los forasteros con el rigor de los castigos; porque a unos los empalaban, a otros los ahorcaban, a otros
los azotaban cruelisimamente en las pantorrillas con bejucos mojados, y así repartían los castigos. Pero lo
que nos dejó asombrados fue ver que a algunos les señalaban las caras con unos fierros ardiendo, y después
Periquillo’s initial reaction to those punishments serves a didactic purpose. It prompts a narrative intervention debating the merits of such punishments. This occurs in a subsequent conversation between Periquillo and other foreign observers who have all just witnessed the bloody spectacle of torture, mutilation, and execution that constitutes justice on the island of Saucheofú. Furthermore, Periquillo’s immediate reaction is presented as an indication of his natural sentimental rejection of such carnage, and it serves as a catalyst for conversation between the foreign observers. Beyond their role as a catalytic narrative device, Periquillo’s reactions also advance the novel’s sentimental strategy by indicating the progress that Periquillo has made in his sentimental education by the second half of the novel. Said indications confirm that by Tome IV, Periquillo’s initial lack of sensibility has undergone a substantial—but not yet total—transformation. As the conversation between the observers plays out and Periquillo’s sentimental understanding of justice changes, that initial response and its subsequent alteration through reflection prove to the reader that Periquillo is no longer hopelessly incorrigible. Even if he does so imperfectly, Periquillo now demonstrates the ability to use sentimental understanding to realign and control his own passions. Nevertheless, the novel is the story of Periquillo’s sentimental education, and that story cannot be allowed to conclude before the novel’s end in Tome V. Only then will Periquillo be able to complete his conversion into Lizardi’s model of ideal citizenship, “El hombre de bien.”

The question of justice in punishments perfectly showcases the possibility of sentimental rearticulation and transformation since questions of justice are notoriously
counter-intuitive affairs and difficult to approach without prejudice. On its face and in practice, one person’s justice may often look like a savage violation to others. The passage discussed above opens to find Periquillo seated on a dais with other foreign observers, all of them rapt with attention by the apparent carnival of cruelty unfolding before them. Upon seeing the prisoners receive their multifarious punishments, Periquillo can at first think of nothing other than the intense suffering that their mutilation must have caused. This initial reaction is shared by the other foreigners present at the scene and is voiced by one of them, an unnamed Spaniard:

[...] Cierito, señores, que es cosa dura el ser juez, y más en estas tierras, donde por razón de la costumbre tienen que presenciar los suplicios de los reos, y atormentar sus almas sensibles con los gemidos de las víctimas de la justicia. La humanidad se resiente al ver un semejante nuestro entregado a los feroces verdugos que sin piedad lo atormentan, y muchas veces lo privan de la vida añadiendo al dolor la ignominia.

Un desgraciado de éstos, condenado a morir infame en una horca, a sufrir la afrenta y el rigor de unos azotes públicos, o siquiera la separación de su patria y los trabajos anexos a un presidio, es para una alma piadosa un objeto atormentador. No sólo considera la aflicción material de aquel hombre en lo que siente su cuerpo, sino que se hace cargo de lo que padece su espíritu con la idea de la afrenta y con la ninguna esperanza de remedio; de aquella esperanza, digo, a que nos acogemos como a un asilo en los trabajos comunes de la vida.235

As the Spaniard proceeds, this initial reaction is mediated and deepened by reflection, and the suffering that the prisoner experiences is further contextualized as the impact of that suffering upon his family and society as a whole is considered:

Estas reflexiones por sí solas son demasiado dolorosas, pero el hombre sensible no aísla a ellas la consideración: su ternura es mucha para olvidarse de aquellos sentimientos particulares que deben afligir al individuo puesto en sociedad.

¡Qué congoja tendrá este pobrecito reo!, dice en su interior a sus amigos, ¡qué congoja tendrá al ver que la justicia lo arranca de los brazos de la esposa amable, que ya no volverá a besar a sus tiernos hijos, ni a gozar la conversación de sus mejores amigos, sino que todos lo desampararán de una vez, y él a todos va a dejarlos por fuerza! ¿Y cómo los deja? ¡Oh, dolor! A la esposa, viuda, pobre, sola y abatida; a los hijos, huérfanos infelices y mal vistos; y a los amigos escandalizados, y acaso arrepentidos de la amistad que le profesaron.236 (My emphasis)

235 Op. cit. IV:VI; 779
236 Ibid.
But the Spaniard’s considerations do not stop there. A final level of reflection brings the question of justice and the disparity between sentimental understanding and the spontaneous reactions of the passions properly to the fore:

Pero, ¡infelices de nosotros si esta humanidad mal entendida dirigiera las cabezas y plumas de los magistrados! No se castigaría ningún crimen, serían ociosas las leyes, cada uno obraría según su gusto, y los ciudadanos, sin contar con ninguna seguridad individual, serían los unos víctimas del furor, fuerza y atrevimiento de los otros.

En este triste caso serían ningunos los diques de la religión para contener al perverso; sería una quimera el pretender establecer cualquier gobierno, la justicia fuera desconocida, la razón ultrajada y la Deidad desobedecida enteramente. ¿Y qué fuera de los hombres sin religión, sin gobierno, sin razón, sin justicia y sin Dios?²³⁷

It would be difficult to make Hume’s point more clearly, for the Scottish sceptic also acknowledged the problems that impede recognition of the utility or goodness of justice in any of its particular instantiations:

Were every single instance of justice, like that of benevolence, useful to society; this would be a more simple state of the case, and seldom liable to great controversy. But as single instances of justice are often pernicious in their first and immediate tendency, and as the advantage to society results only from the observance of the general rule, and from the concurrence and combination of several persons in the same equitable conduct; the case here becomes more intricate and involved. The various circumstances of society; the various consequences of any practice; the various interests which may be proposed; these, on many occasions, are doubtful, and subject to great discussion and inquiry.²³⁸

As Hume goes on to assert, it is precisely because of the difficulty implicit in examining particular instances of justice that consideration of such matters requires appeal to a set of fixed, general rules. Those rules should be arrived at through reasonable debate instead of appeals to the particulars of any isolated set of circumstances:

The various circumstances of society; the various consequences of any practice; the various interests which may be proposed; these, on many occasions, are doubtful, and subject to great discussion and inquiry. The object of municipal laws is to fix all the questions with regard to justice: the debates of civilians; the reflections of politicians; the precedents of history and public records, are all directed to the same purpose. And a very accurate REASON or JUDGEMENT is often requisite, to give the true determination, amidst such intricate doubts arising from obscure or opposite utilities.²³⁹

²³⁷ *Op. cit.* IV:VI; 780
Just as Lizardi’s Spaniard claims that the magistrate’s quill must set the rule of justice above the particular immediate passions of the observer, Hume claims that the aim of social debate and legislation is to do the same, namely, to circumscribe the bounds of justice in a way that supersedes the sentimental disparity or sense of injustice that accompanies witnessing an act of justice in isolation from sufficient reflection.

At this point, however, Hume’s account again collides with Lizardi’s popular didactic objectives. We have seen that the case of justice is emblematic of the difficulty that understanding can encounter in the process of sentimental interpretation. Hume’s elitism allows him to appeal to the most elevated circles of sentimental cultivation to establish something like the objective principle necessary for making difficult sentimental judgments like the sort just seen in the case of justice. And yet, the text’s own explanation of the problem prompted by the spectacle in Saucheofú depends upon an appeal to the reasoning of “todo hombre sensato,” a term that is prima facie suspiciously similar to Hume’s preference for an aristocratic notion of sentimental education. And yet, the emphasis that Lizardi places on making sentimental education accessible to all throughout the work demands that we take that “todo” seriously. It is impossible to do so as long as we remain within the coordinates of Hume’s theoretical framework. Instead, we will see that Lizardi attempts to innovate his way out of the difficulty implicit in the creation of a popular sentimental didacticism by using phenomena homologous to the Smithian conceptions of sympathy and the impartial spectator as the basic building blocks of the sentimental didacticism elaborated in El periquillo sarniento. The next section of this chapter analyzes how Lizardi combines sympathy and the impartial spectator with the
universality of death in order to create a means of sentimentally producing the ever-elusive *hombre de bien.*
2.2 Sentimental Strategies: Death, Sympathy and Other Digressions

Adam Smith’s notion of the “impartial spectator” offers an imaginative solution to a problem with which all nation-building projects must reckon: how can we understand the feelings of others, and how can people who start out feeling radically different ever come to reconcile their differences? Smith has a response to both of those interrogations. As we have seen, Smith argues that we can understand the feelings of others because humans are naturally predisposed to sympathize with each other’s emotions. Of course, this does not mean that a sympathetic person experiences sentiments identical to those that they observe. The imagination always plays a decisive role in interpreting those feelings, and that interpretation can completely change the way that a feeling is understood. Smith’s second response, then, is to bypass the problematic mediation of sentimental interpretation by appealing to the impartial spectator, an imaginary entity that represents a general set of sentiments available to all people, differences in their histories and circumstances notwithstanding. The impartial spectator purports to provide a common sentimental perspective to all people, while sympathy guarantees an equally universal means of accessing the sentiments of others by making use of humanity’s natural proclivity toward feeling what others feel. Such a perspective posits that the potential for sympathetic interpretation and sentimental insight is the common patrimony of humanity.

Lizardi similarly acknowledges that the potential seeds of shared sentiment exist even in the most hardened of people: “Ya sabéis que no hay libro tan malo que no tenga algo bueno; así los hombres, no hay uno tan perverso, que tal cual vez no tenga algunos buenos sentimientos; y en esta inteligencia, el mayor pecador, el más relajado y libertino,
puede darnos un consejo sano y edificante.”240 Those seeds of sentiment have to be cultivated, and *El periquillo sarniento* is structured to help people attain to that goal. As I will now argue, the novel’s narrative structure is a didactic compromise between the initial need to invoke the passions through sympathy and the subsequent need to canalize those passions through different conceptual isomorphisms of the Smithian impartial spectator. First we will examine the authorial voice whose presence tries to ensure the success of *El periquillo*’s sentimental didacticism by keeping the passions under control.

Despite Lizardi’s claims to the contrary in the *Advertencia* that prefaces the novel, the didactic digressions in the *Periquillo* are abundant and frequently make explicit reference to sentiment. Those digressions and interventions exercise a corrective function that ensures that the sentimental errors implicit in Periquillo’s actions are understood within the hegemonically-determined bounds of propriety that sustain the author’s didactic strategy. Examination of a selection of those instances shows how the function of those digressions parallels that of Smith’s impartial spectator by acting as a control mechanism that prevents sentimental understanding from arriving at conclusions inappropriate to the text’s didactic message. In chapter IV of Tome I, Periquillo’s *apodo* is explained and the custom of assigning *apodos* condemned by the authorial voice. This is one of the first cultural critiques in the book, and it demonstrates that the sympathy that should be natural to Periquillo has already been corrupted at this early age:

[…] Y ella [la costumbre de ponerles apodos a los niños] ayuda a acabar de formar los espíritus crueles de los estragadores como yo, que veía llorar a un niño de estos desgraciados, a quienes afligía sumamente con las injurias y befa que les hacía, y su llanto, que me debía enternecer y refrenar;

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como que era el fruto del sentimiento de unas criaturas inocentes, me servía de entremés y motivo de risa, y de redoblar mis befas con más empeño.241 (My emphasis)

In recalling this scene, Periquillo is forced to acknowledge that he should have been sympathetic towards the students being abused because their suffering was that of innocent creatures. The problem is that he possesses neither the sympathy nor the sentiments necessary to appropriately interpret the situation. Without sympathy, he fails to recognize the suffering of the children for what it is, and his corrupted sentiments then allow him to mistakenly interpret the meaning of that suffering as a cause for laughter. This example perfectly illustrates the lack of sensibility characteristic of Periquillo for the majority of the novel, showing as it does that he perceives the sentiments of his classmates but is unable to interpret and react to them appropriately.

This scene invites comparison with others examples from the opposite end of the spectrum of the use and abuse of sentiment. The first concerns Periquillo’s father and mother, the former being an unfailing paragon of virtue and just sentiment:

[…] Y volvimos para casa, donde hallamos a mi pobre madre enferma de un gran flujo de sangre que le había venido por la pesadumbre que le di, y el susto con que se quedó. Ya se ha dicho que mi padre la amaba con extremo, y así, lleno de sentimiento, acudió a que la medicina la auxiliara. En efecto, al segundo día ya estuvo mayor.242

Echoing the perspective of the impartial spectator, the corrective function of the narrator’s digression unambiguously appears and instantly affirms its own judgment by showing how the appropriate use of sentiment resolves the situation: upon perceiving his wife’s suffering, Periquillo’s father is filled with sentiment and, as the text makes clear, he rightly interprets this crucial moment in the light of his love for her and runs to fetch a doctor.

Because his actions rightly accord with his sentiments, the anticipated result is almost immediate, and she recovers within two days.

Lizardi also substitutes other virtuous characters as stand-ins for the regulatory function of the authorial voice. We see an example of this permutation of the impartial spectator’s corrective function in a scene revolving around another of Periquillo’s many benefactors, *el buen* Antonio Sánchez. In this case, Antonio’s virtuous aunts provide sentimental authorization of the appropriateness of the character’s sentiments. As Antonio tells the story of how he was abandoned by the evil executor of his father’s estate, his aunts compassionately hear his tale and appropriately display their sentiments. In this way, the aunts verify that Antonio’s own sentimental manifestation is a just and appropriate reaction to the troubles that assail him: “Las benditas viejas se enternecían con estas cosas, y yo redoblabas mis agradecimientos a sus sentimientos expresivos.”

As befits Lizardi’s didactic aims, examples of the use of sentiment going right are far more rare than examples to the contrary. Negative exemplars of sentimental abuse are littered throughout the novel and provide opportunities for the authorial voice to disabuse the reader of superstitious or harmful but culturally-sanctioned prejudices and preoccupations. One of Lizardi’s hobby horses for critique, the abuses of the practice of mourning, demonstrates how the author uses the corrective function of his authorial digressions to bridge the gap between genuine passion and its faulty sentimental canalization:

> Llegamos a los lutos, en los que, como visteis con mi madre, caben también los abusos. El luto no es más que una costumbre de vestirse de negro para manifestar nuestro sentimiento en la muerte de los deudos o amigos; pero este color, a merced de la dicha costumbre, es sólo señal, mas no prueba del sentimiento. ¿Cuántos infelices no se visten luto en la muerte de las personas que más aman,

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243 *Op. cit.* II:VI, 400
porque no lo tienen? Y su dolor es innegable. Al contrario, ¿cuántas viuditas jóvenes, cuántos hijos y sobrinos malos e interesables, que desearon la muerte del difunto por entrar en la posesión de sus bienes, no se vestirán unos lutos muy rigurosos así por seguir la costumbre como por persuadirnos que están penetrados del sentimiento que no conocen?244

The narrator’s intervention here again signals the divide between the motivating passions that give rise to the sentimental manifestation of the mourners and the nature of that manifestation itself. I noted earlier in this chapter that the signs of mourning are no guarantee that the sentiments manifested by someone ostensibly in mourning are genuine. In a more cynical twist, we should now consider the further possibility that such sentimental manifestations might actually demonstrate that some mourners are hiding far more sinister intentions, such as the desire to take possession of what the deceased has left behind. As seen in the above case of don Antonio and his aunts, the novel counteracts such a possibility by using the just sentiments of its morally exemplary characters as a means of verifying the true character of more dubious manifestations of sentimentality. The functioning and success of this process of sentimental verification is made apparent by scenes like that examined above, when don Antonio is presented as justifiably desperate and, more importantly for the didactic aims of the novel, properly grateful for the understanding and assistance that he receives. As such, don Antonio’s sentimental responses present a model of the correct use of sentiment advocated throughout the novel. Furthermore, this virtuous model provides the perfect contrast with Periquillo’s own sentimental manifestations.

Although the scene between don Antonio and his aunts takes place after the novel’s halfway point, the two characters have already met earlier in the story during one of Periquillo’s many prison terms. During that time don Antonio embraced Periquillo as a

friend and acted as his benefactor. When don Antonio is set free and Periquillo must stay behind to finish serving his sentence, the specter of the lack of companionship sends him into a spiral of desperation. And here lies the essential difference between the sentiments of the two men. Don Antonio’s desperation is appropriate to the destitution that threatens him. Nevertheless, he still manages to manifest genuine gratitude for his aunt’s understanding and aid. Periquillo, by contrast, has far less reason for desperation, but his sentimental outburst is still sufficient to cause him to forget to thank the very benefactor whose absence he so grievously laments. Here again, for Periquillo, sentimental understanding and passionate motivation fail to properly coincide, and this would continue to be the case were it not for the corrective function of the impartial spectator:

No pudo contener este hombre sensible y generoso su ternura: las lágrimas interrumpieron sus palabras, y sin dar lugar a que yo hablara otra, marchó, dejándome sumergido en un mar de aflicción y sentimiento, no tanto por la falta que me hacía don Antonio, cuanto por lo que extrañaba su compañía; pues, en efecto, ya lo dije y no me cansaré de repetirlo, era muy amable y generoso.245

That Periquillo’s sensibility and appreciation of the good example that don Antonio has set forth are lacking is further confirmed after this scene; Periquillo immediately disregards all of don Antonio’s advice and slithers back into the disreputable company of the other prisoners that his benefactor has advised him to avoid:

Enseñado con estos hipócritas sentimientos, resolvi hacerme camarada de aquella gentuza, olvidándome de los consejos de mi ausente amigo, y lo que es más, del testimonio de mi conciencia, que me decía que cuando no en lo general, a lo menos en lo común, raro hombre sin principios ni educación deja de ser vicioso y relajado.246 (My emphasis)

Nevertheless, it appears that something of don Antonio’s character has indeed rubbed off on Periquillo. When carefully unpacked, the previous example shows that, in

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245 Op. cit. II:IX; 447 Although this example may seem prima facie contradictory, it must be noted that the voice that acknowledges don Antonio’s kindness and generosity at the end of the line is that of the narrator, and not Periquillo as portrayed in the scene. The fact that the narrative voice is associated with don Pedro Sarmiento after his conversion to an hombre de bien explains this apparent discontinuity of sensibility.

246 Op. cit. II:IX; 448
acting as he does, Periquillo goes against don Antonio’s recommendations and acts in opposition to his own conscience. The logical implication, of course, is that Periquillo is finally beginning to recognize that he has a conscience. This sentimental maturation, however minor it may be, begins a change in Periquillo that leads him to acknowledge the generosity of his next benefactor (who remains don Antonio, although Periquillo is unaware of this fact):

En estas pláticas pasamos un gran rato de la mañana, preguntándome sobre el estado de mi causa y que si tenía qué comer. Díjele que sí, que todos los días me llevaban una canasta con comida, cena, dos tortas de pan y una cajilla de cigarros, que yo lo recibía y lo agradecía, pero que tenía el sentimiento de no saber a quién, pues el mozo no había querido decirme quién era mi bienhechor.247 (My emphasis)

In spite of its relative impotence at this early point in the novel, the fact that Periquillo’s conscience has awakened represents an important watershed in the story. With this newly-awakened conscience, Periquillo will become increasingly involved in the diagnosis of his own degenerate passions and mistaken sentimental understanding. As this occurs, the structure of the novel is transformed, and the possibility of sentimental salvation slowly rises out of the mire of vice that characterizes Periquillo’s life. That redemptive possibility and the conscience that sustains it will not be fully realized until the novel’s end, when the first stage of Lizardi’s redemptive didactic work has been completed. The inclusion of a conscience into the didactic equation also represents a third permutation of the corrective function of the impartial spectator in the novel. We have already seen how the novel’s authorial digressions and interventions and the text’s virtuous characters function to correct Periquillo’s sentimental understanding. The introduction of conscience allows for that function to be carried out in a third way, one operative in both Periquillo and the readers of the novel.

The movement of sentimental arbitration from authorial voice to virtuous character to conscience is also significant for a third reason. That those phenomena emerge within the novel in that specific order indicates that the corrective devices deployed by the narrative exhibit a trend toward internalization that parallels the evolution of Periquillo’s own sentimental understanding. At the beginning of the novel, Periquillo’s sentiments are guided by distant authority figures (the authorial voice, the memory of his dead father) whose impeccable virtue and discretion parallel the Smithian description of the impartial spectator. In a later development, Periquillo occasionally manages to become friends with truly virtuous people like Limahotón and the colonel who supervises his military service in the Philippines. Closer than his first authority figures but distinct from Periquillo’s own conscience, these virtuous characters still remain at a remove from Periquillo; to come closer might risk sullying their immaculate reputations. Nevertheless, Periquillo’s friendship with those figures lends their advice greater impact, as does Periquillo’s willingness to feign virtue in order to remain in their company. Lastly, and as this pattern would suggest, Periquillo’s conscience is the final permutation of the impartial spectator to emerge in the novel, and it is also the most internal. By the end of his conversion, Periquillo will no longer have any need for the first two authorities: his conscience will be able to call on the assets of his successful sentimental education to make the determinations of the impartial spectator without needing to appeal to the corrective action of sources external to himself.

While the authorial voice *qua* impartial spectator remains in place to varying degrees until the end of the novel, its second permutation, the novel’s virtuous benefactors, have a more compensatory role to play. Periquillo’s benefactors act as a supplementary
source of correction until Periquillo’s conscience is fully developed. This form of positive correction is complemented by the presence of negative exemplars whose own actions confirm the warnings proffered by the novel’s virtuous characters. The narrative develops a “carrot and stick” approach to sentimental didacticism by strategically alternating those two modalities of exemplarity in order to inculcate the desired lesson in Periquillo and the audience reading his tale. Lizardi artfully combines positive admonition and negative exemplarity to gradually refine his audience’s sensibilities as they bear witness to Periquillo’s painstaking reformation and redemption.

Lizardi’s alternating use of positive and negative exemplarity combines with the corrective function of three permutations of the impartial spectator in an attempt to guarantee that the novel’s lessons are sentimentally canalized in the appropriate way. But although the use of exemplarity and the impartial spectator unify El periquillo sarniento’s didactic structure through their corrective functions, another element is still necessary to set that machinery into motion. Students must desire to learn before they can learn, and Lizardi’s sentimental education is no exception. The novel fans the flames of its reader’s interest by stimulating their passions and sentimentally engaging them in Periquillo’s many trials and tribulations. Lizardi achieves this effect by counterbalancing the particularity of natural sympathy with the universality of death.

As seen in the foregoing discussion of the punishments in Saucheofú, Hume points out that the case of the execution of justice is one of the moments when our sentimental understanding is most susceptible to error, and Lizardi’s didactic technique also makes use of that insight. The first time Periquillo goes to prison, his lack of savvy quickly marks him as a sucker, a fact that his fellow prisoners waste no time in exploiting for their own
entertainment. Periquillo has no living benefactor to guide him at this point in the novel, and his inability to discern the sentiments of his fellow prisoners makes him unconscionably gullible. Lizardi begins capitalizing on this possibility as Periquillo, having been tricked by his fellow prisoners into thinking that he is to receive two hundred lashes, laments his fate in a moment that reveals the truly ridiculous nature of the image he has of himself and his inheritance:

-¡Santa Bárbara! -exclamé yo penetrado del más vivo sentimiento-. ¿Qué es lo que me ha sucedido? ¿Doscientos azotes le han de dar a don Pedro Sarmiento? ¿A un hidalgo por todos cuatro costados? ¿A un descendiente de los Tagles, Ponces, Pintos, Velascos, Zumalacárreguis y Bundiburis? Y lo que es más, ¿a un señor bachiller en artes, graduado en esta real y pontificia universidad, cuyos graduados gozan tantos privilegios como los de Salamanca?248

In a way that perfectly accords with Periquillo’s incipient sensibilities at this time, his incredibly flawed understanding of his own social standing and value to society is erroneously supported by what is nevertheless shown to be “the most lively sentiment.” This relatively minor sentimental provocation instantly reveals that the sentimental understanding of the *hombre de bien* is still completely alien to the mind of Periquillo.

However, the fear of castigation seen above only presents an attenuated version of a phenomenon that proves to be fundamental for the didactic strategy utilized throughout *El periquillo*. The confrontation with death is far more provocative and thereby far more effective at illuminating the true nature of the sentiments solicited by its presence. Having recognized the sentimental force that accompanies the invocation of the ineluctable fact of human mortality, Lizardi reappropriates the manifestation of death and converts it into one of the two phenomena that organize the novel. The image of death affords the novel with a measure of direction and finality that is lacking in sympathy, the other cornerstone of the novel’s narrative structure.

248 *Op. cit.* II:X; 472
*El periquillo sarniento* is a novel written in the key of sympathy. Periquillo’s sentimental development takes shape as a journey along a spectrum ranging from wholly unsympathetic to optimally sympathetic. In the beginning of the novel, Periquillo is wholly incorrigible, and this trend seems irreversible as his crimes escalate in gravity throughout the first three tomes of the work. As is the case with its deployment of alternating models of moral exemplarity, the process of sentimental didacticism enacted in the novel utilizes both sides of the sympathetic spectrum while treating them differently. Periquillo’s degenerate actions throughout the first half of the novel make it impossible for most readers to endorse his sentiments, but the absurd level of suffering that he undergoes as a consequence of his depravity keeps readers engaged with his development until his conversion into an *hombre de bien* can be completed. In another echo of the punishment scene in *Saucheofú*, Periquillo’s misery still manages to touch the reader’s sentiments even though the text gives every indication that he is the author of his own downfall.

This process of readerly engagement transitions into a process of identification as the novel approaches the other end of the sentimental spectrum. As the influence of Periquillo’s conscience is strengthened, he begins to reshape his sentiments and becomes a more and more sympathetic figure for readers who have long watched him navigate life’s pitfalls and are finally given reason to hope that Periquillo might triumph once and for all over the adversities of life. Periquillo’s burgeoning conscience provides a window onto his internal struggles, and the reader’s increasingly intimate familiarity with the problems that he faces strengthens the connection between *El periquillo’s* audience and its eponymous hero, giving them even more reason to celebrate his final conversion and redemption. This connection, however, only becomes possible after he has advanced
significantly in his sentimental education, and for the majority of the novel Periquillo digs in his heels when presented with opportunities for change. Maintaining the audience’s sympathetic connection to Periquillo requires that he constantly refine his sentimental understanding, and a mighty shock seems like the only sort of impetus that can push him in the direction of improvement. Lizardi deploys the image of death to provide Periquillo with the motivation necessary for the continuation of his sentimental education.

There are at least six distinct moments of the manifestation of death in *El periquillo* that prove to be essential to his sentimental progression, and sentiment is unfailingly mentioned in each one; they are, in order of occurrence in the text, the following: the death of Periquillo’s father; the death of his first wife, *la niña* Mariana; the death of one of his benefactors, the colonel from Manila; the death of his childhood rival, Januario (Juan Largo); the death of his final good master; and finally, Periquillo’s own death. With the exception of the death of Periquillo himself, each of these moments articulates its significance in three stages: first, they provoke a passionate response from the reader and Periquillo; second, that passionate response is sentimentally canalized and Periquillo’s understanding or misunderstanding of the situation is presented to the reader; finally, the previous act of sentimental canalization is subjected to verification and authorized in a way that befits the overarching aims of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism. This stages of this process can be clearly seen when the novel’s most significant manifestations of death are examined.

The first of these deaths has already been treated in the foregoing part of my investigation: although the death of Periquillo’s father seems to leave him overwhelmed by a genuine sentiment of repentance and appreciation of his father’s generosity and
kindness, within two weeks of reading his father’s final letter, that sentiment has totally receded, leaving him with nothing but a feeling of appreciation for his newfound freedom. Such ingratitude is emblematic of Periquillo’s initial sentimental disposition. Lizardi has an explanation for Periquillo’s childhood delinquency: just as the practice of improperly mourning is something that is imparted from early childhood, the sentimental disposition and understanding that coincides with it is something that “we imbibe with our mother’s milk.” This metaphor encapsulates one of Lizardi’s more problematic stances, namely, that the formation of improper sentiments is often the result of the intervention of overbearing and foolish mothers who undermine the virtuous teachings of children’s fathers. Following the narrator’s account, this is also the problem in Periquillo’s case. Although his father is constantly attempting to instruct and inspire him with just and virtuous sentiments, he is constantly foiled by his wife’s weak-willed, platitudinous interventions and counterproductive arribista preoccupations:

> Sucede por lo común que el padre es un hombre regular que procura inspirar al niño unos sentimientos cristianos, morales y políticos, y según ellos desviarlo de todas aquellas bajezas a que el hombre se inclina naturalmente. Esto hace llorar al niño, y la madre se aflige y lo embaraza. Hace alguna travesura, se le celebra; usa alguna malcrianza, se le disculpa; produce algunas palabras indecentes, o porque las oyó a los criados o en la calle, y se festejan; el padre se tuesta con estas cosas y tene empeñarse en reprenderlas y castigarlas al hijo, porque cuando lo hace sabe que salta la madre como una leona; y ya sea porque la ama demasiado, ya porque no se vuelva aquel matrimonio un infierno, condesciende con ella, no se castiga el delito del muchacho; éste se queda riendo y satisfecho en la impunidad que le asegura su mamá, da rienda a sus vicios, que entonces, como dijimos, son vicios niños, puerilidades, frioleras, pero en la edad adulta son crímenes y delitos escandalosos.

249 “Ya ustedes verán que mi madre era de aquellas señoras antiguas que se persuaden a que el luto prueba el sentimiento por el difunto, y gradúan éste por la duración de aquél; pero ésta es una de las innumerables vulgaridades que mamamos con la primera leche de nuestras madres.” Op. cit. 1:XIII; 273

250 Op. cit. II: I; 306-307. The following paragraphs also reinforce this idea, and are drawn from the same passage in Tome II, Chapter I: “¡Ah, lágrimas de mi madre, vertidas por su culpa y por la mía! Si a los principios, si en mi infancia, si cuando yo no era dueño absoluto de los resabios de mis pasiones, me hubiera corregido los primeros ímpetus de ellas, y no me hubiera lisonjeado con sus mimos, consentimientos y cariños, seguramente yo me hubiera acostumbrado a obedecerla y respetarla; pero fue todo lo contrario, ella celebraba mis primeros deslices y aun los disculpaba con la edad, sin acordarse que el vicio también tiene su infancia en lo moral, su consistencia y su senectud lo mismo que el hombre en lo físico. Él comienza siendo niño o trivial, crece con la costumbre y fenece con el hombre, o llega a su decrepitud cuando al mismo hombre en fuerza de los años se le amortiguan las pasiones. ¿Qué provecho no hubiera resultado a mi madre y a mí, 149
In a move that is perhaps fortunate granted this retrograde view of maternal influence, Lizardi later ends up partially contradicting this notion in two distinct moves. First, the condemnation of negligent and misguided parenting is extended to both genders in a footnote written by the author that runs parallel to the gentle admonition delivered by Periquillo’s first benefactor, the third schoolmaster with whom he finishes his general education. The good schoolmaster first tells Periquillo that, though common instruments of punishment are available in his school, they will surely not be necessary since Periquillo comes from a virtuous family and therefore ought to act in accordance with his putative upbringing in such a way as to never merit those punishments:

> Acá hay disciplinas, y de alambre, que arrancan los pedazos: hay palmetas, orejas de burro, cornas, grillos y mil cosas feas; pero no las verás muy fácilmente, porque están encerradas en una covacha. Esos instrumentos horrorosos que anuncian el dolor y la infamia no se hicieron para ti ni esos niños que has visto, pues estás criados en cunas no ordinarias, tenéis buenos padres, que os han dado muy bella educación y os han inspirado los mejores sentimientos de virtud, honor y vergüenza, y no creo ni espero que jamás me pongáis en el duro caso de usar de tan repugnantes castigos.  

The mistaken assurances of the schoolmaster are then immediately followed by a stark negative example meant to illustrate that a child who lacks proper parental guidance is destined to be encumbered by gravely deformed sentiments and a diabolical heart (which, in what is perhaps little comfort, at least means that fathers may be as responsible as mothers for the spoliation of their children):

> Hablamos aquí de los padres decentes y bien nacidos que obran de este modo, no de la gente vulgar que no abriga ningunos sentimientos regulares pues a éstos no los corrige la crítica ni la persuasión. Estos bárbaros que llevan al hijo a que los cuide cuando el aguardiente los arroja por las calles; otros que los llevan al juego y aun juegan con ellos; otros en cuyas pocilgas jamás se oyen sino maldiciones, juramentos, riñas y obscenidades, etc.; éstos no sólo no pueden dar a sus hijos buena educación ni buen ejemplo, porque son unos brutos racionales, sino que por esta misma

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razón siempre los imbuyen en sus errores y preocupaciones, y con sus perversos ejemplos les forman un corazón de demonios. Esta es una triste verdad, pero verdad que si se quisiera desmentir, hablarán en su favor las pulquerías, tabernas, billarcitos, cárceles y calles de esta ciudad, que no están llenas de otra polilla que de estos haraganes y viciosos.252 (My emphasis)

Initially, the text seems to back up this claim by making reference to Periquillo’s own waywardness and incorrigibility, and it is hard not to see an echo of “un corazón de demonios” in Periquillo’s diabolical auto-denomination:

Así debe ser, y yo estoy en el caso de no desperdiciar este auxilio sino corresponderlo sin demora. Pero soy el diablo. Mientras no veo a mis amigos ni a mis queridas, pienso con juicio; pero en cuanto estoy con ellos y con ellas, se me olvidan los buenos propósitos que hago y vuelvo a mis andanzas.253

This is the second step that Lizardi takes away from his initial stance on maternal corruption; it turns out that both parents can be liable for the sentimental deformation of their children, particularly if they come from the lower classes of society. What follows is the ultimate assertion of sentimental and ethical authority on the part of the author, who defies his own insistence on incorrigibility by masterfully presenting his own solution to the problem in a footnote following the above-quoted passage:

¡Qué cosa tan grande fuera el hacerlos útiles al Estado y a sí mismos! ¿Qué providencias más conducentes para el caso que encargarse de sus hijos, proporcionándoles por amor y por fuerza la buena educación? ¿Y qué arbitrio, a mi parecer, más fácil para ello que el proyecto de las escuelas gratuitas que propuse en el tomo tercero de mi Pensador Mexicano, números 7, 8 y 9? Yo aseguro

252 Op. cit. II:1; 308 footnote e.
253 The remainder of this passage goes on to drive home the incorrigibility of Periquillo as he feigns virtuous sentiments to no avail: “No son éstos los primeros que hago, ni el primer sermón que me predico; varios he hecho, y siempre me he quedado tan Periquillo como siempre, semejante a la burra de Balaam, que después de amonestar al inicuo se quedó tan burra como era antes. ¿Pero siempre he de ser un obstinado? ¿No me docilitará alguna vez a los suaves avisos de mi conciencia, y no responderé algún día a los llamamientos de Dios? ¿Por qué no? ¡Eh, vida nueva, señor Perico! Acordémonos que estamos empecatados de la cruz a la cola, que somos mortales, que hay infierno, que hay eternidad y que la muerte vendrá como el ladrón cuando no se espere, y nos cogerá desprevenidos, y entonces nos llevarán toditos los diablos en un brinco. Pues no, a penitencia han tocado, Periquillo; penitencia y tente perro, que las cosas de esta vida hoy son y mañana no. Buscaré a capellán, lo encargaré de ciencia, prudencia y experiencia; me confesaré con él; me quitaré de las malas ocasiones; y adiós, tertulias; adiós, paseos, alameda, coliseo y visitas; adiós, almacencitos de Nana Rosa; adiós, billares y montecitos; adiós, amigos; adiós, Pepitas, Tutilas y Mariquitas; adiós, galas; adiós, disipación; adiós, mundo; un santo he de ser desde hoy, un santo. ¿Pero qué dirán los tunantes mis amigos y mis apasionadas? ¿Dirán que soy un mocho, un hipócrita, que por no gastar me he metido a buen vivir, y otras cosas que no me han de saber muy bien? Pero ¿qué tenemos con esto? Digan lo que quisieren, que ellos no me han de sacar del infierno. Con estos buenos, aunque superficiales sentimientos, me entré en casa de don Prudencio, amigo mío y hombre de bien, que tenía tertulia en su casa.” Op. cit. IV:X; 806-7.
It is Lizardi, then, who has the answers necessary to resolve the sentimental incorrigibility of both Periquillo and the readers of the novel, and he uses the manifestation of death as a didactic tool to cause them to heed his message regarding the reformation of sentiment.

Sentimental re-articulation is a fraught and arduous process in *El periquillo sarniento*. After the death of Periquillo’s father, the reader arrives at another milestone to mortality: the death of Periquillo’s first wife, *la niña* Mariana. The death of his father passed by without leaving any substantial marks upon his conscience, but Mariana’s violent death makes an enduring impression on Periquillo. Lizardi here ups the sentimental stakes more than anywhere else in the novel by presenting a gut-wrenching scene; the delivery of Periquillo and Mariana’s child goes horribly wrong because of the ignorance of a midwife with dangerously long nails:

> Muy contento llegué a casa con mis cuatro pesos, a hora en que la ignorantísima partera le había arrancado el feto con las uñas y con otro instrumento infernal, rasgándole de camino las entrañas y causándole un flujo de sangre tan copioso, que no bastando a contenerlo la pericia de un buen cirujano, le quitó la vida al segundo día del sacrificio, habiéndosele ministrado los socorros espirituales.255

The carnage is so intense that it manages to awaken Periquillo’s sentiments for the first time, and a torrent of emotion overwhelms him as he realizes that the culpability for the horror that lies before him is his own:

> Luego que yo vi a la infeliz Mariana tendida exánime en su cama atormentadora, pues se reducía a unos pocos trapos y un petate, y escuché las tiernas lágrimas de su madre, despertó mi sensibilidad, pues a cada instante le decía: ¡Ay, hija desdichada! ¡Ay, dulce trozo de mi corazón! ¿Quién te había de decir que habías de morir en tal miseria, por haberte casado con un hombre que no te merecía, y que te trató no como un esposo, sino como un verdugo y un tirano? A éstas añadía otras expresiones más duras y sensibles que despedazaban mi corazón, de modo que no pude contener mis sentimientos.256 (My emphasis)

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254 *Op. cit.* II:1; 308 footnote e
The psychological drama that follows is parsed as a revelation brought on by the confrontation with the unfathomable mystery of death: “¡Oh, muerte, y qué misterios nos revela tu fatal advenimiento!” What the narrator will later refer to as the innate “seeds of sentiment” contained in *El periquillo* then begin to transcend their long-dormant state and burst into bloom:

> En aquel momento advertí que me había casado no con los fines santos a que se debe contraer el matrimonio, sino como el caballo y el mulo, que carecen de entendimiento; conocí que mi mujer era naturalmente fiel y buena, y yo la hice enfadada en fuerza de hostigarla con mis inciusos tratamientos; vi que era hermosa, pues aunque exangüe y sin vital aliento, manifestaba su rostro difunto las gracias de una desventurada juventud, y conocí que yo había sido el autor de tan fatal tragedia.

His wife’s gruesome death then pushes Periquillo’s imagination into overdrive and forces him to remorsefully and relentlessly evaluate his own conduct. It is fitting, then, that what follows is his first moment of genuine repentance in the novel:

> Entonces... (¡qué tarde!) me arrepentí de mis villanos procederes; reflexioné que mi esposa ni era fea ni del natural que yo la juzgaba, pues si no me amaba tenía mil justísimas razones, porque yo mismo labré un diablo de la materia de que podía haber formado un ángel, y atumultadas en mi espíritu las pasiones del dolor y el arrepentimiento, desahogué todo su ímpetu abalanzándome al frío cadáver de mi difunta esposa. ¡Oh instante fúnebre y terrible a mi cansada imaginación! ¡Qué de abrazos le di! ¡Qué de besos imploré en sus labios amoratados! ¡Qué de expresiones dulcísimas la dije! ¡Qué de perdones no pedí a un cuerpo que ni podía agradecer mis lisonjas ni remitir mis agravios!... ¡Espíritu de mi infeliz consorte, no me demandes ante Dios los injustos disgustos que te causé; recíbe, sí, en recompensa de ellos, los votos que tengo ofrecidos por ti al Dueño de las misericordias ante sus inmaculados altares!

All that remains is for Periquillo’s newfound conscience to speak, and it minces no words as it rightful accuses him of inhumane neglect:

> Entregado a las más tristes imaginaciones no pude dormir ni un corto rato en toda la noche, pues apenas cerraba los ojos cuando despertaba estremeciéndome, agitado por el pavor de mi conciencia, que me representaba con la mayor viveza a mi esposa, a la que creía ver junto a mí, y que, lanzándome unas miradas terribles, me decía: -¡Cruel! ¡Para qué me sedujiste y apartaste del amable lado de mi madre? ¿Para qué juraste que me amabas y te enlazaste conmigo con el vínculo más tierno y más estrecho, y para qué te

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258 *IV:*X; 802  
259 *Op. cit.* III:VIII; 638  
llamaste padre de ese infante abortado por tu causa, si al fin no habías de ser sino un verdugo de tu esposa y de tu hijo?
Semejantes cargos me parecía escuchar de la fría boca de mi infeliz esposa, y lleno de susto y de congoja, esperaba que el sol disipara las negras sombras de la noche para salir de aquella habitación funesta que tanto me acordaba mis indignos procederes.261

This scene also provides an explanation for the narrator’s intensely sentimental intervention: granted the hyper-violent grotesquerie in play, if Periquillo’s honest and open lamentations were lacking, it would surely be impossible to view the character in any sympathetic light. However, here again the narrator’s intervention allows the reader a window onto Periquillo’s psyche and demonstrates that at least this once his repentance is genuine. If this maneuver fails to make Periquillo a sympathetic figure, it nevertheless ensures that he remains tolerable enough for his further sentimental development to still be of interest. The scene thereby allows the narrator to approach the limits of readerly tolerance while achieving an optimal level of sentimental provocation and engagement. If we can tolerate Periquillo here at his worst, then surely we will be on board for the rest of the story and the lessons contained therein. It seems that Lizardi’s didactic gamble here pays off, but this is a sort of sentimental apex in the novel, and, having achieved its aims, this level of provocation will not be risked again in the rest of the story.

Periquillo’s sensibilities are now awakened, and his conscience plays an active role in his imaginative interpretation of sentiment. His conversion is irrevocably set into motion and has advanced a great deal by the time Periquillo is condemned to military service in the Philippines. But regardless of his ostensible improvement, the atrocities he commits while drunk with the power invested in him as scribe to the evil subdelegate continue to cast the true extent of his sentimental progression into doubt. This doubt is mostly

261 III:VIII, 639
dispelled during his time in Manila, where he consistently conducts himself as an hombre de bien under the tutelage of another significant benefactor, the colonel.

The colonel takes Periquillo under his wing, instructing him in virtue and teaching him to keep himself free of the temptation of bad company. The death of the colonel proves to be one of the few times when Periquillo’s sentiments are appropriately made manifest before Tome IV. His funeral serves as a positive verification that the novel’s previous critiques of mourning have been successfully inculcated by the novel’s didactic appeals to sentiment:

No desampararon el cadáver hasta que lo cubrió la tierra. La música fúnebre lograba las más dulces consonancias con los tristes gemidos de los pobres, legítimos dolientes del difunto, y las bóvedas del sagrado templo recibían en sus concavidades los últimos esfuerzos del más verdadero sentimiento.

Concluida esta religiosa ceremonia, me volvi a la casa lleno de tal dolor, que en los nueve días no estuve apto ni para recibir los pésames.

Pasado este término, el albacea hizo los inventarios; se realizó todo, y se cumplió la voluntad del testador, entregándome la parte que me tocaba, que fueron tres mil y pico de pesos, los que recibí con harta pesadumbre por la causa que me hacían dueño de ellos.

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Pasados cerca de tres meses me hallé más tranquilo, y no me acordaba tanto de mi padre y favorecedor; ya se ve que me duró la memoria mucho tiempo respecto de otros, pues he notado que hijos, mujeres y amigos de los difuntos, aun entre los que se precian de amantes, suelen olvidarlos más presto, y divertirse a este tiempo con la misma frescura que si no los hubieran conocido, a pesar de los vestidos negros que llevan y les recuerdan su memoria. (My emphasis)

Nevertheless, Periquillo’s sentimental understanding is not yet complete, and he himself admits that he does not fully understand what has caused his sentiments to change:

Experimentamos los hombres unas mutaciones morales en nosotros mismos de cuando en cuando, que tal vez no acertamos a adivinar su origen, así como en lo físico palpamos muchos efectos en la Naturaleza y no sabemos la causa que los produce, como sucede hasta hoy con la virtud atractiva del imán y con la eléctrica; por eso dijo el poeta que era feliz quien podía conocer la causa de las cosas.

Pero así como aprovechamos los efectos de los fenómenos físicos sin más averiguación, así yo aproveché en Manila el resultado de mi fenómeno moral sin meterme por entonces en inculcar su origen.

El caso fue, que ya por verme distante de mi patria, ya por libertarme de las incomodidades que me acarreaba el servicio en la tropa por ocho años, a que me sujetaba mi condena, o ya por el famoso tratamiento que me daba el coronel, que sería lo más cierto, yo procuré corresponder a sus confianzas, y fui en Manila un hombre de bien a toda prueba. (My emphasis)

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263 Op. cit. IV:I; 722
Because of this lack of understanding, and although Periquillo is now capable of manifesting sentiment in the appropriate way, he still lacks the enlightened sensibility required for him to complete his transformation into an hombre de bien. Confronted with his conscience and unable to withstand its accusations, he gets drunk and attempts suicide. Fortunately, he withdraws at the last minute, and is saved from another desperate attempt by a kind india, whose pity stays his self-destructive impulses.

Knowing that he is in error, but still incapable of effectuating the necessary change, a final brush with death is necessary for Periquillo to fully awaken to a new state of sentimental enlightenment. This manifestation of death is redoubled in a way that mirrors the interaction of sufferer and observer described in Smith’s account of the operation of

264 “Es verdad muchas veces prueba Dios a los suyos en el crisol de la tribulación; pero más veces los impíos la padecen porque quieren. ¡Qué de ocasiones se quejan los hombres de los trabajos que padecen, y dicen que los persigue la desgracia, sin advertir que ellos se la merecen y acarrean por su descabellada conducta! Así decía yo la noche que me vi en el triste estado que os he dicho, y desesperado o aburrido de existir, traté de ahorrarme.” Op. cit. V:I; 819

265 It is particularly interesting that Periquillo’s salvation from suicide comes at the hand of an india, granted Lizardi’s general disregard for and mockery of indigenous characters elsewhere in the novel; the final line of this passage, though contradictory, appears to counteract this otherwise negative impression of las castas: “En estas y las otras se pasarían dos horas, cuando ya muy fatigado con mi piedra, trabajo y porrazos que llevaba, y advirtiendo que aun tenerme en pie me costaba suma dificultad, temeroso de que amaneciera y alguno me hallara ocupado en tan criminal empeño, hubo de desistir más de fuerza que de gana, y quitándome la piedra, echando la reata a la acequia y buscando un lugar acomodado, volví cuanto tenía en el estómago, me acosté a dormir en la tierra pelada, y dormí con tanta satisfacción como pudiera en la cama más mullida. […]Consideradme en tal pelaje, a tal hora y en tal lugar. Todos los indios que pasaban por allí me veían y se reían; pero su risa inocente era para mí un terrible vejamen, que me llenaba de rabia, y tanta, que me arrepentía una y muchas veces de no haberme podido ahorrar. En tan aciago lance se llegó a mí una pobre india vieja, que condolida de mi desgracia me preguntó la causa. Yo le dije que en la noche antecedente me habían robado; y la infeliz, llena de compasión, me llevó a su triste jacal, me dio atole y tortillas calientes con un pedazo de panocha, y me vistió con los desechos de sus hijos, que eran unos calzones de cuero sin forro, un cotón de manta rayada y muy viejo, un sombrero de petate y unos guaraches. Es decir, que me vistió en el traje de un indio infeliz; pero al fin me vistió, cubrió mis carnes, me abrigó, me socorrió, y cuanto pudo hizo en mi favor. Cada vez que me acuerdo de esta india benéfica se enternecía mi corazón y la juzgaba en su clase una heroína de caridad, pues me dio cuanto pudo, y sin más interés que hacerme beneficio sin ningún merecimiento de mi parte. Hoy mismo desearía conocerla para pagarla su generosidad. ¡Qué cierto es que en todas las clases del Estado hay almas benéficas, y que para serlo más se necesita corazón que dinero!” Op. cit. V:I; 820-821.
sympathy. In the first of two moments, Periquillo comes within an inch of death, only to see the fatal blow be dealt to his bandit companion, Aguilucho:

Entonces el Aguilucho se echó a tierra, matando a su caballo de un culatazo que le dio en la cabeza, y al subir a las ancas del mío, le dispararon una bala tan bien dirigida, que le pasó las sienes y cayó muerto.

Casi por mi cuerpo pasó la bala, pues me llevó un pedazo de la cotona. La sangre del infeliz Aguilucho salpicó mi ropa.  

This failed robbery and the deaths of his companions prompt Periquillo to engage in one last sentimental self-examination, and he finally arrives at an understanding that causes him to reject his former prodigal lifestyle once and for all:

No hay duda –decía yo–, la holgazanería, el libertinaje y el vicio no pueden ser los medios seguros para lograr nuestra felicidad verdadera. La verdadera felicidad en esta vida no consiste ni puede consistir en otra cosa que en la tranquilidad de espíritu en cualquier fortuna; y ésta no la puede conseguir el criminal, por más que pase alegre aquellos ratos en que satisface sus pasiones; pero a esta efímera alegría sucede una languidez intolerable, un fastidio de muchas horas y unos remordimientos continuos, pagando en estos tan largos y gravosos tributos aquel placer mezquino que quizá compró a costa de mil crímenes, sustos y comprometimientos.

This epiphany serves as a confirmation of all that Periquillo has learned up to this point and testifies to the importance of the truths and virtues that his father tried to instill in him from the very beginning. Furthermore, in a move that again forwards the novel’s didactic thesis, Periquillo’s realization also confirms that, granted sufficient attention and reflection, anyone could and should arrive at the same conclusion:

Éstas son unas verdades concedidas por todo el que reflexione atentamente sobre ellas. Mi padre me las advertía desde muy joven; el coronel no dejaba de repetírmelas; yo las he leído en los libros y tal vez las he oído en los púlpitos, ¿pero qué más? El mundo, los amigos, mi experiencia han sido unos constantes maestros que no han cesado de recordarme estas lecciones en el discurso de mi vida, a pesar de la ingratitude con que yo he desatendido sus avisos.

Periquillo will never again depart from the high road of virtue, but one final reminder of what the path of vice holds in store for those that tread it emerges to drive the point home when Periquillo stumbles upon the hanging corpse of Juan Largo:

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266 Op. cit. V:III; 851
267 Ibid.
Acerquéme a verlo despacio; pero ¿cómo me quedaría cuando advertí y conocí en aquel deforme cadáver a mi antiguo e infeliz amigo Januario? Los cabellos se me erizaron; la sangre se me enfrió; el corazón me palpitaba reciamente; la lengua se me anudó en la garganta; mi frente se cubrió de un sudor mortal, y perdida la elasticidad de mis nervios, iba a caer del caballo abajo en fuerza de la congoja de mi espíritu.

[…]En aquel momento me acordé de sus extravíos, de sus depravados consejos, ejemplos y máximas infernales; sentí mucho su desgracia; lloré por él, al fin lo traté de amigo y nos criamos juntos; pero también di a Dios muy cordiales gracias porque me había separado de su amistad, pues con ella y con mi mala disposición fijamente hubiera sido ladrón como él, y tal vez a aquella hora me sostendría el árbol de enfrente.

Confirmé más y más mis propósitos de mudar de vida, procurando aprovechar desde aquel punto las lecciones del mundo y sacar fruto de las maldades y adversidades de los hombres; […].

From this point on, the novel will be primarily concerned with providing opportune confirmations that Periquillo’s sentimental change is a lasting one, and what better moment for such verification than yet another funeral?

The penultimate funeral in the novel finds Periquillo mourning the death of his final buen amo. This time Periquillo’s grieving perfectly manifests his newfound propriety of sentiment:

Asistí a sus funerales, vestí luto con toda mi familia, no por ceremonia, sino por manifestar mi justo sentimiento; cumplí todos sus comunicados exactamente y habiendo entrado en posesión de la herencia, disfruté de ella con la bendición de Dios y la suya. (My emphasis)

Periquillo’s sentimental education is finally complete, and it serves him well as he spends the rest of his life in virtuous pursuits, most of them surrounding his quest to set right the wrongs that he had committed before his conversion:

“En el tal pueblo procuré manejarme con arreglo, haciendo el bien que podía a cuantos me ocupaban, y granjeándome de esta suerte la benevolencia general. Así como me sentía inclinado a hacer bien, no me olvidé de restaurar el mal que había causado.”

Now that the appropriate sentimental understanding has been established, Periquillo is able to overcoming the “corazón de diablo” that once led him astray. His sentimental education has finally made it possible to overcome the weaknesses of his
upbringing: “Así como se dice que el sabio vence su estrella, se pudiera decir con más seguridad que el hombre de bien con su conducta constantemente arreglada domina casi siempre su fortuna, por siniestra que sea.”

His actions are informed by refined sentiments and driven by what ought to have been his natural motivation all along. Periquillo identifies this new, motivating passion with the desire to help carry out the divine will of Providence:

_Yo no he hecho sino cumplir en muy poco con los naturales sentimientos de mi corazón_. Cuando hice lo que pude por tu familia, fui condolido de su infeliz situación, y sabiendo que era tuya, cuya sola circunstancia sobraba para que, cumpliendo con los deberes de la amistad, hiciera en su obsequio lo posible. _Pero, después de todo, Dios es quien ha querido socorrerte_; dales a Su Majestad las gracias y no vuelvas a acordarte de lo pasado por vida de tus niños._

(My emphasis)

Harmonizing his sentiments with the will of God endows Periquillo with a vigorous power of discretion. Such discretion allows him to maintain himself in good company, and he is now capable of recognizing and befriending other “hombres de bien” whose companionship contributes to his sentimental perfection: “Jamás me equivoqué en este juicio, ni se equivocará en el mismo todo el que sepa hacer distinción entre sus dependientes, tratando a los hombres de bien con amor y particular confianza, seguro de que los hará mejores.”

A newly-discrete Periquillo acts in accordance with the propriety of sentiment even when the going gets tough, as when he shamefully but willingly reveals himself to _hombre de bien_ don Tadeo as the miscreant that had once had him imprisoned on false accusations of theft. Significantly, the result of Periquillo’s confession is not punishment or condemnation. Instead, the text presents a scene of sentimental reconciliation. Don Tadeo and Periquillo’s friendship is instead reinforced by just

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sentiment and fellow-feeling in a moment that also portends the potential for a greater social reconciliation through the unifying ties of a shared sentimental understanding:

Entonces yo, lleno de júbilo que no soy bastante a explicar, me abracé de don Tadeo, y el misántropo, satisfecho del buen proceder de su amigo y creyéndome algo bueno, se abrazó de nosotros, y en un nudo que expresaba el cariño y la confianza, se enlazaron nuestros brazos; nuestras lágrimas manifestaban los sentimientos de la gratitud, la reconciliación y la amistad, y un enfático silencio aclaraba elocuente las nobles pasiones de nuestras almas.275 (My emphasis)

These new friendships will endure throughout the rest of Periquillo’s life, and when this continuity is extended to the level of social metaphor, such friendship grounded in right action and right sentiment promises the possibility of establishing a lasting and benevolent social order grounded in the manifest action of Providence:

Estas amistades tuve y conservé cuando fui hombre de bien, y jamás hubo motivo de arrepentirme de ellas. Prueba evidente de que la buena y verdadera amistad no es tan rara como parece; pero ésta se halla entre los buenos, no entre los picaros, aduladores y viciosos.276

Rather than serving as a further temptation to error, Periquillo’s past misadventures are now converted into little more than a reminder prompting him to sympathize with those who suffer in error as he once did. This fundamental rearticulation of sentiment renders him perfectly sympathetic, both in his dealings with others and in his relationship to the reader:

He dicho que yo debí a Dios un alma sensible y me condolía de los males de mis semejantes en medio de mis locuras y extravíos. Según esto, fácil es concebir que en este momento me interesé desde luego en la suerte de aquellos infelices.277

Periquillo’s conversion into an hombre de bien brings the first phase of Lizardi’s literary project to a close, a fact heralded by Lizardi’s sudden introduction of himself into the story as a character in the novel’s final chapters. Lizardi himself is the character who will be entrusted with carrying out Periquillo’s wishes and preserving the account of his life for his children. Having passed all of the trials that the text could put in his way, the

novel uses the moments after Periquillo’s death to provide one last confirmation of his successful journey across the sentimental spectrum from unsympathetic to sympathetic. Periquillo’s final state of virtue is one so enlightened that his sentiments are perfectly united with those of the impartial spectator. This is why Lizardi can declare without hesitation that El Pensador and Periquillo may now be regarded as being one and the same:

Al escuchar al Pensador tales expresiones, lo marqué por mi amigo, y conociendo que era hombre de bien, y que si alguna vez erraba era más por un entendimiento perturbado que por una depravada voluntad, lo numeré entre mis verdaderos amigos, y él se granjeó de tal modo mi afecto que lo hice dueño de mis más escondidas confianzas, y tanto nos hemos amado que puedo decir que soy uno mismo con el Pensador y él conmigo.278

It only follows, then, that Periquillo’s last advice concerning his own death echoes the critique of the misuse of sentiment espoused throughout the novel by the author’s moralizing digressions:

Sentado yo a la cabecera, y rodeando su familia la cama, les dijo con la mayor tranquilidad: Esposa mía, hijos míos, no dudéis que siempre os he amado, y que mis desvelos se han consagrado constantemente a vuestra verdadera felicidad. Ya es tiempo que me aparte de vosotros para no vernos hasta el último día de los siglos. El Autor de la Naturaleza llama a las puertas de mi vida; Él me la dio cuando quiso, y cuando quiere cumple la Naturaleza su término. No soy árbitro de mi existencia; conozco que mi muerte se acerca, y muero muy conforme y resignado en la divina voluntad. Excusad el exceso de vuestro sentimiento.279 (My emphasis)

*El periquillo sarniento* responds to the social upheaval of early 19th century Mexico by attempting to formulate a sentimental groundwork capable of inculcating and sustaining an embryonic sense of national community. In this sense, the novel is most properly understood as a proto-national novel, one that anticipates the challenges that would obstruct future attempts at fashioning the sentimental community necessary for the establishment of the Liberal vision of an independent Republican future. But while *El Periquillo* contains the groundwork for the author’s sentimental didacticism, Lizardi’s project does not end with the death of Periquillo. The final section of this chapter examines how Lizardi’s other

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278 *Op. cit.* V:VIII; 921
279 *Op. cit.* V:VIII; 923
novels, *La Quijotita y su prima* and *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*, extend and complete Lizardi’s pedagogical project by moving his sentimental didacticism from theory to practice.
2.3 Instruction, Application, Final Examination: Revalorizing Lizardi’s Sentimental Didacticism

Having understood how *El periquillo sarniento* lays the groundwork for Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism, it now becomes possible to see how Lizardi builds on those foundations in the two novels that follow it. *La Quijotita y su prima* (1818-1819) and *Don Catrín de la fachenda* (completed 1820, published 1832) pick up where *El Periquillo* leaves off, and the emphasis of Lizardi’s later novels transitions from an experiment in sentimental understanding to a strictly-constrained model of applied sentimental pedagogy.

The movement from *El periquillo* to *La Quijotita* entails far more than a shift in style. The entire purpose of the work is radically distinct from that of *El periquillo*, and this point is ubiquitous from the very beginning of the novel, as Lizardi presents the motivation behind this work in a prologue composed of “una carta y su contestación.” The letter presented has been written to Lizardi by a female reader known only as *la curiosa*, and she wants to know why Lizardi hasn’t yet written a *Cotorra* to match *El periquillo* and educate the sentiments of female readers. *As la curiosa* makes clear, her interest in such a work was generated by the sentiments that she had encountered upon reading *El periquillo* and the way in which they excited her imagination:

> Estos generosos sentimientos, fruto de la lectura del Periquillo, han agitado mi fantasía y puesto la pluma en mi mano para suplicar a V., aunque sin mérito, que escriba una Cotorra o lo que quiera, según la idea que le presento […]\(^\text{280}\)

Lizardi agrees to write the novel as desired, but he is careful to clarify that this work will be far less ambitious than *El periquillo* in its structure, style, aims, and execution:

Si alguna persona compre esta obrita, creyendo hallar en ella invención singular, erudición escogida, método exacto, estilo brillante y todas aquellas bellezas que encantan y sorprenden en muchas obras del día, se llevará un buen chasco, sin duda alguna; pues solo encontrará una invención común, una erudición no rara, un método en partes incorrecto y un estilo sencillo y familiar.  

The shift in purpose that gives rise to this work has real consequences for the way in which *La Quijotita* functions and causes it to differ from *El periquillo* in a number of ways.  

Albeit with less frequency than in *El periquillo*, Lizardi still uses shock and awe techniques in *La Quijotita* to provoke a deep sentimental reaction, the most memorable being the “graciosa aventura de los perritos de leche” and the unforgettable brutal tale of an infant who dies after being pierced through the spine by a tie clip accidentally left in his crib by a negligent wetnurse.  

282 “— Pues, vaya, repetía el coronel; ¿qué te ha sucedido?— ¡Qué me ha de suceder! En malhora me encargó el señor cura de mi tierra que tragiera una carta en la calle de... de... quién sabe cómo se llama la calle; pero ello es que el rétulo de la carta era para la señora Lustrina...—Liduvina se llama mi ama, que no Lustrina, decía la vieja muy enojada; ¡habráse visto! ¿Qué hasta eso más es usted ponenombres? ¿o ya se metió a arzobispo para confirmarla?— Todo está güeno, decía el payo; ¿cómo dice que se llama su ama?— La señora doña María Liduvina... — Ascan, ansina, eso es, reponía Pascual; ansí se llamará, sino que como yo tengo mal güido se me había olvidado; pero el cuento es, señor amo, que yo jui a la casa y llegué, ¿y qué hago?, subo, entro de sopetón hasta la recámara, y me jallo á la señora Luterina dándole de mamar á estos dos cachorros, sin tener tantita caridá de un probé muchachito de tres meses que estaba tirado a sus pies en una saleyita, dando el pobre angelito unos gritos que hasta se desmorecía, y croque era de hambre, porque se chupaba las manitas y se revolcaba como culebra. Yo no me pude sofrenar, y ansí le dije á la señora: — ¿No juera mejor que le diera de mamar á ese probé niño, que al fin es cristiano como nosotros, y no á esos perros que tiene colgados de las chichis? ¡Si a mano viene será su hijo el muchacho!—Lumbre le quemaron en los lomos á la tal Lustrina o como se llama; porque poniéndose más colorada que un huachichil me dijo: — ¡Quítese do aquí el payo bruto, barbaján, majadero, entremetido! Y ¿qué le va o qué le viene que yo dé de mamar o no a mi hijo? Yo le dije: —Sí, me va, porque la leche que le da á los perros, más mejor se la diera a ese niño, y yo no he de consentir tal picardía. — Y diciendo esto, le arrebató los cachorros y me salí corriendo para cá en casa; pero en la calle me alcanzó esta maldita vieja, que á pura juerza quere que se los dé, y yo no se los quero dar, porque son más güenos para el rancho a conforme están de gordos y grandotes.” Fernández de Lizardi, José Joaquín. *La Quijotita y su prima*. Ed. María del Carmen Ruiz Castañeda. México: Editorial Porrúa, 2009. I: 3-4. Print.
283 “Llegó el médico y halló al niño todo torciéndose, en un continuo grito, muy renegrido y casi con la convulsión de una mortal alférea. El médico le aplicó lo más específico del arte; pero todo su empeño y habilidad, toda la eficacia de los remedios y el cuidado de la madre fueron inútiles. El niño murió entre terribles ansiás. Admirado el facultativo de la tenacidad del mal y deseoso de indagar la causa de su resistencia, hizo desnudar al niño, y le encontró en el espinazo clavado un fistol hasta la cabeza. ¡Cuál sería entonces su asombró y cuánto el sentimiento de la madre al saber que la pilmama, por una cruelísima venganza, había cometido semejante atroz infanticidio! Tú eres madre, yo lo dejo a tu consideración.” *Op. cit.* II:12
also present in *La Quijotita*, but in truncated form. These episodes are abbreviated in accordance with the more modest didactic goals to be realized in these later works. Furthermore, many of the devices used to render Periquillo sympathetic and to effect his sentimental transformation are simply not necessary in *La Quijotita*. Whereas Periquillo’s transformation requires a movement from the position of negative exemplarity to positive exemplarity, the potential complexity of character that such a transformation demands is nowhere to be found in *La Quijotita*.

*La Quijotita* does not require the complexity of character seen *El periquillo*. Periquillo’s transformation requires that his character possess the potential for both good and evil, or virtuous and vicious action, whereas in *La Quijotita* virtue is fully embodied in Pudenciana, and vice in her cousin Pomposita, the novel’s eponymous *Quijotita*.²⁸⁴ All of Pomposita’s vicious traits run counter to the hegemonically-determined image of feminine virtue that Lizardi forwards in the novel: she is selfish; full of false pride; abusive with those lower in social station; deluded and unthinking in her actions; greedy; narcissistic; selfish; demanding; and totally unwilling to accept advice, correction, or responsibility for her actions. On the other hand, Pudenciana manifests all the virtues absent from the character of Pomposita: she is trustworthy, humble, loyal, conscientious, magnanimous with people of all social strata, pious, moderate, generous, and attentive to the counsel of her parents.

This last point regarding Pudenciana’s willingness to accept and follow the counsel of her parents, and specifically that of her father, Rodrigo, is essential to understanding

²⁸⁴ As is readily apparent, the very names of Pomposita and Pudenciana already reveal the two girls true natures, with the first being unchecked in her arrogant self-absorption, and the latter being a paragon of propriety and decorum.
how *La Quijotita* differs from Lizardi’s first novel. To see why, one need only imagine what would have happened if Periquillo had followed the sound advice that his father attempts to give him from the very beginning: there would likely have been little or no conflict, and consequently, very little novel left to write.\(^{285}\) This is why *La Quijotita* ends up being far more streamlined than *El periquillo*. Its positive exemplar, Pudenciana, incarnates the misogynistic Cervantine maxim “la mujer honrada, pierna quebrada y en casa,” and never leaves the vigilance of her parent’s watchful eyes, thereby significantly diminishing her potential for the sort of adventures that promote sentimental growth and transformation in *El periquillo*. Those sorts of adventures are instead reserved for Pomposita, whose travails only demonstrate the woeful consequences of following an existential trajectory diametrically opposed to that trod by her virtuous cousin.

Unlike *El periquillo*, *La Quijotita* is not structured around the life and perspective of one central character. Lizardi has already formulated his educational theories in *El periquillo*, so its successor is instead a kind of handbook indicating the sort of comportment appropriate to every stage of life. It begins with the birth of the cousins, and the reader is immediately met with a litany of advice regarding the use of wet nurses, the necessity of breast feeding, and the importance of early education and proper upbringing. These lessons continue throughout the novel and offer guidance for all stages of life, including courtship, marriage, and harmonious life as a couple. In each of these instances, the parents of Pudenciana unfailingly direct her down the path of virtue. In contrary fashion, Pomposita’s parents unfailing get every situation wrong. Whereas this didactic division provides a stark

\(^{285}\) As proof of this, one need only note the brevity and lack of specificity with which the remainder of Periquillo’s life is addressed after his transformation into being an *hombre de bien*: “Yo me volví a San Agustín y viví tranquilo muchos años.” José Joaquin. *El periquillo sarniento*. Ed. Carmen Ruiz Barrionuevo. 2nd ed. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2008. V:VI; 896. Print.
sense of exemplarity by juxtaposing absolute virtue with absolute vice, this strategy also
precludes the kind of sentimental growth made possible in *El periquillo* because
Pudenciana is endowed with just sentiments from the very beginning and therefore never
commits any errors from which to learn and attain to a new sentimental understanding.
None of Pudenciana’s actions ever evince any reason for change or sentimental
transformation.

Rather than being the product of trial and error as in *El periquillo*, Lizardi utilizes
a more direct strategy in *La Quijotita y su prima* in order to accomplish the same sort of
sentimental union with the impartial spectator that it takes Periquillo a lifetime to achieve.
For starters, as opposed to what happens in Periquillo’s conflictive upbringing,
Pudenciana’s mother never defies her father, but rather serves as an echo chamber for his
opinions and instructions. In this way, the author precludes the sort of maternal
interference that Lizardi holds responsible for Periquillo’s initial sentimental corruption.
Lizardi’s tactic here is two-fold. He first attempts to cloak Matilde, Pudenciana’s mother,
with an aura of illusory independence. Matilde is constantly reminded by her husband that
she should not follow his reasoning blindly. Instead, he insists that she embrace his counsel
only after its truth has been demonstrated by appeals to both authority and her own
experience:

> Mas cuando la cosa que nos dicen se halla, además de confirmada por la razón y la
experiencia, recomendada por la autoridad de los sabios, entonces seremos insensatos o locos si
queremos resistirnos a su creencia. Por ejemplo: si yo quisiera persuadirte de que no se debe castigar
taos niños con dureza, con venganza ni frecuencia, porque tal modo sólo sirve de hacerlos estúpidos,
sinvergüenzas e incorregibles, y esto quisiera yo que lo creyeras, sólo porque soy coronel y tu
marido, sin darte otra razón, sería una necedad mía, y tú no deberías creerme, si tenías otras ideas
que te convencieran de lo contrario; pero si después de haberte señalado la causa de lo que te digo,
por la razón y por la experiencia, añadiera las autoridades de un Cicerón, de un san Jerónimo, de un
Blanchard, de un Fenelón y de otros varios, que van conformes con que el tratar á los niños con una
imprudente severidad, no sólo es inútil, sino pernicioso; en este caso, digo, ya no tienes ningún
fundamento para dudar de mi opinión, porque la ves corroborada por la razón, la experiencia y la
autoridad. Entonces ya me debes creer, y abandonar como boberías las máximas de tus venerables
tías, reírte de los refranes vulgares, estar entendida de que ni la letra, ni la labor ni nada entran con rigor, mejor que con la suavidad y el cariño, del que se debe usar más liberalmente con las niñas, en atención a su compleción más delicada, a su pudor y timidez.

Y descansando en estos racionales sentimientos, procurarás desde luego educar a Pudenciana según mi modo, sin sujetarse a otro alguno contrario. ¿Qué te parece?286

This illusion, however, is belied by the fact that Matilde’s husband Rodrigo’s opinion turns out to be uniformly correct in all cases. Moreover, Rodrigo’s judgment is still accepted as an authority even when Matilde’s conversations with him indicate that she is and continues to be of a different mind. It follows then that, in the house of the Linares family, an appeal to authority is in truth an appeal to Rodrigo’s understanding, and to avail oneself of experience is actually to embrace the patriarch’s interpretation of what is happening.287

This allows for a consolidation of sentiment to be effected within two simple steps.

The first step in this process is the total subjugation of Matilde’s understanding and sentiment to that of Rodrigo. This subjugation is reinforced by an argument, forwarded by Matilde and roundly endorsed by Rodrigo, that asserts that women are naturally inferior to men, and that this fact justifies the husband always having the final say in any dispute regarding their marriage or their children. Rodrigo tries to attenuate this claim by insisting that this natural inferiority is corporeal and not spiritual, a possibility that provides little solace and no alternative to Rodrigo’s assertion of masculine authority:

—Pues oye, prosiguía Matilde. Ya entiendo que las mujeres nacimos sujetas a los hombres con una dependencia forzosa, que aunque dictada por la naturaleza y autorizada por las leyes, no nos es indecorosa como dices; pero ahora pregunto: ¿por qué los hombres por la mayor parte nos han tratado con tanta altanería y nos han sujetado a sus caprichos, valiéndose sólo de nuestra natural debilidad, a pesar de conocer que somos iguales a ellos en el alma?

—Porque los hombres, respondía el coronel, que así lo han hecho, los más han sido unos bárbaros, que o no han escuchado o han despreciado los clamores de la naturaleza, y desentendiéndose de estos innatos sentimientos, se han sabido aprovechar de la imbecilidad de las mujeres para oprimirlas; y entiende que bajo el nombre de bárbaros no señalo solamente a aquellos gentiles paganos, que sin idea de verdadera religión, justicia ni sociedad, han procedido de este


287 In discussing the way in which Rodrigo fills in the authorizing position of locus of truth in the novel, it is interesting to note that he, like Periquillo’s decisive benefactor in Manila, also bears the rank of colonel.
The novel reinforces Rodrigo’s authority through an appeal to both natural and spiritual law. Instead of being based in opinion, Rodrigo resituates the notion of female debility as a putative “fact of nature.”

Lizardi again becomes a character in his own novel, but Rodrigo’s usurpation of the position of impartial spectator severely diminishes Lizardi’s potential influence in the text. Instead of directing the family or offering advice, Lizardi is instead placed in the role of student and observer, with Rodrigo being his trusted friend and tutor. It is not necessary for Lizardi, the chronicler of the family’s life, to intervene and attempt to rearticulate Pudenciana’s sentiments because those very sentiments are totally dominated by the ideal sentiments of Rodrigo, the novel’s ‘impartial’ spectator.

Con este convencimiento, abre tu corazón a tu padre y a tu madre sin ninguna reserva; deposita en nuestro seno todos tus pensamientos, tus sentimientos, tus deseos; nada nos ocultes, ni aun tus faltas y flaquezas, bien persuadida de que nunca abusaremos de tu confianza filial, que nunca contestaremos a tu franqueza con amargura ni severidad, sino siempre con una ternura verdaderamente paternal, y que dirigiremos tus pasos con tanta bondad como celo.

¿Has entendido, hija?289

In a device similar to that employed in Matilde’s cursory interrogation of Rodrigo, the text uses Pudenciana’s words to perform a similar prosopopoeia that confirms that she too has learned the necessary sentimental lessons and is therefore in agreement with Rodrigo:

[...]. Y ahora conozco que con razón las leyes son más rigurosas con las mujeres que con los hombres, porque éstas agravian e injurian al marido y perjudican a la prole. ¡Ojalá que todas las mujeres casadas entendieran bien estas cosas, quizá así no se prostituirían tan fácilmente!
—Yo me alegro que pienses de ese modo, dijo el coronel, y apreciaré que siempre cultives esos tan cristianos y honrados sentimientos. 290

288 Op. cit. IV; 42
289 Op. cit. XIX; 189
290 Op. cit. XXIV; 227
Lizardi’s auxiliary role in the text is affirmed when his character is bizarrely dispensed with in the closing lines of the novel. At the end of the La Quijotita, Lizardi becomes a mouthpiece that reiterates Rodrigo’s advice to his daughter after the father’s death. Having warned the reader one last time that not following those recommendations ruined the lives of Pomposa and her mother Eufrosina, he clumsily removes himself from the novel: “Yo, que había visto en la familia de Pomposa tan sensibles desengaños de lo que es el mundo, no queriendo experimentarlo más, me di por muerto.”291 This strange final line sheds light on the overall didactic thrust of the three novels here discussed. Because it occurs at the end of the novel, the ramifications of Lizardi’s disappearance from La Quijotita y su prima are necessarily limited ramifications in that work. Nevertheless, the repercussions of that disappearance have a decisive impact on Lizardi’s final novel, Don Catrín de la Fachenda.

The impact of Lizardi’s disappearance in Don Catrín is unmistakable for any reader of the first two novels. That impact is first felt at the literal beginning of the work, or to be more exact, in the absence where a beginning would typically be expected. Lizardi utilized the tradition of the prologue to great effect in El periquillo and La Quijotita. As previously mentioned in this investigation, the front matter of the Periquillo includes two distinct prologues, one attributed directly to Lizardi and another whose authorship is attributed to the hombre de bien Pedro Sarmiento. The first prologue explains the structure of the work and allows the narrator to comically riff on the parodic style of prologue already made classic by Cervantes in the prologue to the first tome of the Don Quijote. The second prologue transmits the elder Periquillo’s intentions for the work and redoubles his

291 Op. cit. XXXIX; 349
insistence on the novel’s didactic objectives. The prologue to *La Quijotita* similarly attempts to justify the nature of the work. *La Quijotita*’s prologue presents a guide to how the novel should be read and specifies its intended audience.

None of this occurs in the case of *Don Catrín*. The novel has no prologue whatsoever. *Don Catrín* begins without further ado as the eponymous reveals in his own words precisely what makes the story of his life so different, and in his eyes superior, to the tales cited in *El periquillo*:

No, no se gloriará en lo de adelante mi compañero y amigo el Periquillo Sarniento, de que su obra halló tan buena acogida en este reino; porque la mía, descargada de episodios inoportunos, de digresiones fastidiosas, de moralidades cansadas, y reducida a un solo tomito en octavo, se hará desde luego más apreciable y más legible; andará no sólo de mano en mano, de faltriquera en faltriquera, y de almohadilla en almohadilla, sino de ciudad en ciudad, de reino en reino, de nación en nación, y no parará sino después que se hayan hecho de ella mil y mil impresiones en los cuatro ángulos de la tierra.

Surprisingly, there is some truth to don Catrín’s description of the work: the “fastidious digressions” and “tired moralities” so frequently encountered in the *Periquillo* are almost entirely missing from this novel. And there is good reason that this should be the case:

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292 It is important to observe that, as happens in *La Quijotita*, don Catrín’s very name already serves as a summation of his character.


294 There are, in truth, only four principal manifestations of anything like the didactic digressions or moral interventions of the *Periquillo* to be found in *Don Catrin*. There are the brief allusions to the sound advice offered by one of Catrín’s uncles, a priest, whose counsel is for the most part instantly mocked and dismissed by Catrín. Additionally, other occasional interventions occur, but they stem from the public at large, whose sentiments demand a response to Catrín’s idiocy. There is also the brief intervention of the doctor that concludes the work, but at that point Catrín is already dead, and rather than offering the possibility of sentimental re-articulation as in the *Periquillo*, his words only serve as a final affirmation of the utter condemnation and unrepentance of Catrín. In fact, one of the few moments that bears any resemblance to the sentimental interventions of the *Periquillo* is voiced by a military man, whose name, Modesto, perfectly describes his character and also provides a direct link with the *Quijotita*, as Modesto is also the name of Pudenciana’s perfectly virtuous husband: “Oyes, Tremendo: el cadete nuevo tiene mucha razón para confundirse al oír una plática tan escandalosa como la que sostuvo Taravilla, y la tendrá mayor si se hace cargo de los desatinos que has dicho, y cuya malicia tú mismo ignoras; pero yo que, aunque joven y militar, no soy de la raza de los Catrines y Tremendos, debo decirle que hace muy bien en abrigar los cristianos y honrados sentimientos que le ha inspirado el bueno de su tío. Sí amigo don Catrín; entienda usted que la carrera militar no es el camino real de los infiernos. Un cadete, un oficial, es un caballero, y si no lo es por su cuna, ya el rey lo hizo por sus méritos o porque fue de su agrado; pero no es caballero ni lo parecerá jamás el truhán, el libertino, el impío, el fachenda ni el baladrón. No, amigo: la carrera militar es muy ilustre; sus
*Don Catrín* is a work almost entirely constituted by negative exemplarity. Moral interventions are few and far between because they would be superfluous in this final stage of Lizardi’s didactic project. The necessary sentimental re-working has already been accomplished in *El periquillo*, and the means of forwarding it have been established in *La Quijotita*. It is only because of this prior attention to sentiment that Lizardi can now allow for a more polyvalent usage of one the key words of his text: *hombre de bien*.

The author of *El periquillo* is extremely preoccupied with establishing a definition of the *hombre de bien* because that term represents the title to which Periquillo attains and the ultimate goal of the novel’s sentimental didacticism. That achievement adds the final requisite element to Lizardi’s proto-national literary project. The term *hombre de bien* functions differently in *Don Catrín* because each of those novels represents distinct phases of the development of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism. As long as the reader, like Periquillo, has attained to the sentimental disposition advocated in the first novel, their discrete perceptions will have no trouble recognizing the incredible irony of Catrín’s ridiculous claims regarding the virtues of *calaveras* like himself:

—Los catrines —respondí yo—, no puede ser, padre mío; porque los catrines son hombres de bien, hombres decentes y, sobre todo, nobles y caballeros. Ellos honran las sociedades con su presencia, alegran las mesas con sus dichos, divierten las tertulias con sus gracias, edifican a las niñas con su doctrina, enseñan a los idiotas con su erudición, hacen circular el dinero de los avaros con su viveza, aumentan la población en cuanto pueden, sostienen el lustre de sus ascendientes con su conducta y, por último, donde ellos están no hay tristeza, superstición *ni* fanatismo, porque son marciales, corrientes y despreocupados.295

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Although Catrín prides himself on being both a *calavera* and an *hombre de bien*, to a discrete eye grounded in proper sentiment, his words cannot help but reveal the contradictory and untenable nature of his claims, and this despite the fact that Catrín himself is perfectly oblivious to his own manifest idiocy:

Delante de un catrín verdadero nada es criminal, nada escandaloso, nada culpable; y en realidad, padre mío, ya ve usted el provecho que debe inducir en cualquier concurrencia un joven de éstos (y más si tiene buena figura) bien presentado, alegre, sabio y nada escrupuloso. El no se admira de la trampa que hizo Pedro, de lo usurero que es Juan, de lo embustero que es Antonio, ni de ninguna cosa de esta vida.

Lleno siempre el legítimo catrín de amor hacia sus semejantes, a todos los disculpa, y aun condesciende con su modo de pensar. Al que roba, lo defiende con su necesidad; a la coquetilla, con la miseria humana; al que desacredita a todo el mundo, con que es su genio; al ebrio, con que es alegria; al provocativo, con que es valor, y aun al hereje lo sostiene, alegando la diferencia de opiniones que cada día se aplauden y desprecian. De manera, que el catrín verdadero, el que depende de esta noble raza, ni es tan interesable que se dé mala vida por el cielo, ni tan cobarde que se prive de darse buena vida por temor de un infierno que no ha visto; y así sigue las máximas de sus compañeros y satisface sus pasiones según y como le parece,\(^{296}\) o como puede, sin espantarse con los sermones de los frailes, que tiene buen cuidado de no oír nunca, ni con los libros tristes que no lee.

Así es que el catrín se hace un hombre amable dondequiera. Las muchachas le aprecian, los jóvenes le estiman, los viejos le temen y los hipócritas le huyen. Vea usted, padre mío, cuan útiles son los señores catrines, de quienes tan mal concepto tiene el señor.\(^{297}\)

Catrín’s words only deceive himself, and the public is quick to counteract his self-deception, as seen in the response by a *viejo* to the above-cited harangue:

Como estos arbitrios no alcanzan sino cuando más para pasar el día, y el todo de los catrines consiste en estar algo decentes, en bailar un valsé, en ser aduladores, facetos y necios, aprovechan estas habilidades para estafar a éste, engañar al otro y pegársela al que pueden. Y así el santo Parián los habilita de cáscara con que alucinar a los tontos, o de trapos con que persuadir a los que creen que el que viste con alguna decencia es hombre de bien. Pero, después de todo, el catrín es una paradoja indefinible, porque es caballero sin honor, rico sin renta, pobre sin hambre, enamorado sin dama, valiente sin enemigo, sabio sin libros, cristiano sin religión y tonto a toda prueba.\(^{298}\)

The *viejo*’s response is rather mild compared to the general response of the public to don Catrín’s shameless displays of vice. The public’s reactions will become more and more

\(^{296}\) This line perfectly illustrates the differences between *El periquillo* and *Don Catrín*. Whereas in *El periquillo* the author demonstrates an unwavering concern for sentimental articulation as a mediating factor between the impulse of the passions and their sentimental canalization, *Don Catrín* presents a different model where the impulse of the passions becomes directly commensurate with their satisfaction without necessitating interpretation or sentimental mediation.

\(^{297}\) *Op. cit.* VIII: 111

intense, until even Catrín’s imagination can no longer put a favorable spin on the insults levied against him:

—Por lo que hace a mí —añadió el conde— yo le estimaré que no vuelva usted a poner un pie en mi casa. Mucho siento que me haya hecho esta única visita, y que nos haya dicho quién es tan sin rebozo. No, no quiero que honren mi mesa semejantes caballeros, que me instruyan tales maestros, ni que me edifiquen tan calificados católicos; y así, pues, se ha concluido la merienda, tome usted su sombrero y déjenos en paz.

Todos los concurrentes, luego que oyeron producirse al conde de este modo, fuérase por adularle o por lo que ustedes quieran, comenzaron a maltratarme, casi a empujones me echaron de la sala, y un lacayo maldito por poco me hace rodar las escaleras. Y no contentos con hacerme sufrir tales baldones, sin acordarse de la nobleza de mi casa, ya al salir a la calle me echaron una olla de agua hirviendo, con lo que me pusieron cual se deja entender.

Because the appropriate sentimental disposition is presupposed to be in play here, it is unnecessary for Catrín to disavow his vicious life and convert at the end of the tale. And indeed, the moribund Catrín remains unrepentant and continues to insist that his life is both exemplary and worthy of the greatest fame until the bitter end:

El practicante admira mi talento, compadece mi estado y me da consejos. Ya me cansa; quiere que haga las protestas de la fe; que me arrepienta de mi vida pasada, como si no hubiera sido excelente; que pida perdón de mis escándalos, como si en un caballero de mi clase fuera bien visto semejante abatimiento; quiere que perdone a los que me han agraviado; eso se queda para la gente vil; el vengar los agravios personales es un punto de honor, y no hay medio entre tomar satisfacción de una injuria o pasar por un infame remitiéndola.

Quiere este mi amigo tantas cosas, que yo no puedo concedérselas. Quiere que haga una confesión general ya boqueando. ¿Habéis oído majadería semejante?

Don Catrín dies shortly after making these final, extravagant claims, and Lizardi then adds the final touch to the work by inverting the usage of the same device employed after the death of Periquillo. Whereas at the end of the first novel all of the surviving hombres de bien offer sonnets celebrating Periquillo’s life and confirming his final state of grace, the sonnet that concludes Don Catrín ultimately condemns the life that Catrín has led and

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300 These lines on the embrace of vengeance and denial of forgiveness echo in inverted fashion the words of the priest who corrects Periquillo regarding his vengeance against Juan Largo.

301 *Op. cit.* XIV: 144
frames his tenure on earth as a warning to anyone that might be tempted to imitate his constant errors:

Aquí yace el mejor de los Catrines,
el noble y esforzado caballero,
el que buscaba honores y dinero
en los cafés, tabernas y festines.

Jamás sus pensamientos fueron ruines,
ni quiso trabajar, ni ser portero;
mas fue vago, ladrón y limosnero.
¡Bellos principios! [Excelentes fines!

Esta vez nos la echó sin despedida,
dejándonos dudosos de su suerte:
él mismo se mató, fue su homicida.

Con su mal proceder, Lector, advierte que el que como Catrín pasa la vida, también como Catrín tiene la muerte.302

Having seen the three developmental stages of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism, it is now possible to summarize the different functions of each stage of that development. Although it may first appear that the differences between the works are simply a result of Lizardi’s ongoing refinement of literary technique, it should now be apparent that this stylistic evolution is only an epiphenomenal indication of the progression of the author’s didactic project. This is why Lizardi’s works steadily decrease in size, with La Quijotita being only a third the size of El periquillo, and Don Catrín requiring only a ninth of the space of the first novel to accomplish its aims. It is crucial not to miss the qualitative reason for these quantitative differences: El periquillo has to be longer because the sentimental re-articulation necessary to carry Periquillo from being wholly insensible and unsympathetic to a sympathetic and exemplarily virtuous hombre de bien requires far more work and development. La Quijotita takes up less space because the sentiments presented

therein have already been amply demonstrated in the foregoing novel. The only question in La Quijotita is how to properly apply the sentimental insights of the first novel. The adventures in Don Catrín require the least space, since its aims are far more modest than those of the other two works: the last novel is merely a final warning that demonstrates what awaits those who fail to learn the lessons of El periquillo and apply them in the fashion presented in La Quijotita. That the success of each stage of this project is assumed in each new novel is also reflected in the fact that mentions of the term sentiment in La Quijotita decrease to roughly a third of what they were in El periquillo, and appear only once (in the speech given by Modesto) in Lizardi’s final novel.

An awareness of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism allows us to understand the didactic purpose of each of his novels. Those three novels represent a threefold process of sentimental education: El periquillo instructs readers by rearticulating their sentiments, La Quijotita applies the sentimental lessons El periquillo, and Don Catrín administers a final examination of the sentimental lessons propounded and practiced in the first two novels. Lizardi’s three novels provide the basic elements needed for the harmonious functioning of society in spite of the whirlwind changes and misadventures that rise up to meet the Mexican nation.

Understanding sentimental didacticism also makes it possible to account for why Polič-Bobič and Yáñez both err in their estimations by considering El periquillo sarniento in isolation from the rest of the author’s works. As it turns out, the differences between their approaches and their subsequent claims notwithstanding, both critics pass over the importance of sentiment, albeit in two different ways.
Blinded by patriotism and the desire to signal *El periquillo* as the founding work of the Mexican national literary tradition, Yáñez remains unaware of the mechanisms used by Lizardi to provoke and produce the very sort of social sentiment that he rightly recognizes in the work. Likewise, Polič-Bobič erroneously deems the author’s didactic digressions to be superfluous and counterproductive in a way that detracts from the value of the work because she neglects their sentimental function in Lizardi’s didactic project. Lizardi’s goal is not to provide an accurate, or verisimilar representation of Mexican reality. Instead, the author is trying to bring out a deeper truth underlying that reality. Lizardi’s objective is not to show the world as it is, but rather to show what the world might become after his didactic project is put into practice. Far from being a failed project (Polič-Bobič) or the culmination of the Mexican spirit (Yáñez), *El periquillo* is better understood as the first step in a didactic project meant to facilitate the creation and dissemination of a new idea of sentimental community.

The sophistication of Lizardi’s sentimental didacticism puts the lie to the author’s supposed intellectual backwardness. Even if Lizardi was personally unaware of them, the parallels visible between the sentimental function of his literary innovations and the radical interpretation of sentiment in David Hume and Adam Smith should suffice to put any claim that Lizardi remains an essentially pre-modern thinker to rest. All of these reasons justify Lizardi’s position as a precursor of Mexican national literature. *El periquillo sarniento* may not be the first or the best Mexican novel, but its proto-national attempt at unifying the sentimental community nonetheless signifies the first shot in the battle for an independent national culture. It also inaugurates a movement toward a didactic canon of
national literature that would be continued by the inheritors of Lizardi’s ambitious literary project of sentimental didacticism.
Chapter 3

Ignacio Ramírez: Sentiment, Nature and Necromancy

“Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.”
– Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Axiom 109

“RECEDANT VETERA, NOVA SINT OMNIA”
– Thomas Aquinas, Sacris Solemnis

“Me informaron que el señor Ramírez era un apóstata, ateo y precursor del exterminio de la sociedad conservadora y decente”
– Soledad Mateos Losada, spouse of Ignacio Ramírez

“La silla presidencial cuenta con un embrujo ancestral desde los tiempos de Iturbide y de López de Santa Anna, que consiste en que si un hombre, por algún designio divino o infernal, se sienta en ella, de inmediato se convierte en un afamado y consumado patriota. Pero de todos modos, los que se sientan en ella, ¡siempre acaban locos!
– Ignacio Ramírez, El Simio Dictador

“Nature, Nature is the great Cry against the Rules. We must be judg’d by Nature, say they, not at all considering that Nature is an equivocal Word, whose Sense is too various and Extensive ever to be able to appeal to since it leave it to the Fancy and Capacity of every one to decide what is according to Nature and what not."
– Charles Gildon

“Rien n’est beau que le vrai”
– Nicolas Boileau
3.0 Introduction: A Nation between Heaven and Hell

Ignacio Ramírez was the most radical apostle of the Mexican Reform movement and master of the young Liberals that would come to power in the second half of the 19th Century. While the majority of the leaders of the Independence movement were of *criollo* descent, Ramírez was unmistakably mestizo.³⁰³ His father, José Lino Ramírez, was criollo, but his mother, Ana María Guadalupe Sinforosa Calzada, came from a pure indigenous line tracing back to Aztec and Tarascan royalty.³⁰⁴ As was the case for Lizardi, the pen was Ramírez’s weapon of choice, and he disseminated his ideas through provocative articles that appeared in a wide variety of newspapers, many of which he himself founded, funded, and edited.³⁰⁵ Ramírez, however, would surpass Lizardi in the number of times

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³⁰³ This has led some to mistakenly allege that Ramírez, like Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz, was of indigenous descent rather than being racially mestizo.

³⁰⁴ Arellano, Emilio. *Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: memorias prohibidas*. Mexico City: Planeta, 2009. 22. Print. As further confirmation of Ramírez’s Amerindian inheritance, Arellano provides the following information along with a fascinating prophetic anecdote: “Hasta allá fueron a parar Cuauhtémoc y su séquito de nobles, porque según decían los gachupines, iban a encontrar un tesoro legendario cerca de la Hibueras. Al desesperarse los conquistadores porque no le podían sacar la información a Cuauhtémoc, por la simple y sencilla razón que no era real la versión del fabuloso tesoro, Cortés ordenó que lo atormentaran quemándole los pies, y con hierros candentes le marcaron varias partes del cuerpo. Entre los nobles que estaban también prisioneros presenciando el tormento de su señor, se encontraba Ahuelitoc Cuitlateca Ixaca, señor azteca y el ancestro más remoto de la familia materna del Nigromante, de apellido Calzada, bautizados así por los españoles debido a que eran los señores de la población de Tacuba en donde había una calzada y un acueducto que desaparecieron en el siglo XIX. Ese noble señor y sacerdote supremo del templo dedicado a la Tonantzin-Coatlicue en el antiguo pueblo de Tlacopan, ahora conocido como Tacuba, se enfrentó a Cortés diciéndole que todo lo que le hacía a su señor eran viléezas dignas de un asesino vulgar y no propias de un gran conquistador. El gachupín, indignado por las palabras del señor de Tlacopan, le mandó quemar brazos y piernas. Ahuelitoc Ixaca Calzada, sacerdote con gran poder entre los dioses antiguos y los espíritus ancestrales, maldijo a Hernán Cortés [...]. Hernán Cortés, indignado por lo que le dijo el señor de Tlacopan, le mandó cortar los pies y los brazos, yeccan tlaxeyan. Ahuelitoc Ixaca Calzada duró poco tiempo en agonía y cuando expirió con Cuauhtémoc, los indígenas sobrevivientes dijeron que movió la tierra con fuerza – *tlatatzin*, *amamaniztli*-nite-tekoyoualitzli—, hubo relámpagos en el cielo y las bestias salvajes aullaron fuertemente.” (Arellano, Emilio. *La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante*. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 153-154. Print.).

that he was imprisoned for his radical ideas and oppositional politics. Ramírez’s impact extended beyond the domain of literary practice to include the execution of public offices and the creation and advocacy of legislation. The thinker’s incomparable vigor and activity led Altamirano to dub him “una verdadera ametralladora de decretos y leyes.” True to this description, Ramírez would go on to hold four cabinet positions simultaneously during the Juárez government. Ramírez would even engage in physical combat for the sake of the nation, although it was clear to those around him that his prodigious intellectual gifts were his most powerful weapons. As an example of that fact, Arellano notes that, having been wounded in battle, Ramírez was given a printing press by General Pedro Hinojosa along with the following instructions: “Escribir en todos los confines de la patria artículos incendiarios que inflamaran el patriotismo en el pueblo mexicano.”

Ramírez held the traditional liberal conviction that education was the best means of shaping society, and his entire body of thought demonstrates a persistent pedagogical focus. He founded the Instituto Científico y Literario de Toluca, required that former

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Arellano records that, having been imprisoned following the popular triumph of the Liberal position in a debate sustained between Ramírez in his own Don Simplicio and Lucas Alamán in his El Tiempo, Ramírez celebrated his birthday alongside Guillermo Prieto and two other prisoners. The birthday gift smuggled in to Ramírez is revealing: the package contained “tres panes de dulce y un envoltorio de papel que guardaba una libreta con ensayos y escritos de su ideólogo favorito, el verdadero iniciador de la reforma, Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, fechados en 1823, un documento que los descendientes de Guillermo Prieto custodiaron por décadas” Arellano, Emilio. Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: memorias prohibidas. Mexico City: Planeta, 2009. 45-46. Print.


ecclesiastical properties be transformed into libraries, and helped to establish the first educational scholarships for indigenous children.\footnote{Ignacio Manuel Altamirano is perhaps the most famous beneficiary one of those scholarships.} He vehemently advocated for the education of women, which he saw as one of the most important elements of true political reform and social evolution.\footnote{The following passage, originally printed in 1878 in \textit{El Siglo Diez y Nueve} and recovered through Arellano’s research, demonstrates the paramount importance that Ramírez attributed to the education of women: “Los abusos de la sociedad conservadora y del clero para con nuestras mujeres han sido atroces, pero la educación y su superación personal las hará descollar en la vida nacional y lo que el hombre no pudo hacer con la fuerza bruta, la mujer con su inteligencia natural lo logrará. Por ello insisto hasta el final de mi existencia: dénle la oportunidad a esos seres privilegiados de participar como las preceptoras de la patria y sustituyamos los bordados de sus manos con unas plumas nuevas. […] La sociedad quedará asombrada de cuán precisas son en el análisis de la realidad política de la nación, no en vano en silencio gobiernan los hogares del mundo desde hace más de veinte siglos. El hombre temeroso de sus capacidades la condenó a una prisión permanente que se reducía a las labores del hogar y a la familia. Pero las generaciones futuras de mujeres arrollarán con inusual energía a lo largo de toda la patria las labores más diversas y quién sabe si hasta lleguen a gobernar las tierras y naciones que los hombres perdieron por ambición o por su notoria incompetencia. Yo hasta el final lucharé por su reivindicación y por eliminar de sus frentes el estigma de pasionarias, y en vez de aprenderse los empalagosos e inútiles versos de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, es mejor que comiencen a dominar las leyes nacionales y con su brillante inteligencia conquisten el lugar que la funesta religión y los conservadores les despojaron. Señoras mías, el tiempo apremia.” \textit{Op. cit.} 15.} Ramírez was also responsible for setting up the first school in Mexico for the deaf and the mute and creating a lottery system of educational scholarships for economically disadvantaged students.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Op. cit.} 58.} Driven to put his theories into practice, Ramírez also wrote the first general education textbook to be distributed nationally in Mexico.\footnote{For more information on Ramírez’s brief encounter with José Martí, cf. Arellano, Emilio. \textit{Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: memorias prohibidas}. Mexico City: Planeta, 2009. 132. Print. For Ramírez’s complex and indirect relationship with Victor Hugo, cf. \textit{Op. cit.} 98. Print; and \textit{La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante}. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 97-98. Print.}

Accomplishments of the sort just mentioned and Ramírez’s masterfully acerbic provocations work in tandem to produce a historical image of the thinker that is at once obscure and larger-than-life. His reputation extended across the world and had reached the ears of José Martí and Victor Hugo.\footnote{For Ramírez’s brief encounter with José Martí, cf. Arellano, Emilio. \textit{Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: memorias prohibidas}. Mexico City: Planeta, 2009. 132. Print. For Ramírez’s complex and indirect relationship with Victor Hugo, cf. \textit{Op. cit.} 98. Print; and \textit{La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante}. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 97-98. Print.} A statue bearing his image was the first to be placed in the Paseo de la Reforma, and the provocative use of his words and image incited riots,
particularly among the fervently Catholic citizenry, as recently as 1948. Because of the distortions implicit in representing a thinker of Ramírez’s magnitude, the actual substance of his thought is often omitted. The emphasis placed on the more spectacular elements of Ramírez’s biography, and particularly his publicly-avowed atheism, is in part due to conscious and unwavering provocations on the part of the thinker. Nevertheless, merely adhering to principles as radical as those embraced by el Nigromante would in itself have guaranteed him an equal share of notoriety and infamy in the society of his day. Ramírez’s steely adherence to principle motivated his pursuit of the publication and dissemination of his ideas of reform and revolution and played a determinate role in his overall project.

As already mentioned, most studies of Ramírez begin with a consideration of his atheism. This is generally done by making reference to a speech, given on October 18th, 1836, as a part of Ramírez’s solicitation of membership in the Academia de Letrán.315 For reasons made clear by its introductory affirmation, “No hay Dios, los seres de la naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos,” that speech provoked considerable scandal in the social life of the capital.316 His most recent biographer, Emilio Arellano, tells us that that discourse earned him some impressive new monikers, including “Jacobin, Freemason, unbeliever,

316 The intensity of scandal that was provoked by Ramírez’s words can be understood when the declaration of one of his most outspoken opponents, a priest named Clemente de Jesús Munguía alias “el demonio rojo”, is taken into account: “Era aquel un tiempo en que tener ‘garantías individuales’ o ‘creencias y formas de gobierno diferentes’ se consideraba un gran pecado, como afirmó el ‘demonio rojo’, el clérigo Clemente de Jesús Munguía, que incitó al pueblo de México a rechazar la Constitución de 1857.” Arellano, Emilio. Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: Memorias prohibidas. Mexico: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 2009. 42-43. Print.
and heretic.”\footnote{Arellano, Emilio. \textit{La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante}. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 13. Print.} Arellano has argued that Ramírez’s most famous pseudonym, “the necromancer,” also originates out of this moment.\footnote{Arellano, Emilio. \textit{Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante: Memorias prohibidas}. Mexico: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 2009. 43. Print.} But even if all of the defamatory charges levied at Ramírez had in fact been true, they would in their aggregate still be insufficient to account for the impact of his thought and reform projects on the history and socio-political reality of Mexico.

This chapter of my investigation delves into the dark corners of Ramírez’s thought and sheds light on the sentimental side of the Necromancer’s attempts to harness language and literature as a force for unity in the national community. Understanding Ramírez’s place in the development of national literature and sentimental didacticism requires that we first follow the path of the Necromancer himself by banishing the shadows that distort the image of this titanic thinker. Section 4.1 begins that process by debunking the traditional etiology of Ramírez’s most famous moniker, \textit{El Nigromante}. That same moniker then prompts analysis of the stakes implicit in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century nation-building projects’ attempts to resuscitate the body politic after the “death of God.” The death of God casts a long shadow, and section 4.2 examines how Ramírez fought to keep that shadow from enveloping the possibility of progress by reconceptualizing the notion of Nature. Section
4.3 explores the confrontations that Ramírez’s materialist, voluntarist conception of Nature provoked with his rival Gabino Barreda, a positivist thinker and one of the most significant contributors to the nation’s institutional growth. Ramírez’s radical reformation contests the absolutism of the positive approach that would eventually coopt the Liberal project for the nation, transforming it into the decadent authoritarianism of the Porfiriato. Section 4.4 traces the ontological origins of Ramírez’s critique of “scientifically-administrated politics” and his advocacy of freedom of will and of all forms of association. The consequences of that insistence on freedom and mutualism for Ramírez’s physiological account of language are presented in section 4.5. Section 4.6 continues analysis of that physiological account of language and shows how Ramírez also forwards what he holds to be a physiological account of aesthetics, both generally and with regard to literature in particular. This section demonstrates how Ramírez’s physiological account of sentiment connects with his theorization of literature to reveal new avenues of cultivating sentimental community and fellow-feeling. In an echo of the sentimental theories of Hume, Smith, and Lizardi, that connection revolves around the unique possibility of rearticulating sentiment through the sign, an idea that leads Ramírez to rethink the capabilities of literature. An analysis of Ramírez’s reconceptualization of the notion and possibilities of literature is presented in section 4.7, while section 4.8 shows how Ramírez proposes to revive Mexico’s culture without sacrificing its uniqueness through a selective and critical re-appropriation of the cultural phenomena of other national traditions. Section 4.9 concludes by bringing the previous moments of the investigation together and revealing the pedagogical structure elaborated in the diverse domains of Ramírez’s thought. In this way, the once obscure destiny of literature envisioned by Ramírez is finally brought to light.
In reassessing the traditional image and legacy of the Necromancer, this investigation also broadens our understanding of what is at first glance an inconsistent and contradictory body of thought by moving beyond a simplistic account of the role of atheism in the project that he elaborates and focusing on his oft-neglected contributions to the renovation of national culture and sentiment. Clarifying the role of Ramírez’s atheism within the greater context of his vision of Nature and the natural world allows for the discipline imposed by principle and hypothesis upon his thinking to be seen. It also allows for another facet of the pseudonym nigromante to be illuminated, as perhaps the most significant aspect of his thinking is not the heresy or nihilism that that name meant and continues to imply, but rather the task that he adopted: thinking, from the ground up, the project of a new social order and a new humanity, and doing so through a combination of radical democracy and maximal individual liberty that would be unthinkable without first reckoning with one of the watershed realizations of modernity, what Friedrich Nietzsche would call the “Death of God.” Ramírez follows in the footsteps of Lizardi while blazing the trail for the next Maestro, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano.

Contrary to the assessment of many contemporary critics, I will be insisting throughout my analysis of Ramírez that his thought is indeed not internally contradictory, but rather follows a rigid set of principles constitutive of the underpinnings of his discourse. That this is the case gets hidden from view when too much emphasis is placed on the exigencies of the period. It should instead be insisted that the frequent interruptions of the development of his thought makes its internal consistency even more remarkable.
3.1 “What’s in a Name?”: A Quixotic Detour through the Name

Nigromante

The way a nation names its heroes is an integral part of the formation of national narratives, and Ramírez’s name stands as a monument to the antagonisms that such narratives try to overcome. Attempting to understand the significance of Ramírez’s adoption of the name “nigromante” inevitably requires consideration of two specific moments in which Ramírez defines himself in that way. The first makes an obvious allusion to the sabio encantador, eternal foil to Alonso Quijano’s idealism in Don Quijote:

…Y un oscuro Nigromante
que hará por artes del diablo
que coman en un establo
Sancho, Rucio y Rocinante
con el Caballero andante… 320

The second elaborates on the same theme:

Y tú feroz Nigromante
que a toda virtud ves máscara
y toda fruta haces cáscara
entonarás este cántico
que no será muy romántico. 321

It is understandable that these two citations should be so determinate for today’s critical understanding of the value of the name “nigromante” and its adoption as a signifier. After all, as David Maciel points out, both of the cited verses appear in the first issue of Don Simplicio, the first of many radical newspapers that Ignacio Ramírez would found over the next 30 years. Don Simplicio was sustained from 1845 to 1847 by the collective contributions of Ignacio Ramírez, Guillermo Prieto, Manuel Payno, and Vicente Segura. It was during this initial venture into political satire that we see what Jesús Reyes Heroles

refers to as the first exteriorization of the nigromante’s social ideas.322 This fact makes that moment especially productive as a point of departure for analysis of the possible meaning of that fateful moniker. Accordingly, criticism to date has produced a series of interlinked interpretations of the meaning of the name nigromante. This is generally done by first mentioning the name nigromante in relation to Cervantes’s Don Quijote.

From Maciel’s perspective, the meaning of the term “nigromante” is clear from the torrent of satire that follows its appearance, and he insists on the heavily symbolic nature of its adoption:

Cabría, en consecuencia, conjugar lo siguiente: la adopción del seudónimo tuvo un carácter definitivamente simbólico. El grupo político dirigente en la época, y particularmente, el grupo dominante del partido liberal se caracterizaba por un interés casi exclusivamente teórico que los apartaba de los problemas concretos que aquejaban al país. Sería esa realidad la que este nuevo Nigromante haría relucir atentando en contra de la desbocada imaginación de los quijotescos dirigentes del país; por ello haría comer en un establo a “Sancho, Rucio y Rocinante con el caballero andante.”323

Liliana Weinberg shares this premise but interprets Ramírez’s overall significance in a way distinct from Maciel’s iconoclastic vision of the thinker. Struggling with what she reads as a contradiction between the shadowy, diabolical imagery of necromancy deployed by Ramírez and the project of illumination that his work embodied, Weinberg focuses on the essentially playful nature of satire and notes how understandings of the significance of Ramírez’s work have changed over time to eventually reveal what was, at least putatively, a fundamentally enlightening core of meaning:

Reyes Heroles divides the development of Ramírez’s thought into three chronological periods: “Las ideas sociales de El Nigromante se exteriorizan en tres momentos: cuando el joven Ignacio Ramírez redacta el políticamente desafortunado Don Simplicio; cuando, más tarde, en el Congreso Constituyente 1856-57, propone una especie de participación de los trabajadores en las utilidades y, por último, en escritos y discursos posteriores. Siguiendo las sucesivas etapas del pensamiento de Ramírez, se ve que ellas constituyen momentos de un pensamiento que lucha por integrarse: son ideas que se afinan en un ininterrumpido radicalismo ideológico.” (My emphasis) (Reyes Heroles, Jesús. "El liberalismo social de Ignacio Ramírez." Cuadernos americanos 20.118 (1962). 178. Print.) Reyes Heroles provides an extremely lucid analysis of Ramírez’s works, and is one of the few critics to perceive the unified character of Ramírez’s thought.


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De este modo, si bien en su origen el concepto de “nigromacia” tiene una connotación negativa como el arte adivinatorio abominable y peligrosa ligada a la invocación de los muertos y al pacto con el diablo, la lectura de la obra de Cervantes, Quevedo, Vélez de Guevara o Torres Villaroel nos conduce a otra trayectoria posible en la tradición literaria: la nigromancia tomada de manera jocosa como arte del desengaño que permite descubrir el lado oculto de las cosas, y de allí, por extensión, el lado secreto de las costumbres reprobables que sólo un desencantador de genio puede descubrir. Se genera así un tema literario que, vinculado a su vez con el de la proliferación de diablos y espíritus maliciosos y revestido en el origen de una carga negativa, oscura y grave, a lo largo de los siglos XVII y XVIII se desatanizará hasta llegar a adquirir, a través del juego desestabilizador de la sátira y la caricatura, un valor positivo, luminoso y mordaz, de tono goyesco, ligado a la agudeza y el ingenio en la pintura de las costumbres.

These two critical interpretations of the significance of the moniker nigromante, although seemingly complementary at first glance, paradoxically produce two very distinct accounts of the satirical production attached to the name nigromante and the significance of the name itself. For Maciel, Ramírez’s project is one of mordant critique that relentlessly seeks to unveil a mystified political and social reality. For this reason, the critic affirms that the adoption of the pseudonym nigromante is therefore a herald of Ramírez’s forthcoming project of ideological shock and awe. As seen in the citation above, Weinberg’s approach instead attempts to qualify the meaning of the name nigromante and attenuate the occult terror it connotes by understanding it as an essentially playful (jocoso) manipulation. On Weinberg’s argument, the initial darkness of the name nigromante has been displaced by a subsequent lightening and brightening of its meaning. This latter notion finds support in the fact that even today in Mexico the word nigromante remains an immediate reference to Ramírez, albeit one stripped by and large of its original menacing connotations.

Reconciling these two perspectives is possible if we shift the way in which the question is asked: rather than looking for a way to reconcile or combine these two critical perspectives, we should first recognize that what is at stake here is precisely what each critic holds to be the essential character and aim of Ramírez’s necromancy. Whereas

Maciel insists that the name “nigromante” is a determining factor for interpretation of Ramírez’s work of disenchantment, Weinberg inverts that proposition and attempts to sever all connection between Ramírez’s work and his diabolic public image. In accordance with that inversion, Weinberg reduces the usage of “nigromante” to the status of a mere literary device of conflated significance. The issue here stems from a confused attempt to reconcile the satirical gesture of the adoption of the pseudonym nigromante with the apparent reference to Don Quijote that coincides with its first appearance and has since dominated its interpretation. That confusion is primarily derived from the ambiguity of that very same signifier, nigromante, not in the first issue of Don Simplicio, but rather in the context of Don Quijote from which it is drawn. Fortunately, the origin of that confusion may be located by carefully examining Maciel’s explicit interpretation of the role of the nigromante in Don Quijote:

Ramírez era un hombre de letras, de ahí el seudónimo que adoptó. En El Quijote, la figura de El Nigromante es el principio antagónico del héroe; en la imaginación del caballero el mago es quien lo confunde todo, que hace que los gigantes con quienes lucha sean de pronto molinos, y los ejércitos un simple rebaño de pacíficos animales. En el movimiento general de la novela, es El Nigromante el que, cada vez, trae al caballero a la realidad funcionando justamente contrario sensu de lo que el caballero cree y afirma.

This citation shows that both critics have failed to distinguish what a literato like Ramírez, being eminently familiar with Don Quijote, would have known, namely, that the

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325 Weinberg justifies this shift regarding the importance of the name “nigromante” by signaling the fact that the deployment of provocative and infernal imagery was already a characteristic of 19th century journalistic discourse: “Así lo confirma además el ambiente en el cual se nutren y en el cual se insertan a su vez las ideas de Ramírez, cuya posición no resulta, a la luz de aquél, de ningún modo excéntrica y singular: la apelación al mundo de las tinieblas y los actos demoniacos es una estrategia satírica y crítica característica de la época, que se extenderá a lo largo del siglo XIX sobre todo en el campo del periodismo, y está sumergido en pleno clima ilustrado, aunque ya prerromántico y liberal. Así, por ejemplo, nada más alejado del oscurantismo que La sombra; periódico jocoserio, ultraliberal y reformista escrito en los antros de la tierra por una legión de espíritus que dirigen Mefistófeles y Asmodeo […]” Op. cit. 19.

Although my interpretation differs from Weinberg’s, it should nevertheless also be noted that her argument as to the minor importance of the moniker “nigromante” is further reinforced by the fact that “nigromante” is hardly the only pseudonym adopted by Ramírez throughout his career (others being Tirabeque and el Chile Verde) although it was certainly the most perdurable.

figure of the nigromante is far more ambiguous in the novel than might first appear to be the case. To see this, one need only contrast Maciel’s description of the nigromante with the passage in which the word first appears, in chapter XXXI (“De los sabrosos razonamientos que pasaron entre don Quijote y Sancho Panza su escudero, con otros sucesos”) of the first volume of *Don Quijote*. In this passage, Sancho has just returned from his failed and feigned attempt to deliver a letter from don Quijote to his lady Dulcinea.

Don Quijote is befuddled by the speed with which Sancho has accomplished his task, and can only speculate that this miracle is due to the intervention of his dear friend, a nigromante:

¿Sabes de qué estoy maravillado, Sancho? De que me parece que fuiste y veniste por los aires, pues poco más de tres días has tardado en ir y venir desde aquí al Toboso, habiendo de aquí allá más de treinta leguas; por lo cual me doy a entender que aquel sabio nigromante que tiene cuenta con mis cosas y es mi amigo (porque por fuerza le hay, y le ha de haber, so pena que yo no sería buen caballero andante), digo que éste tal te debió de ayudar a caminar, sin que tú lo sintieses.\(^\text{327}\) (My emphasis)

Far from being the sort of enemy of idealism portrayed by Maciel, or the revealer of secrets described by Weinberg, the nigromante is here instead a friend of the quixotic project and an aid to the continuing reality of the fantastic world created by don Quijote.\(^\text{328}\) This confusion regarding the role of the nigromante in the text is readily explicable when it is noticed that the word is only used three times in the entirety of *Don Quijote*, and only once


\(^{328}\) In what follows the above-cited passage, don Quijote goes on to insist on the importance and necessity of just such a figure for the continuation of errant knighthood: “[…] Que hay sabio destos que coge a un caballero andante durmiendo en su cama, y sin saber cómo o en qué manera, amanece otro día más de mil leguas de donde anocheció. Y si no fuese por esto, no se podrían socorrer en sus peligros los caballeros andantes unos a otros, como se socorren a cada paso; que acaece estar uno peleando en las sierras de Armenia con algún endriago, o con algún fiero vestigio, o con otro caballero, donde lleva lo peor de la batalla y está ya a punto de muerte, y cuando no os me cato, asoma por acullá, encima de una nube, o sobre un carro de fuego, otro caballero amigo suyo, que poco antes se hallaba en Inglaterra, que le favorece y libra de la muerte, y a la noche se halla en su posada, cenando muy a su sabor; y suele haber de la una a la otra parte dos o tres mil leguas. Y todo esto se hace por industria y sabiduría destos sabios encantadores que tienen cuidado destos valerosos caballeros.” *Ibid.*
in a way suggestive of a mysterious character intervening for good or ill in his chivalric fortunes. The problem, then, is that the meaning of this term in the text is conditioned by a far more pervasive one that is used throughout the novel in a far more ambiguous way, namely el sabio encantador or encantador maligno.

An immediate comparison shows that while the word nigromante only occurs three times in the entirety of Don Quijote, some permutation of the term encantador is utilized no less than 110 times in the text. While encantador does refer to the sort of malignant deceiver that impedes don Quijote’s plans, the term itself remains ambiguous because—at least in the first tome of the novel— it is used to designate two different sorts of figures: firstly, there is the “sabio encantador” who records the glories of don Quijote’s adventures and whose magic miraculously aids him throughout his quest; however, there is another, malignant “sabio encantador” that don Quijote blames—while being thoroughly encouraged to do so by the barber and the priest—for the sudden disappearance of his chivalric books. Conflating these figures into a menacing necromancer capable of smashing (Maciel) or somehow undoing (Weinberg) deceptive illusions denies the unique pedigree of both figures, each of which have clear predecessors in the universe of chivalric literature from which Don Quijote draws much of its content.

Luis Andrés Murillo’s careful analysis of Don Quijote makes this point clear. In the moment when don Quijote first identifies the disappearance of his library with the malevolent action of a “sabio encantador,” he immediately asserts that the name of the enchanter was surely Fristón (despite his niece’s initial identification of the enchanter as “Muñaton”), thereby alluding to Frestón, sorceror and purported author of Don Belianis de

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329 Op cit. 124.
In doing so, the notion of the *sabio encantador* is immediately contextualized within the chivalric world of Amadís de Gaula *et al.*, and two images, that of Urganda la desconocida (herself already invoked in the first of the sonnets that introduce the novel), mysterious aide to Amadís de Gaula in his most desperate perils, and that of Arcaláus, the evil sorcerer who lends strength to the forces that oppose Amadís. As is the case in that textual universe, in the world of don Quijote the signifier *sabio encantador* can bode either well or ill for the protagonist’s ambitions. However, in neither case do those enchanters accomplish their magic by piercing through delusion or by demystifying a secret. To the contrary, their power lies in the manipulation of reality and appearance, although don Quijote takes care to assure us that God would never allow an evil enchanter to overpower a good one. The medium for the malignance or beneficence of those enchanters is always that of the miraculous manipulation and alteration of reality, meaning that both Weinberg’s and Maciel’s assessments of the significance of the “*nigromante*” fall short of the mark. Instead, *Don Quijote* points out a different way forward through its redefinition of “*nigromancia*” (the word itself being a *hapax legomenon* in the novel):

-No lloréis, mis buenas señoras, que todas estas desdichas son anexas a los que profesan lo que yo profeso; y si estas calamidades no me acontecieran, no me tuviera yo por famoso caballero andante; porque a los caballeros de poco nombre y fama nunca les suceden semejantes casos, porque no hay en el mundo quien se acuerde dellos. A los valerosos sí, que tienen envidiosos de su virtud y valentía a muchos principes y a muchos otros caballeros, que procuran por malas vías destruir a los buenos. Pero, con todo eso, la virtud es tan poderosa que, por sí sola, a pesar de toda la nigromancia que supo su primer inventor, Zoroastes, saldrá vencedora de todo trance, y dará de sí luz en el mundo, como la da el sol en el cielo.

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332 It should be noted that the role of the *sabio encantador* does change as *Don Quijote* progresses, and by the middle of the second tome of the novel it is increasingly used as an explanation for misfortune.
333 “Aunque yo espero en Dios nuestro Señor que no ha de poder tanto la fuerza de un encantador malicioso, que no pueda más la de otro encantador mejor intencionado, y para entonces os prometo mi favor y ayuda, como me obliga mi profesión, que no es otra si no es favorecer a los desvalidos y menesterosos.” *Op. cit.* 596
This citation serves to again divide between well-intentioned and malevolent magicians, but it goes further by separating what might be thought of as a virtuous, “white” magical tradition, from an evil, “black,” necromantic tradition. The difference between them lies in the kind of magic that they practice. The ambiguity of the signifier necromancer/enchanter can then be distilled by focusing on the nature of necromancy itself as the defining element of the signifier “nigromante” in the work of Ignacio Ramírez.

Carlos Monsiváis has already made great strides in this direction. His study of Ignacio Ramírez opens with a definition that rightly emphasizes the necromantic component of Ramírez’s pseudonym: “Nigromante. El que adivina el futuro evocando a los muertos.”335 Although he does not note it, Monsiváis’s rendition of the definition is only a minor grammatical readjustment away from the definition of “nigromancia” found in the 1611 edition -roughly contemporaneous with the publication of the first volume of Don Quijote- of Sebastian de Covarrubias Orozco’s standard Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española: “NIGROMANCIA, arte de adivinar invocando los muertos.”336

However, the definition offered by the Tesoro also follows the etymology of the term with a suggestive addition fatefuly absent from Monsiváis’s conception of Ignacio Ramírez’s necromancy: to wit, “Esta arte y otras como quiromancia, hydromancia, geomancia, etc. están prohibidos por los sacros Canones, y últimamente por el Santo Concilio Tridentino. Nigromántico, el que usa de esta superstición.”337 This is the key needed to begin decoding Ramírez’s legacy: the notion of necromancy as another,

337 Ibid.
prohibited form of knowledge, a “superstitious” and dangerous activity in the eyes of the Church is precisely the element that allows us to reconcile the aforementioned differing critical interpretations of the meaning of the pseudonym “nigromante.” When read in this way, the moniker “nigromante” indicates the fundamental character of Ramírez’s political project of totalizing reform. Ramírez embraced the education of the people. His promethean gift would be to disabuse the pueblo of their idols and superstitions. No position of power could escape his deadly volleys of satire. The Necromancer elaborates his magic haphazardly, but its effects cannot be doubted. This chapter will show that sentiment was an integral ingredient in the Necromancer’s heady brew.

If the term “nigromante” is the word most widely attributed to Ramírez, the phrase that he is most famous for—and the one most often cited as an indicator of the radical position that he adopted as a thinker—is surely that which introduces the speech he delivered while seeking entrance into the Academia de Letrán: “No hay Dios.” Indeed, as Monsiváis notes, Ramírez’s proclamation of atheist belief would follow him for the rest of his life and still informs critical pronouncements on the nature and value of his work in contemporary scholarship. What has been omitted from critical evaluation is an insistence that that phrase be understood in accordance with the totality of its significance. Rather than being a simple declaration of atheism, the phrase contains in nuce the entirety of the ontology and epistemology that unify Ramírez’s work: “No hay Dios, los seres de la

338 Monsiváis signals the demonic character that would subsequently be attributed to Ramírez and includes an anecdote from Ignacio Manuel Altamirano to that effect: “Su ‘no hay Dios’ marca a Ramírez el resto de su vida […] De acuerdo con sus descripciones, a Ramírez se le ve literalmente como el demonio. Los clérigos y los ricos observan aterrados al joven pobremente vestido y, describe Altamirano, ‘como las mujeres de Ravena al ver pasar al Dante por las calles’, murmuran: ‘Ese hombre viene del infierno.’” Monsiváis, Carlos. *Las herencias ocultas: De la Reforma liberal del siglo XIX*. 2nd ed. Mexico City: Random House Mondadori, 2006. 195. Print.
Naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos.” Teasing apart each element of this declaration allows for it to be understood in a new way.

The first clause, “No hay Dios,” has traditionally been taken to be the heart of Ramírez’s shocking words. On its face a concise declaration of atheism, the sense of this clause is complicated by what immediately follows it: “los seres de la naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos.” A few preliminary observations demonstrate how the sense of the first clause is modified by the second. Firstly, attention must be paid to the way in which the sentence is punctuated: the clauses are separated by a comma, a grammatical connective that implies a strong conceptual link between two distinct clauses by unifying them through a minor pause. Furthermore, the clause’s context indicates its autonomy: the claim that “No hay Dios” is not merely one in a list that also happens to include the claim that “los seres de la naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos.” But despite that apparent autonomy, the context of the utterance also suggests that the first clause is closely connected to the second. Given that interconnection, the significance of the first clause must be interpreted in the light of the second, “los seres de la Naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos.”

Dissecting this second clause is a more complex affair. Here Ramírez stakes out a claim, the significance of which is as weighty as that of his atheist declaration. The usage of the word “seres,” or beings, is a crucial one here, as it signals that this claim, beyond being merely prescriptive or normative, in fact pertains to how human beings are related to all beings, and thereby, to the order of Being itself. Reading the claim in this way also permits us to understand why Ramírez qualifies the status of those “seres” by making specific reference to the domain that they inhabit: they are specifically “los seres de la
Naturaleza.” It follows then that the claim contained in the second clause is in fact an ontological one, inasmuch as it attempts to make sense of beings by addressing the framework that makes them intelligible as such. Furthermore, the genitive character of “beings of Nature” also makes clear what framework is being used here to conceptualize the domain inhabited by the beings under discussion, namely, “la Naturaleza”.

Ramírez is making a claim about the beings that inhabit the domain of Nature, and in doing so he is also making a claim about that domain itself, one which requires that the traditional Scholastic framework used to conceptualize Nature be fundamentally re-understood: “los seres de la Naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos.”339 In defining the beings of Nature as auto-sufficient, 340 Ramírez also defines what he means by Nature: Nature here is not a created totality dependent on an external force for its ordering and operation.341 Instead, Nature is a domain of auto-sufficient entities, meaning that Nature itself is also auto-sufficient and thereby requires no external guarantor for its functioning, persistence, or development.342 That auto-sufficiency is then driven home by a final qualification, por sí mismos, which phrase reinforces the reflexive and reciprocal action of the verb sostener. From this perspective, the essential principles governing nature are naturally emergent instead of being externally imposed or transcendentally determined.

The total effect of this second clause is to illustrate the way in which Ramírez’s thought makes the passage from conceiving of nature as natura naturata to a vision of nature as natura naturans. In the case of the first term, natura naturata, Nature is

339 My emphasis.
340 The reflexive form of “se sostienen” evinces this notion of auto-sufficiency.
341 This is, of course, a common feature of “theist” models of the universe.
342 Indeed, such a model of nature leaves no room for the existence of a position of externality from which a purported guarantor might intervene.
understood in its completed, passive, created character: it is always-already constituted as a static order. Nature understood as *natura naturans*, as the active suffix –*ans* suggests, instead entails an active, creative, and chaotic vision of nature. His conceptualization of Nature in the modality of *natura naturans* gives shape to the paradigm that encompasses the breadth of his thought and sustains his obsessive focus on freedom, association, and demystification. Those three concepts are integral components of Ramírez’s thought, and I will be addressing each of them in turn. However, first it is necessary to return to the central question of this section: how is the significance of the moniker “*nigromante*” to be interpreted? If we follow up on Monsiváis’s intuition regarding necromancy’s explicit relationship with death, the way that that relationship grounds Ramírez’s thought becomes clear. Doing so also allows for examination of the impact of that relationship with death on the three central concepts of his thought that I have just mentioned (freedom, association, and demystification). What remains, then, is to return to the first clause of Ramírez’s notorious declaration: “No hay Dios.”

My investigation up to this point has shown why the first clause of Ramírez’s declaration must be reinterpreted: the first clause is actually a consequence of the second clause. First, we should invert the standard reading of the two clauses, which traditionally presents the second clause as a consequence of the assertion of the first. The standard reading of the declaration holds that the auto-sufficiency of beings it mentions is simply a consequence of the prior claim that there is no God. That this is the case is reflected by the commonplace omission of the lines that follow “No hay Dios.” But its second clause is in

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343 It is in this latter modality of the conception of nature that we come close to the Greek (Aristotelean) notion of *physis*, or nature as that which arises of its own accord without any apparent human intervention.
fact the primary claim here, and it is the assertion of auto-sufficiency that obviates any sort of explanatory role for God in a description of natural phenomena, or what is the same, of “los seres de la naturaleza.” The assertion “No hay Dios” is a consequence of the auto-sufficiency of Nature and not vice-versa: Ramírez’s radical materialism gives rise to his atheism. As such, the truly radical, naturalist core of his thought is found in that materialism and his conceptualization of nature, and not in his subsequent claim to atheism. When this is taken into account, Ramírez’s projection of the consequences of the radical, voluntarist materialism that he adopts brings his thought into startling proximity with the ontological and epistemological consequences entailed by Friedrich Nietzsche’s own infamously celebratory exclamation that “God is dead” some 45 years later in Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (1882). A brief comparison of their respective positions reveals the affinities between their understandings of atheism and also demonstrates how Ramírez’s thought radically anticipates Nietzsche’s own struggle with nihilism in the wake of the “death of God.”

As is the case with Ramírez, great caution is required in order to avoid a superficial reading of Nietzsche’s own atheistic declaration. Such a reading is at once obvious from a first glance at what has become – probably in large part due to its provocatively celebratory and blasphemous nature- an oft-cited early version of the declaration of the “death of God” that is uttered with finality in Nietzsche’s Also sprach Zarathustra. This version, which appears at the beginning of the fifth book of Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (After the heading “The meaning of our cheerfulness”) follows: “The greatest recent event –that ‘God is dead,’ that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable – is already beginning
to cast its first shadow over Europe.\textsuperscript{344} Although the obsolescence of the Christian conception of God is explicitly mentioned here, the ramifications of that obsolescence for human understanding of the meaningfulness of life extend far beyond simple disbelief or indifference.\textsuperscript{345} Nietzsche elaborates on the weight of this realization in a passage from the third book of the same work, in an axiom aptly titled “New struggles”: “After Buddha was dead his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. —And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.”\textsuperscript{346} As Nietzsche’s warning makes clear, asserting the “death of God” as a proposition is not equivalent to dealing with the ontological, epistemological, and ethical fallout of that ominous event.

In accordance with Nietzsche’s insistence, the “death of God” only appears as a revelatory opening and promise of a new reality after it is first realized as a responsibility, incumbent upon each individual, requiring that the metaphysical presuppositions that undergird our thinking be universally challenged and destroyed when they prove inadequate for furthering life. Ever the astute reader of Nietzsche, Heidegger rightly insists on the priority of working out this question and notes that the process of doing so has two primary components: we must rethink both the relationship between truth and the


\textsuperscript{345} After the above-cited passage, Nietzsche himself makes the widespread impact of the “death of God” clear while at the same time emphasizing the difficulty of immediately transmitting that recognition to others: “The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude’s capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having arrived yet. Much less may one suppose that many people know as yet what this event really means—and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it; for example, the whole of our European morality.” \textit{Ibid.}

supersensory world and the way in which that truth (or lack thereof) relates to how humanity is essentially understood. Communing with death and raging against the shadow of God, Ramírez’s own necromancy consists of a relentless and radical questioning after the same two relations signaled by Heidegger. In this sense, his maxim “No hay Dios, los seres de la Naturaleza se sostienen por sí mismos” is truly emblematic of his career, and his title of “nigromante” is justified in a sense different from what has been previously supposed.

Ramírez grounds his intellectual and political projects in a fundamental rethinking of the relation between truth, humanity, and the domain previously attributed to the supersensory world: this is the heart of his necromantic practice. His dark communion conjures up the impact of the death of God and all of its implications for human knowledge and social existence. This is why his critique must leave no stone unturned; as he emphasizes while writing in support of the Reforma in 1867, everything must be questioned because none of the previous ideologies suffice to provide the nation, and humanity itself, with a way forward:

El partido conservador jamás podrá formarse de mexicanos; lo que se llama tradición, para nosotros es una quimera. ¿La tradición azteca? ¡No es posible pensar seriamente en restablecer la corte de Moctezuma ni el templo de Huitzilopochtli! ¿La tradición colonial? ¡Acabamos de atropellarle en sus iglesias y en los privilegios de las clases, que nos son odiosos! ¿Conservaremos siquiera la tradición republicana? Hasta ahora nuestras conquistas han sido grandes, pero sus beneficios son negativos; hemos suprimido obstáculos, clero, ejército, nobleza, monopolios; pero las codiciadas mejoras materiales no han salido de las manos de la promesa. Aún nos es necesario probarlo todo, cambiarlo todo, y pedir al astro de la libertad que fecundice en el seno de la patria los gérmenes de la vida, del poder y de la gloria.

347 “As long as we grasp “God is dead” only as the formula of unbelief, we are thinking in terms of theoretical apologetics and are eschewing what matters to Nietzsche, namely reflection that thinks about what has already happened with the truth of the supersensory world and with its relation to man’s essence.” Heidegger, Martin. "Holzwege." Trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Off the Beaten Track. Ed. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 164. Print.

The next section takes up how Ramírez’s radical critique of notions of truth and humanity that rely on the supersensory world formulates its own solution to the problem of grounding knowledge through an appeal to Nature. This prepares the way for new structures of knowledge that would be necessary to realize the future aspirations of the nation-state. It also allows Ramírez to reimagine the nature of humanity, and with it, the nature of literature.
Having studied under the auspices of Roman philologist Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) at the University of Berlin, Nietzsche was surely acquainted with the Epicurean philosophy of Lucretius. The Roman philosopher also left his mark on Ramírez’s thought, as evidenced by his inclusion of a citation from Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* at the beginning of his most significant critique of what he dubbed “metaphysical thinking”:

“Exemplum porro gignundis rebus, et ipsa notities hominum, divis unde insita primum est.” The citation is a selection from a longer interrogation found in Book V of *De rerum natura*, toward the end of a section entitled “Argument of the Book and the New Proem Against a Teleological Concept”:

Whence, further, first was planted in the gods  
The archetype for gendering the world  
And the fore-notion of what man is like,  
So that they knew and pre-conceived with mind  
Just what they wished to make?

Mirroring the two-fold interrogation regarding the nature of truth and the nature of meaning that follows upon the realization of the “death of God,” Lucretius’s words marvel at two phenomena that emerge alongside the origination of meaning. First he beholds the engendering archetype of Nature (*Exemplum gignundis*), the raw fecundity of unknown origin that gives rise to Nature itself. This is followed by the apparent impossibility of comprehending the role of humanity within Nature itself. Lucretius then defines this first phenomenon, saying that “[…] The earth herself / And nature, artificer of the world, bring

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Http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.5.v.html
forth / Aboundingly all things for all.”

Such a characterization emphasizes the same auto-sufficiency implied by Ramírez’s “se sostienen por sí mismos.” Lucretius’s response to the question of humanity’s relationship with the archetype of Nature directly resonates with Ramírez’s own strategic response to the “death of God.”

Lucretius could also rightly be described as an atheist, inasmuch as his gods, though perhaps existent, nevertheless maintain an aloof indifference to and distance from human affairs. And this situation is not subject to change: for Lucretius, the default of the gods in worldly affairs is beyond the scope of human amelioration or divine interest. Although this position is not an outright denial of the existence of gods, Lucretius’s argument nevertheless makes its objective plain: since the gods are in default they must be divested of their explanatory power where our understanding of Nature is concerned. This action of divestment aims to open up the world for consideration and to prevent its future re-mystification.

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Http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.5.v.html

352 “[...] Our gratefulness, / O what emoluments could it confer / Upon Immortals and upon the Blessed / That they should take a step to manage aught / For sake of us? Or what new factor could, / after so long a time, inveigle them – / The hitherto reposeful –to desire / To change their former life? For rather he / Whom old things chafe seems likely to rejoice / At new; but one that in fore-passed time / Hath chanced upon no ill, / through goodly years, / O what could ever enkindle in such a one / Passion for strange experiment?” *Ibid.*

353 “Thus far we’ve gone; the order of my plan / Hath brought me now unto the point where I / Must make report how, too, the universe / Consists of mortal body, born in time, / And in what modes that congregated stuff / Established itself as earth and sky, / Ocean, and starts, and sun, and ball of moon; / And then what living creatures rose from out / The old telluric places, and what ones / Were never born at all; and in what mode / The human race began to name its things / And use the varied speech from man to man; / And in what modes hath bosomed in their breasts / That awe of gods, which halloweth in all lands / Fanes, altars, groves, lakes, idols of the gods. / Also I shall untangle by what power / The steersman nature guides the sun’s courses,/ And the meanderings of the moon, lest we, / Percase, should fancy that of own free will / They circle their perennial courses round, / Timing their motions for increase of crops / And living creatures, or lest we should think / They roll along by any plan of gods / For even those men who have learned full well / That godheads lead a long life free of care, / If yet meanwhile they wonder by what plan / Things can go on (and chiefly yon high things / Observed o’erhead on the ethereal coasts), / Again are hurried back unto the fears / of old religion and adopt again / Harsh masters, deemed almighty, wretched men, / Unwitting what can be and what cannot, / And by what law to each its scope prescribed, / Its boundary stone that clings so deep in Time.” *Ibid.*
deification of Nature as a response to the default of the Gods. After the announcement of the advent of the "death of God," Nietzsche immediately cautions against the all-too-human urge to respond to the horror vacui produced by deicide with a re-deification of Nature; perhaps Nature can serve as a ground, but it will meet with no better luck in the roles where God has failed. Nietzsche advocates a de-deification of Nature even more radical than that promoted by Lucretius:

"Let us beware thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics. But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we being to "naturalize" humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?" (My emphasis)

The move from atheism to de-deification involves the admission of a deep skepticism regarding totalizing explanation and a renewed emphasis on the life-giving potential of the pursuit of the practical knowledge derived from observation (as opposed to argumentation based on metaphysical hypotheses). Accordingly, for Ramírez, the first obstacle to overcoming the "death of God" bears the name "Metaphysics."

Ramírez’s unfavorable comparison of “metaphysical” understanding to “positive” knowledge is a recurrent theme of his work and is even present in his poetry. In his poem “El Hombre-Dios” he mocks metaphysical attempts at comprehending the laws of nature through supposition and entheogenic sleight-of-hand:

Ved a ese metafisico. ¡Cuan vano!  
Con voz chillona y con la cara seria  
dice, cerriendo tierra en una mano:

‘¡Oh torpe ceguedad! ¡Triste miseria  
del incrédulo necio que pretende  
fabricar la vida de la materia!’

Cultivar flores en el viento emprende;  
exige del silencio un dulce canto

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y con tinieblas un lucero enciende.

Su demencia produce absurdo tanto; 
Pues es absurdo hacer de la inteligencia 
cual si fuese pared de cal y canto.

¿El polvo vil disfruta esa potencia 
que con su agitación en tierra y cielo 
de un espíritu anuncia la presencia?

Un puñado de polvo, que del suelo 
cualquier patán levanta, ¿de qué suerte, 
como bandada de ángeles el vuelo 
puede alzar? ¿La material no es inerte? 
¿No siempre ha proclamado el universo 
Que quien dice materia, dice muerte…?355

Ramírez’s response opposes this image of a matter destitute of spirituality, and therefore 
of life, with one that recalls the marvelous fecundity of nature signaled by Lucretius:

—Así se disparata en prosa y verso 
y se obliga a mentir de la natura; 
pero lo que ella dice es muy diverso.

Un puñado de polvo en vida pura 
hierve, y arranca de su propio seno 
de seres mil el alma y la figura.

Ese polvo en mi mano, ¿está sereno? 
Lo vais a ver bajo de un soplo leve 
cual nuevo mundo de prodigios lleno.

¡Soplad! ¡En tierra y agua cual se mueve 
en infusorios mil, que osado el lente 
como gigantes a pintar se atreve!

Fascina, magnetismo, cual serpiente 
el átomo de hierro que abandona 
sus alas al furor de la corriente.

De mágicos cristales se corona 
más allá otro povillo; en otro el fruto 
de hongo naciente, rápido sazón

Un cuerpo suponed tan diminuto 
como os plazca, veréis lo que se agita 
siguiendo de la vida el estatuto.

Aunque se llame mónada, gravita 
sobre la tierra, el sol, la luna; en ella

a su vez la acción de éstos se ejercita;

y cuando en otra mónada se estrella,
se inflama en atracción, y sus amores
nunca pasaron sin profunda huella.

De la vida doquier los resplandores
¡contemplo absorto! ¡Ay!, teólogo,
¿y te dejas todavía arrastrar por tus errores?

Ramírez holds that the errors of metaphysics leave us blind to the workings of Nature and the path toward progress. The phenomena of nature are in themselves marvelous, so it is necessary that an approach to Nature make room for awe while still avoiding the deification of Nature. This could be partly resolved by imposing positive rigor on thinking and allowing observation to be determinate in giving shape to Truth:

El mundo queda a oscuras todavía.
‘¿Este bicho es un Dios, o nos lo inventa?’
Más de uno de los suyos se diría.

Yo, que en prodigios nunca llevo en cuenta
el testimonio ajeno, ni el del papa,
No veré a Dios si no se transparenta
como la luz que de un farol se escapa.

According to Ramírez, the laws of Nature can be observed, but their truth can never be exhaustively ascertained in advance by a hypothetical, metaphysical projection. He insists that “Natura hizo esta ley y no una vieja,” this being an allusion to one of the primary tropes used to describe metaphysics in his essay “Los estudios metafísicos”: “La dibujaremos de modo que todo el mundo diga: ésa es la vieja que corrompe todavía a la

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357 Ibid.
358 Not even Kant escapes from Ramírez’s attack on what he perceived as “metaphysical thought”: “‘Todo lo que existe pertenece á una sustancia,’ dice Espinosa, ‘ya se comprenda bajo éste, ya bajo el otro atributo.’ Y pues, nos hemos acercado á los tiempos modernos, limitémonos á indicar la escuela alemana que acaudilla á todas las europeas, y mencionemos no más á su ingenioso fundador. Aseguramos, de Kant y la brillante pléyade que lo ha seguido, que del mismo modo que sus antecesores, no han dejado sino un rastro oscuro en el espléndido firmamento de las ciencias. Cada maestro se va sepultando con un millar de abortivos discípulos.” Op. cit. 91.
juventud estudiosa.” A similar use of metaphor frames the beginning of this critique, as the text juxtaposes the counterproductive and empirically-barren –but traditionally-sanctioned— metaphysical approach to nature with the vibrant vision of the natural world advocated by his radical materialist approach:

Se casa un joven con una anciana; aunque no pueden tener hijos, el matrimonio se autoriza y conserva, porque, al fin, representa la unión de la Iglesia con Cristo: así sucede con la metafísica; representa la unión del entendimiento humano con la divinidad; ¿qué importa que ese contubernio sea infecundo?"360

Thusly we arrive at the other part of the solution: a continuous process of mental emancipation from ideological prejudices is required if Nature is to become and remain accessible to positive investigation. Ramírez’s answer to that situation lies in the notion of “radical Reform”:

¡Reforma! Reforma radical, ¡reforma aplicada a todo y a todos! Creencias, costumbres, leyes, títulos de propiedad, educación, instituciones públicas y privadas, cuanto existe debe presentarse al tribunal de la prensa y sujetarse a las exigencias de la ilustración moderna, y a las nobles y ambiciosas aspiraciones de la patria. Tal es nuestra persuasión, tal será, como lo ha sido hasta aquí, nuestro programa.361

This insistence on constant, radical reform serves as a point of departure for the deconstructive work of Ramírez’s thought. The Necromancer hunts down the fissures and crannies of the ideology of his day, exposing the elusive and opaque fictions that condition the reality of Mexico and provide life with a sense of meaning –but at a price. Ramírez insists that people rethink what they have been buying –politically, religiously, and socially. And it is not coincidental that he should explicitly mention educational reform as much of his critical work is geared precisely toward providing Mexico with a rigorous program of materialist pedagogy and the means with which to observe and analyze the natural world. Ramírez’s concern for the education of the future citizens of the nation is

360 Ibid.
made manifest in an article, “Plan de estudios,” from the October 9, 1866 edition of the *Correo de México.* There he proposes the division of education into three branches: gymnastics, history, and science. The demarcation of subjects pertinent to each branch and the method of their inclusion summarizes Ramírez’s educational concerns:

Tres ramos comprende la enseñanza: el primero, aunque se puede reducir a principios, consiste en ejercicios que, con más práctica que reglas, educan ciertas propensiones de algunos órganos humanos; tales son el aprendizaje de los idiomas, la música, la pintura y todos los ejercicios gimnásticos, comprendiendo en ellos el arte de los signos, como la escritura y los elementos de las matemáticas; el segundo ramo consiste en conocimientos históricos o en la clasificación de los hechos sobre diversas materias que se refieren a épocas pasadas, a actos de la humanidad ya consumados; historia propiamente dicha; obras literarias notables y sus sistemas; mitos y códigos religiosos; legislación nacional y comparada; gramática comparada o general; y los diversos sistemas filosóficos: y el tercero y último ramo se compone de las ciencias donde dominan estos dos elementos: la observación y el cálculo; éstas son las verdaderas ciencias, las ciencias positivas.

I will return to this dense and programmatic statement again in what follows, but for now it suffices to note that Ramírez restricts his account of the positive sciences to those sciences whose *praxis* is restricted to “la observación y el cálculo.” Such a restriction and definition of the “positive sciences” gives rise to the temptation to include Ramírez’s thought under the broad umbrella of *Positivismo* in Mexico, and this temptation only becomes stronger when one realizes that Ramírez also sometimes referred to himself as a “positivista.” This temptation, however, draws most of its allure from the complexity of the phenomenon of *Positivismo.*

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362 Ramírez’s understanding of the need for total educational reform is explicit at the beginning of the article: “Comienzan a ocuparse los periódicos sobre la reorganización de la enseñanza que depende del gobierno general; no sólo las instituciones, sino la vida industrial, agrícola, mercantil, literaria y científica, dependen del impulso que dan los establecimientos públicos a la instrucción de todas las clases de la sociedad; la enseñanza es libre ante la ley, pero las escuelas privadas no pueden resistir enteramente la influencia de los colegios nacionales. Pero de tantas cosas que se escriben, ¿cuáles debe aprender la juventud bajo la protección del gobierno?” Op. cit. 83.


364 Leopold Zea’s classic treatises on Positivism demonstrate both the monumental pretentions of the ideology and the generally inconsistent and opportunistic nature of its deployment in Mexico: “Así como tratándose de la filosofía universal se han dado interpretaciones de carácter abstracto, es decir, desligadas de sus circunstancias, en la misma forma se ha solido interpretar al positivismo en México. Sin embargo, esta interpretación es la menos corriente. Más bien se ha dado como defensa de los propios positivistas frente a los ataques de quienes combatieron al positivismo en México. Desde luego, son también los propios positivistas mexicanos los que consideraron que su filosofía tenía un carácter universal y eterno. Que la
superficial once his own formulation of “positivism,” a notion radically distinct from the
dogmatic formulation that would ideologically ground the Porfirian era, is examined. In a
dialogue with La Voz de México, an anthropomorphic embodiment of one of the dominant
Conservative political newspapers of the day, el Nigromante makes clear both his
adherence to positive science and his insistence on the open, uncertain character of
scientific progression: “Escuche usted. Yo soy positivista: todo hombre que no es infalible,
absoluto, ni intolerante, debe ser positivista; es decir, debe buscar la realidad de las
cosas.”

For Ramírez, the question of how to approach the truth of Nature remains an
open one subject to observation and experimentation. This is what allows him to prevent
the re-deification of Nature warned against by Nietzsche. The Mexican nation would have
to be convinced that its freedom from colonial bondage was the beginning of a greater
process of emancipation. The old order would not pass away until the gods that had


sustained it were forced from their thrones. This latter task would require Ramírez to fundamentally revalorize the relationship between truth, humanity and Nature.
3.3 Between Order and Anarchy: the Tumultuous Ground of Knowledge

Ramírez’s reforms touched all sectors of society, and long-held presuppositions came crashing down in the wake of his critical barrages. Nevertheless, the question remained: if neither humanity nor knowledge could ever be the same again, what new models would be capable of replacing them? What structures could accommodate this enigmatic arbiter of the future, the “will of the people”? What form of knowledge could create the unity necessary to make the Liberal dream a reality, and what kinds of institutions and systems were most apt at canalizing the sovereign sentiments of the pueblo?

Ramírez’s thought relies upon scientific investigation without presupposing it as an absolute bulwark against error. His writings on educational reform make explicit his dedication to moving beyond a totalizing encyclopedism to a radically-revisionist experimentalism. The experimental position that he advocates recognizes the inescapably provisional character of scientific evolution:

Y lo que más necesita de empeño entre nosotros, multiplicar los gabinetes de historia natural y de física y los laboratorios de química, para multiplicar y vulgarizar los experimentos; y multiplicar las bibliotecas para que el estudioso no tropiece con la falta de libros. El encadenamiento de estos estudios no se puede fijar sino transitoriamente; depende de los adelantamientos y revoluciones que pasan día a día por el mundo científico.366

Ramírez’s insistence that a revolutionary openness accompany the progress of scientific revolution assured his place as leader of the liberal jacobino phalanx that would challenge Gabino Barreda’s efforts to institutionalize positivist philosophy through educational reform.367 Whereas Ramírez prizes the experimental, revolutionary, and unforeseeable

367 Gabino Barreda (1818-1881) founded the Partido Científico and attempted to establish himself as the arch-pedagogue of 19th century Mexico through his directorship of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria.
368 “Este cambio político coincidirá, por otro lado, con la introducción en México del ideario positivista por parte de Gabino Barreda. Su "Oración cívica” pronunciada en 1867 en Guanajuato con motivo de la conmemoración del Grito de Dolores puede considerarse la carta de presentación oficial en México del nuevo credo. Las ideas allí expuestas quedarían plasmadas legalmente en la ley de reforma educativa del 2 de
character of scientific evolution, Barreda argues for the inviolability of the Scientific Method and—as a direct consequence of that premise— the universal validity of its results; it is this universal character that allows Barreda to declare that science should also dominate and control the political sphere:

Pero en el dominio de la inteligencia y en el campo de la verdadera filosofía, nada es heterogéneo y todo es solidario. Y tan imposible es hoy que la política marche sin apoyarse en la ciencia como que la ciencia deje de comprender en su dominio a la política.369

This insistence on the infallibility of a scientific approach to the political is a consequence of Barreda’s adherence to his adoptive formulation of Auguste Comte’s positivisme scientifique. His famous Oración cívica, given in Guanajuato 57 years after the emergence of the Independence movement in Dolores, unequivocally declares the aims of the partido progresista cum positivista to be synonymous with the remedy for the nation’s manifold problems:

[...] Es, en fin, la de sacar, conforme al consejo de Comte, las grandes lecciones sociales que deben ofrecer a todos esas dolorosas colisiones que la anarquía, que reina actualmente en los espíritus y en las ideas, provoca por todas partes, y que no puede cesar hasta que una doctrina verdaderamente universal reúna todas las inteligencias en una síntesis común.”370

Barreda also equates the dynamics of scientific advance with those of historical progression, and sees in the nation’s history since 1810 a necessary movement toward the acceptance of novel ideas, including an optimally-stable, scientifically-administrated politics:

diciembre de ese año (en cuya redacción participa Barreda por encargo del ministro de Justicia e Instrucción Pública de Juárez, Antonio Martínez de Castro). Por la misma se sanciona la enseñanza elemental obligatoria, laica y gratuita, y también se dispone la abolición de los antiguos bachilleratos y su centralización en una Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (el sistema de universidades había sido ya abolido). Barreda, su primer director, convertiría a ésta en una especie de laboratorio para la puesta en práctica de las doctrinas filosófico-pedagógicas de Comte —a quien Barreda conoce personalmente cuando asiste a las famosas conferencias que aquél dictó en el Palais Royal—.” José Palti, Elías. La invención de una legitimidad: razón y retórica en el pensamiento mexicano del siglo XIX: Un estudio sobre las formas del discurso político. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005. 292. Print.

370 Ibid.
[... ] Una necesidad se hace sentir por todas partes, para todos aquellos que no quieren, que no pueden dejar la historia entregada al capricho de influencias providenciales, ni al azar de fortuitos accidentes, sino que trabajan por ver en ella una ciencia, más difícil sin duda, pero sujeta, como las demás, a leyes que la dominan y que hacen posible la previsión de los hechos por venir, y la explicación de los que ya han pasado. Este deber y esta necesidad, es la de hallar el hilo que pueda servirnos de guía y permitirnos recorrer, sin peligro de extraviarnos, este intrincado dédalo de luchas y de resistencias, de avances y de retrogradaciones, que se han sucedido sin tregua en este terrible pero fecundo período de nuestra vida nacional: es la de presentar esta serie de hechos, al parecer extraños y excepcionales, como un conjunto compacto y homogéneo, como el desarrollo necesario y fatal de un programa latente, si puedo expresarme así, que nadie había formulado con precisión pero que el buen sentido popular había sabido adivinar con su perspicacia y natural empirismo.371 (My emphasis)

The attempt to interpellate its audience with the term conciudadanos betrays the way in which Barreda’s Oración cívica tacitly presupposes its own popular support. Barreda’s appeal goes far beyond a praise of the utility of science; rather than being one element among many in the drive toward the progress of Modernity as he envisioned it, Barreda holds that science ought to exercise total control of the socio-political field. Even if the necessity of this form of technocratic government is still hidden from the pueblo (a fact implied in the very act of giving such a discourse), Barreda nevertheless insists that the superiority of the Partido Progresivo’s technical and scientific understanding has allowed them to be preternaturally aware of that necessity all along. The Oración uses that claim to justify the assertion of a further equivalency between Comte’s aims on a social, scientific, and metaphysical level and those of the Partido Progresivo:

[La meta] es la de hacer ver que durante todo el tiempo en que parecía que navegábamos sin brújula y sin norte, el partido progresista, al través de mil escollos y de inmensas y obstinadas resistencias, ha caminado siempre en buen rumbo, hasta lograr después de la más dolorosa y la más fecunda de nuestras luchas, el grandioso resultado que hoy palpamos, admirados y sorprendidos casi de nuestra propia obra […].372

From Barreda’s perspective, now is hardly the time for questions: the battle has been decided, the only viable project is the positive one he propounds, and any opposition to

that newly-crowned order can only stand between Mexico and the untrammeled enjoyment of the much-promised fruits of Modernity.\textsuperscript{373}

The epigram chosen for UNAM’s edition of the \textit{Oración} provides much-needed context for the meaning and ramifications of Barreda’s technocratic pretensions:

Dans les douleureuses collisions nous prépare nécessairement l’anarchie actuelle, les philosophes qui les auront prévues, seront déjà préparés à y [f]aire [sic] convenablement ressortir les grands leçons sociales qu’elles doivent offrir à tous.\textsuperscript{374}

The foregoing passage is drawn from the 57th lesson of Auguste Comte’s incomparably dense and ambitious totalization and exposition of the “Positive Science of the New Age,” and the summary description of the lesson from that tome speaks volumes regarding the vast dimensions of the newly delimited domain of positive science:

57° Leçon […] Appréciation générale de la portion déjà accomplie de la révolution française ou européenne. — Détermination rationnelle de la tendance finale des sociétés modernes, d'après l'ensemble du passé humain : état pleinement positif, ou âge de la généralité, caractérisé par une nouvelle prépondérance normale de l'esprit d'ensemble sur l'esprit de détail.\textsuperscript{375}

Following Comte, Barreda summarily condemns all opposition to the scientific administration of politics as “anarchy,” seeing it as the only force capable of strangling the nascent positive order in its crib. On his account, it is because of such anarchy in the face of order that attempts to constitute a sense of national unity have failed time and time again:

Pero por otra parte, los errores cometidos por los hombres en quienes recayó la dirección de los negocios públicos y, por otra, los elementos poderosos de anarquía y de división que como resto del antiguo régimen quedaban en el seno mismo de la nueva nación, se opusieron y debían fatalmente oponerse, a que tan deseado bien llegase todavía. ¡No se regenera un país, ni se cambian radicalmente sus instituciones y sus hábitos, en el corto espacio de dos lustros! ¡No se acierta del

\textsuperscript{373} For Barreda, this reliance on positive science necessarily excludes any form of “supernatural” explanation; the promised foresight of his new system requires that this be the case because of the impossibility of addressing such phenomena through the Scientific Method: “Si tan importante acontecimiento no hubiese sido preparado de antemano por un concurso de influencias lentas y sordas, pero reales y poderosas, él sería inexplicable de todo punto, y no sería ya un hecho histórico sino un romance fabuloso; no hubiera sido una heroicidad sino un milagro el haberlo llevado a cabo, y como tal estaría fuera de nuestro punto de vista, que conforme a los preceptos de la verdadera ciencia filosófica, cuya mira es siempre la previsión, tiene que hacer a un lado toda influencia sobrenatural, porque no estando sujeta a leyes invariables no puede ser objeto ni fundamento de explicación ni previsión racional alguna.” \textit{Op. cit.} 7.

\textsuperscript{374} \textit{Op. cit.} 5.

primer golpe con las verdaderas necesidades de una nación que en medio de la insurrección no había podido aprender sino a pelear y que antes de ella sólo sabía resignarse! ¡No se apagan ni enfrían, luego que tocan la tierra, las ardientes lavas del volcán que acaba de estallar!

Before all else, the order revealed by positive inquiry must be reinforced against the “anarchic” forces that jeopardize its legitimacy.

Barreda’s assessment of the situation depends upon his assumption of the necessity of gradual change through the progressive dissemination of ideas. He sees an exemplary instance of the gradual triumph of such ideas in the political victory celebrated by his Oración:

¿Cuáles fueron, pues, esas influencias insensibles cuya acción acumulada por el transcurso del tiempo, pudo en un momento oportuno luchar primero, y más tarde salir vencedora de resistencias que parecían incontrastables? Todas ellas pueden reducirse a una sola –pero formidable y decisiva– la emancipación mental, caracterizada por la gradual decadencia de las doctrinas antiguas, y su progresiva sustitución por las modernas; decadencia y sustitución que, marchando sin cesar y de continuo, acababan por producir una completa transformación antes que hayan podido siquiera notarse sus avances.

Key to this formulation of progress is a form of mental emancipation that Barreda describes as “caracterizada por la gradual decadencia de las doctrinas antiguas, y su progresiva sustitución por las modernas.” In spite of the risk of lethargic development entailed by a gradualist approach, the Oración insists that competition in the sphere of ideas will inevitably spur on progress. Barreda signals the eventual triumph of Galileo’s cosmology as a historical proof of this sort of inevitability:

Galileo no había hecho otra cosa que prohijarla y allanar algunas dificultades de mecánica, que se habían opuesto hasta entonces a su generalización; pero lo repito, ninguna prueba positiva podía darse hasta entonces de la realidad del doble movimiento que se atribuía a la tierra; la primera prueba matemática de este importante hecho no debía venir sino un siglo después, con el fenómeno de la aberración descubierto por Bradley. Y sin embargo, era ya tal el espíritu antiteológico que reinaba en tiempo de Galileo, que bastó que la hipótesis condenada explicase satisfactoriamente los hechos a que se refería y que no chocase, como en los principios se había creído, con las leyes de la física o de la mecánica, para que ella hubiese sido bien pronto universalmente admitida, a despecho del Concilio, del Texto y de la Inquisición. Más aún: el Texto mismo tuvo por fin que plegarse a sufrir

378 Ibid.
In effect, just as Galileo’s innovations eventually led to a reckoning within Catholic dogma, Gabino Barreda declares that the emergence of popular sovereignty has the same destabilizing effect on the ideological structures of his own day. Barreda then reappropriates the notion of popular sovereignty and insists that it has already been secured by his project. The positive philosophy that he portrays as the culmination of the Mexican struggle for emancipation depends on its gradual acceptance in the popular mind for its success. After divesting the Church and the Military of their extraordinary privileges and exemptions, Barreda believes that mental emancipation will follow just as inevitably as the technological development promised by the Partido Progresivo:

Las clases privilegiadas que en 1857 se habían visto privadas de sus fueros y preeminencias, que en 1861 vieron por fin sancionada con espléndido triunfo esta conquista del siglo y ratificada irrevocablemente la medida de alta política, que arrancaba de manos de la más poderosa de dichas clases, el arma que le había siempre servido para sembrar la desunión y prolongar la anarquía, derribando, por medio de la corrupción de la tropa a los gobiernos que trataban de sustraerse a su degradante tutela: estas clases privilegiadas, repito, llegaron por fin a persuadirse de su completa impotencia, pues, por una parte, el antiguo ejército, habiéndose visto vencido y derrotado por soldados noveles y generales improvisados, perdió necesariamente el prestigio y con él la influencia que un hábito de muchos años le había sólo conservado; y por otra, el clero comprendió su desprestigio y decadencia, al ver que había hecho uso sin éxito alguno, de todas sus armas espirituales - únicas que le quedaban para defender a todo trance unos bienes que él aparenta creer que posee por derecho divino, y sobre los cuales le niega por lo mismo, todo derecho a la sociedad y al gobierno, que es su representante. ¡Como si algo pudiese existir dentro de la sociedad que no emanase de ella misma! ¡Como si la propiedad y demás bases de aquélla, por lo mismo que están destinadas a su conservación y no a su ruina, no debiesen estar sujetas a reglas que les hagan conservar siempre el carácter de protectoras, y no de enemigas de la sociedad! ¡Como si alguna vez el medio debiera preferirse al fin para el cual se instituye!  

As one of the themes of Part II of this investigation is the deification and the occultation of the faults of historical figures, it is particularly interesting to note here that the passage just quoted, as well as the incendiary anti-clerical passage to follow, are both omitted from the “official” edition of the text published by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma Metropolitana: “Es inútil insistir aquí sobre la importancia de este espléndido triunfo del espíritu de demostración sobre el espíritu de autoridad; baste saber que desde entonces los papeles se trocaron, y el que antes imperaba sin contradicción y decía sin réplica, marcha hoy detrás de su rival, recogiendo con una avidez que indica su pobreza, la menor coincidencia que aparece entre ambas doctrinas, sin esperar siquiera a que estén demostradas, para servirse de ella como un pedestal sobre el cual se complaza en apoyar su bamboleante edificio.” The reason for excising these words from the most significant speech of an illustrious figure like Barreda can likely be guessed at, granted the group toward which their critique was directed. Fortunately for scholarship, those omitted texts have been included in José Luis Gómez Martínez’s edition of the text, available at http://biblioteca.org.ar/libros/1112.pdf.

As might be anticipated from a philosophy that extolls the value of the totality over that of any of its particular members ("l'esprit d'ensemble sur l'esprit de détail"), the above citation forwards a tautological notion of popular sovereignty as a ground for the positive progress of the nation, but it makes no mention of any future role for democratic decision. Rather, Mexico must now be re-educated by the victors until they are capable of realizing the victory already established by the Constitution of 1857 and the War of Reform (1857-1861). But, it should be asked: what say will the pueblo have in its own governance after graduating from the education imparted by its erstwhile positivist schoolmasters?

_El nigromante_ directly addressed these very issues, but he arrived at very different conclusions than those of Barreda, a fact that gave rise to a series of vicious polemics between Ramírez and the _positivistas puros_. Writing some 20 years before Barreda’s _Oración Cívica_, Ramírez had already scathingly indicated how easily appeals to popular sentiment can and have been manipulated by the official ideology:

Mientras el órgano oficial se esfuerza en persuadir a la opinión pública, que la opinión pública está por el gobierno, nosotros daremos sobre la opinión pública en general nuestra opinión privada, dejando a cada uno en particular que opine sobre la misma opinión y sobre el gobierno, como se le antoje.

Here again, _el nigromante_ reveals the dark side of emphasizing the general over the particular; the peculiar feature of “public opinion” is that it is everywhere and nowhere.

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381 This is a reference to _El Tiempo_, a conservative newspaper headed by Lucas Alamán and staunchly opposed to Ramírez’s stated objectives. Beginning in 1845, _El Tiempo_ and Ignacio Ramírez’s _Don Simplicio_ served as an intellectual battleground between Alamán and Ramírez. Their debate was eventually submitted to a popular vote, calculated in accordance with the sales of each newspaper. Although Ramírez emerged the popular victor, Alamán utilized his competitor’s triumph as an excuse to have him jailed by Conservative president Mariano Paredes. Cf. Arellano, Emilio. _La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante_. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 35. Print.

The abstraction it relies on seems to lack any fixed referent in reality capable of justifying its claim to represent the *pueblo*:

Franca, España y Portugal, cuando expulsaron a los jesuitas; México, cuando se hizo independiente; el ejército, cuando ha establecido una dictadura militar; el ilustre ayuntamiento de esta capital, cuando ha promovido una procesión; la joven de Iztacalco, que oculta el fruto de amores ilícitos, han obrado, según todos ellos dicen, respetando la opinión pública: de donde podemos inferir que la opinión pública, unas veces es el voto de muchas naciones, otras, el de una sola; ya el de una corporación, ya el de una ciudad, ya el de un pueblo muy mezquino. Como los jesuitas no estaban por su destierro; como España se opuso a nuestra Independencia; como las juntas departamentales protestan contra algunos planes; y como Maravatío se ignora la crónica escandalosa del joven de Iztacalco, podemos también asegurar que hay opiniones públicas diversas, que las hay contrarias, y finalmente, que algunas de ellas no tienen ecos más lejanos que la voz de un pollino del rancho donde suenan; aun un rebuzno del asno de Don Simplicio tiene más oyentes que la opinión del puritano.

Siendo esto así: ¿se deberá respetar la opinión pública? ¿Cuál, de tantas, deberá respetarse?  

Just as life experience is necessarily different, so too must be public opinion. Taking this into account, just five months before the public delivery of the *Oración cívica*, Ramírez asserted, against Barreda, that the specter of political anarchy was not the result of the diversity of public opinion but rather a sure sign of the imposition of an absolutist ideology: “Esto quiere decir, señores teólogos del comercio, que en la Iglesia acontece lo que en toda sociedad bajo un gobierno arbitrario; el absolutismo conduce á la anarquía.”

In accordance with this thesis, Ramírez’s unrelenting “Jacobin” critique distills the essence of the conflict by singling-out the source of ideological hegemony and the epidemic social antagonism engendered by its domineering, dogmatic absolutism:

Pero si la opinión particular se opone a la pública, ¿qué haremos? Indagar dónde está la fuerza: mientras Napoleón fue más fuerte, esclavizó a la Europa; cuando la Europa fue más fuerte, encadenó a Napoleón. Hoy nuestro gobierno es más fuerte y enérgico; él mismo lo ha dicho.

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The persistent ideological corruption and manipulation that obstructs and constricts the manifestation of true, radical democracy works in the service of those in power and serves to obscure the fact that those who most loudly proclaim the notion of liberty are frequently also those with the most to gain from its proclamation. Barreda’s position is largely representative of the platform that would be adopted by Porfirio Díaz and his Científico cronies during the next fifty years, but its naïve formulation is reliant upon the paradoxical ability of government to arrogate unto itself the rights and liberties that naturally pertain to its constituents:

Pero si la esencia de todo gobierno general es representar el voto de la mayoría de la nación, y muchas de sus atribuciones no necesitan el voto de la mayoría, es claro que debe despojarse de ellas para cederlas a los interesados, y que persistir en conservarlas es pretender el ejercicio de una influencia funesta para los gobernados, y solamente digna del orgullo que se creería capaz de empuñar el cetro del mundo, si tuviera fuerza para sostenerlo, porque ignora que no es lo mismo esclavizar que gobernar.386

Rather than resigning oneself to the inevitability of a putatively superior order, Ramírez emphasizes that truth is found by analyzing each particular situation. An appeal to the felt necessities of the populace is the only way to ensure that government does not degenerate into a new form of domination:

Si se debe escuchar la voz de los hombres instruidos, ¿qué mortal omniscio en todas las necesidades de los pueblos y de los hombres? ¿Quién más instruido que el mismo interesado? Cuando un niño tiene hambre, él lo sabe mejor que nadie; y muchas veces ya una clase, ya una ciudad pide pan, cuando la mayoría de la nación duerme en abundancia.387

After all, Ramírez argues, it is only logical that power concentrated in the hands of a chosen few should fail to work for the benefit of the multitudes. Furthermore, if the solution lies in the autonomy and empowerment of the people, the problem nonetheless appears to be a universal consequence of authoritarian absolutism:

Difícil es probar la bondad y la necesidad de los gobiernos; pero á nadie se oculta que ese sistema de entregar los negocios comunales á forzosos apoderados, engendra la corrupción y la tirania; á pesar de la imprenta y del vapor y de la tribuna, en las naciones más democráticas, en los

387 Ibid.
Estados Unidos, Johnson burla sus compromisos con sus partidarios; y en el extranjero, abusando de un imbécil, somete á los mexicanos, nos obliga á la humillación de celebrar tratados como los que ha impuesto á las tribus indígenas para aniquilarlas!

Las autoridades, sea cual fuere su procedencia, no trabajan sino para sí; el espíritu de corporación que las anima, no se encuentra seguro, sino levantando su trono entre una iglesia y una cárcel; la prisión para el alma y para el cuerpo. Natural era que la vil multitud acabase de buscar lejos del sistema administrativo el aseguramiento de todos sus intereses, la encarnación de sus deseos, el ejercicio de la soberanía que se le ha usurpado por los mismos que se la han reconocido.  

A solution to the absolutist mentality is not to be found in the triumphant reason of the technocratic managers of the State. It instead consists in recognizing the pueblo’s ability to reason for itself.

As Ramírez sees it, once individual and collective autonomy is returned to the pueblo from its erstwhile usurpers, a new mode of participatory government becomes possible and readily reveals the inadequacies of its officially-sanctioned predecessor. If, however, the pueblo is kept from self-governance, it will prove both the impotence of the national administration and the necessity of its absolute destruction for the sake of the Reform it promised:

Las naciones perecían cuando el pensamiento social era el misterio del sacerdote; el secreto del monarca; el monopolio de la nobleza; pero ahora la verdad, la justicia, la palabra de salvación descienden de preferencia a los talleres y a las chozas, y si la civilización nos traicionara, no vacilaríamos en sacrificarla, refugiándonos en esta frontera hospitalaria para todos los perseguidos, donde nos entregaríamos todas las noches a la danza frenética, inspiradora de las cabelleras; no sería la primera vez que el dios de la guerra se levantase sobre un pirámide de esqueletos humanos. El trueno resuene por todas las playas, incende el rayo todas las alturas y respondan con su explosión los apagados volcanes de la América; el suelo que pisemos será nuestra patria, y dominando el fragor universal con nuestro acento, escúchense claras, solemnes, estas palabras: ¡libertad, reforma! Hidalgo las repetirá desde el cielo.

Ramírez opposes the “administrative” approach of absolutist dogmatism to the freedom and spontaneity of egalitarian organization through what he conceptualizes as a distinct model of “association”:

Allí, allí está el arrecife, donde comienza la confusión entre los principios administrativos y los sociales.

The qualification of association as “spontaneous” places it within the realm of Nature, meaning it stands opposed to the institutionalized organs of governmental administration. Those institutions are artificial phenomena that have persisted beyond their own obsolescence and so must resort to deception and subterfuge to justify their continued existence:

By obstructing possibilities for the spontaneous flowering of association, the institutions of administrative governance deny the natural capacity for reason of those they purport to represent and squelch the possibilities of meaningful, lasting reform by occluding and usurping the channels through which community would naturally arise. As Ramírez’s insistence on the “inhumane” character of such governance indicates, the artifice grounding absolutist dogmatism like the “positive philosophy” of Comte and his progeny Barreda denies the intrinsic, spontaneous dynamics emergent in both human nature and Nature itself. Furthermore, there is good reason for Ramírez to insist on this political point, as it follows logically from his rejection of absolutism and his attempt at the de-deification of Nature mentioned in the foregoing. The next section returns to the interrogation prompted by the “death of God” in order to examine how Ramírez’s thought reconceptualizes the relationship between humanity, Nature, and truth.

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391 Ibid.
3.4 Sentiment and Association: Contract and Will between Law and Nature

The “death of God” coincides with the rise of the modern nation-state, but in the default of the divine a familiar question reoccurs in a new context: after old regimes fall under the weight of their own sin, how can the body politic be revived and reimagined? Ramírez’s approach to radical reform requires that the relationship between humanity, truth, and Nature be fundamentally revalorized. His thought confronts this issue head-on by asking: what is humanity’s relation to Truth, to Nature, and unto itself? The officially-recognized “positive philosophy” of Gabino Barreda also attempted to respond to these questions, and Ramírez opposed its purported solutions with intensifying vehemence. The difference between Barreda and Ramírez’s respective responses proves decisive for each of their bodies of thought. The fundamental difference between the two thinkers can be seen through analysis of one of Barreda’s foundational formulations of the Partido Progresivo’s positive project.

At the close of the Oración cívica, Barreda lays all of his conceptual cards on the table and summarizes the totality of the positive project in terms of its “means,” “basis,” and “end”: “Conciudadanos: que en lo de adelante sea nuestra divisa LIBERTAD, ORDEN Y PROGRESO; la libertad como MEDIO; el orden como BASE y el progreso como FIN […]” (original emphasis).392 To this we may oppose another formulation, one parsed in a similar syntax but more appropriate to Ramírez’s thought: association as MEANS; will (voluntad) as BASIS; and liberty as END. There are fundamental differences between

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these two formulations, differences that correlate with the distinct ways of conceiving of Nature forwarded by Ramírez’s “Jacobin” liberalism and Barreda’s “positive philosophy.”

It should first be noted that the three terms invoked by Barreda, namely, “means,” “base,” and “end,” directly correspond to the three relations that must be reassessed and revalorized in the aftermath of the death of God. The question of “means,” for example, is dependent upon the question of who or what can be a credible agent of social or historical change. As it is employed in the politically-charged *Oración cívica*, the notion of “means” already implies that a positive answer has been obtained to the question of whether or not humanity is capable of changing itself or the world around it. From this perspective, all that remains is to determine the optimal means by which those agents might affect the change of which they have been presupposed to be capable.

Since this argument holds that people are already in a position to effect change, all that remains is to set the people to work on his project. This is why Barreda proffers “liberty” as the means for change but restricts all revolutionary action to the intellectual level. For Barreda, liberty is restricted to liberty of inquiry, not liberty of action:

> Que en lo sucesivo una plena libertad de conciencia, una absoluta libertad de exposición y de discusión, dando espacio a todas las ideas y campo a todas las inspiraciones, deje esparcir la luz por todas partes y haga innecesaria e imposible toda connoción que no sea puramente espiritual, toda revolución que no sea meramente intelectual. Que el orden material, conservado a todo trance por los gobernantes y respetado por los gobernados, sea el garante cierto y el modo seguro de caminar siempre por el sendero florido del progreso y de la civilización.

Barreda’s unshakeable certainty is grounded in Auguste Comte’s account of the coming reign of the “positive philosophy.” In his *Cours de philosophie positive*, Comte emphasizes that the revolution brought about by the coming of the “positive philosophy” is general in character, and involves a consequent, not prior, change in human character. This change in

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humanity’s character *writ large* parallels the change in character one might actually undergo over the span of a lifetime:

Cette révolution générale de l’esprit humain peut d’ailleurs être aisément constatée aujourd’hui, d’une manière très sensible, quoiqu’indirecte, en considérant le développement de l’intelligence individuelle. Le point de départ étant nécessairement le même dans l’éducation de l’individu que dans celle de l’espèce, les diverses phases principales de la première doivent représenter les époques fondamentales de la seconde. Or, chacun de nous, en contemplant sa propre histoire, ne se souvient-il pas qu’il a été successivement, quant à ses notions les plus importantes, théologien dans son enfance, métaphysicien dans sa jeunesse, et physicien dans sa virilité? Cette vérification est facile aujourd’hui pour tous les hommes au niveau de leur siècle.394 (My emphasis)

Barreda is following this line of thought when he asserts that all the necessary pieces are available to construct a new order. He contends that progress requires facilitating a climate in which these pieces can be efficiently and gradually put into place:

Hemos visto que dos generaciones enteras se han sacrificado a esta obra de renovación y a la preparación indispensables de los materiales de reconstrucción.

*Mas hoy esta labor está concluida, todos los elementos de la reconstrucción social están reunidos; todos los obstáculos se encuentran allanados; todas las fuerzas morales, intelectuales o políticas que deben concurrir con su cooperación, han surgido ya.*

La base misma de este grandioso edificio está sentada. Tenemos esas leyes de Reforma que nos han puesto en el camino de la civilización, más adelante que ningún otro pueblo. Tenemos una Constitución que ha sido el faro luminoso al que, en medio de este tempestuoso mar de la invasión, se han vuelto todas las miradas y ha servido a la vez de consuelo y de guía a todos los patriotas que luchaban aislados y sin otro centro hacia el cual pudiesen gravitar sus esfuerzos; una Constitución que, abriendo la puerta a las innovaciones que la experiencia llegue a demostrar necesarias, hace inútil e imprudente, por no decir criminal, toda tentativa de reforma constitucional por la vía revolucionaria.

*Hoy la paz y el orden, conservados por algún tiempo, harán por sí solos todo lo que resta.*395

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395 Barreda, Gabino. *Oración cívica*. Mexico City: Imprenta Madero, 1979. 19. Print. It should also be noted that the position taken here by Barreda is indeed extreme in its formulation of the inevitability of progress when compared with Comte’s own carefully qualified claims to the same in the *Cours de la philosophie positive*: “Depuis cette mémorable époque, le mouvement d’ascension de la philosophie positive, et le mouvement de décadence de la philosophie théologique et métaphysique, ont été extrêmement marqués. Ils se sont enfin tellement prononcés, qu’il est devenu impossible aujourd’hui, à tous les observateurs ayant conscience de leur siècle, de méconnaître la destination finale de l’intelligence humaine pour les études positives, ainsi que son éloignement désormais irrévocable pour ces vaines doctrines et pour ces méthodes provisoires qui ne pouvaient convenir qu’à son premier essor. Ainsi, cette révolution fondamentale s’accomplira nécessairement dans toute son étendue. Si donc il lui reste encore quelque grande conquête à faire, quelque branche principale du domaine intellectuel à envahir, on peut être certain que la transformation s’y opérera, comme elle s’est effectuée dans toutes les autres. Car il serait évidemment contradictoire de supposer que l’esprit humain, si disposé à l’unité de méthode, conservât indéfiniment, pour une seule classe de phénomènes, sa manière primitive de philosopher, lorsqu’une fois il est arrivé à adopter pour tout le reste une nouvelle marche philosophique, d’un caractère absolument opposé. Tout se réduit donc à une simple question de fait : la philosophie positive, qui, dans les deux derniers siècles, a pris graduellement une si grande extension, embrasse-t-elle aujourd’hui tous les ordres de phénomènes? Il est évident que cela n’est
The action of putting those pieces into place requires that natural laws in all domains be derived through positive observation. Investigation of the world should be guided into alignment with those laws, which is to say, into unity with the structure of Nature itself. This latter turn equates Nature with the positive order described by the sciences.

Comte’s work never doubts the existence of that positive order in Nature. Accordingly, the philosophie positive holds that to reduce a phenomenon to the laws governing it is to represent it in “real terms”:

Enfin, dans l'état positif, l'esprit humain reconnaissant l'impossibilité d'obtenir des notions absolues, renonce à chercher l'origine et la destination de l'univers, et à connaître les causes intimes des phénomènes, pour s'attacher uniquement à découvrir, par l'usage bien combiné du raisonnement et de l'observation, leurs lois effectives, c'est-à-dire leurs relations invariables de succession et de similitude. L'explication des faits, réduite alors à ses termes réels, n'est plus désormais que la liaison établie entre les divers phénomènes particuliers et quelques faits généraux, dont les progrès de la science tendent de plus en plus à diminuer le nombre.396 (My emphasis)

While the methodology that Comte mentions is supposed to exhaustively express reality, Comte himself admits that the reality thusly expressed is itself only a more advanced projection of the same hypostatic, external One posited in the theological and metaphysical phases of human understanding:397

397 Comte’s project posits a necessary, renovatory movement of world-historical human understanding, one tracing the passage through provisional “theological” and “metaphysical” phases to finally arrive at a “positive phase of understanding”: “[…] L'évolution scientifique, parvenue, dans le domaine inorganique, et surtout mathématique, à l'éclat le plus caractéristique, commence à manifester directement l'incompatibilité déjà radicale de l'esprit positif avec la prépondérance de l'ancienne philosophie, principalement par suite des éminentes découvertes qui renouvel lent totalement le système des notions astronomiques, ainsi toujours destiné à déterminer les grandes transitions mentales, comme dans les passages antérieurs du fétichisme au polythéisme et de celui-ci au monothéisme: enfin, sous cette irrésistible impulsion, une crise vraiment décisive s'opère bientôt dans l'évolution purement philosophique, d'après l'heureuse émancipation fondamentale de l'esprit positif envers l'esprit métaphysique, qui aboutit au compromis, évidemment provisoire, institué par Descartes, dernière modification du partage primordial organisé par Aristote et Platon entre la philosophie naturelle et la philosophie morale, répartition déjà altérée, au profit de la métaphysique, par la scolastique du moyen âge; la méthode positive entre alors irrévocablement en possession exclusive de l'étude entière du monde extérieur, en réduisant l'ancienne méthode à l'étude, aussi restreinte que possible, de l'intelligence et de la sociabilité, où elle ne pouvait plus maintenir longtemps une suprématie devenu profundément stérile. Tout cet ensemble d'opérations critiques et organiques amène nécessairement la phase
Le système théologique est parvenu à la plus haute perfection dont il soit susceptible, quand il a substitué l'action providentielle d'un être unique au jeu varié des nombreuses divinités indépendantes qui avaient été imaginées primitivement. De même, le dernier terme du système métaphysique consiste à concevoir, au lieu des différentes entités particulières, une seule grande entité générale, la nature, envisagée comme la source unique de tous les phénomènes. Pareillement, la perfection du système positif, vers laquelle il tend sans cesse, quoiqu'il soit très probable qu'il ne doive jamais l'atteindre, serait de pouvoir se représenter tous les divers phénomènes observables comme des cas particuliers d'un seul fait général, tel que celui de la gravitation, par exemple.\[^{398}\]

Nevertheless, the “objectivity” assumed by Comte’s “positive” approach is problematic when carried to its end. In his indispensable *La invención de una legitimidad*, Elias José Palti astutely argues that Barreda recognized that science’s apparent objectivity rests on external factors for its genesis. That fact carried potentially fatal consequences for any effort at establishing a totalizing approach to knowledge:

Así, de la mano de Stuart Mill, Barreda comenzaba a desenvolver una problemática a la cual no podía, sin embargo, conducir hasta sus últimas conclusiones sin destruir todo su concepto del método científico. Su solo planteamiento resulta, no obstante, sintomático.

Mediante la introducción de esta distinción entre dos fases en la elaboración del conocimiento científico, una en que el intelecto es pasivo, receptivo (la descriptiva) y en la otra activo, creativo (la explicativa), Barreda condensaba su más reciente comprobación histórica; a saber: que las condiciones fundamentales para la articulación de un cuerpo de conocimiento se le imponían como una circunstancia externa a él; en fin, que la razón no es verdaderamente autosuficiente (ni, por lo tanto, inmune al azar, la contingencia), sino que crea y opera dentro de un dominio acotado y circunscrito por factores ajenos a su control.

En última instancia, tal aparente disquisición teórica articula, de un modo elíptico (traducido en clave epistemológica), un problema mucho menos teórico que por ese entonces habría llevado al fracaso al programa educativo de Barreda: que el mismo tenía ya como su presupuesto una instancia de realidad que escapaba a su dominio, esto es, la abolición de la multiplicidad de escuelas preexistentes (multiplicidad que, de mantenerse, habría necesariamente de perpetuar los antagonismos) y su unificación en una sola (la ENP )\[^{399}\]—lo que, evidentemente, sólo podía realizar y garantizar el poder político—. En definitiva, tal revelación hacía manifiesto el hecho de que la fijación de ese "fondo común de verdades" a que aspiraba era más un corolario de la instauración del nuevo orden liberal que su sustento, lo que sólo se pondría en evidencia, sin embargo, cuando ese orden se revelase menos sólido de lo que él hasta entonces imaginaba. Emergería así nuevamente aquello que Barreda había intentado erradicar del ámbito social: su esencia política oculta.\[^{400}\]

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\[^{399}\] The ENP, or Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, was the institutional heart of Porfirián educational reform.

Working in the shadow of the “death of God,” *el Nigromante* acknowledges the impossibility of establishing an absolute basis for positive knowledge, but instead of shirking the consequences of that realization, he takes it to its proper end and exposes what Palti rightly signals as the “decisionist foundation grounding all knowledge”:

En efecto, la introducción de esa nueva instancia en el "método científico", la descripción, trataba de dar cuenta de los límites de la objetividad de la ciencia, lo que hace asomar, sin embargo, el espectro de un fundamento decisionista en la base de todo conocimiento. La distinción entre descripciones y explicaciones fisuraba la inmanencia de su campo, algo que la segunda distinción que establece, entre representación y fórmula, tratando de ocultar, terminaba volviendo aun más manifiesto.  

Ramírez’s response is to radicalize this gap in knowledge and assert the fundamental irreducibility of knowledge to the will, which phenomenon he posits as the ground of being. As Palti has argued, the political consequences of this ontological shift from the fixed, law-bound order of nature to Ramírez’s voluntarist ontology are made palpable in the opposition that his political discourse forwards between “law” and “contract”:

Tocará a otro de los miembros de la ENP, Ignacio Ramírez, la tarea de llevar esta comprobación a sus últimas consecuencias lógicas, haciendo precisamente de la idea de tal irreductibilidad de la voluntad a la ley, que, para Barreda, hacía imposible todo gobierno, el centro de su concepto político, convirtiendo con ello al positivismo en una forma de liberalismo radical (lo que muestra, en última instancia, el carácter plurívoco del término positivismo y sus diferentes traducciones ideológicas posibles).

Because law and contract are nevertheless fundamental to the Liberal nation-building project, Ramírez’s thought must contend with the adversarial relationship between the popular will and the structures that purport to represent it.

The conjunction of National Socialism and a pseudo-Nietzschean reading of the “Will to Power” may initially render the usage of “Will” here repellent to today’s critical palate, but this is all the more reason to analyze precisely how Ramírez makes use of the term. As Palti’s investigation demonstrates, for Ramírez there could be no greater

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difference between what would become the Authoritarian or Fascist formulation of the Will and the significance of the same term (voluntad) in Ramírez’s corpus. In the former case the Will is conceptualized as a drive to domination or to realize the destiny of a particular people against -and this is the key word here- external opposition. However, Ramírez’s interpretation of voluntad functions in a manner wholly different from such a conception of the Will. Ramírez’s understanding of “Will/voluntad” is instead far more akin to the voluntarist metaphysics of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860).

In Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (1818), Schopenhauer rejects the search for a totalizing ground for knowledge as a futile attempt to reduce the phenomenal world to a scientific singularity. He instead holds that the process of scientific objectification (i.e. the construal of the world in terms of objects knowable to science) relies upon a fundamental omission for its realization. Such an understanding of the Will accords with the notion of φύσις qua the spontaneous emergence of the phenomena constitutive of our world: the origin of all things exceeds the powers of human explanation and understanding.

403 “It is on this account that Kant wanted, as we have said, to apply the name ‘science’ specially and even exclusively to these branches of knowledge together with logic. But, on the other hand, these branches of knowledge show us nothing more than mere connections, relations of one idea [Vorstellung] to another, form devoid of all content. All content which they receive, every phenomenon which fills these forms, contains something which is no longer completely knowable in its whole nature, something which can no longer be entirely explained through something else, something then which is groundless, through which consequently the knowledge loses its evidence and ceases to be completely lucid.” Schopenhauer, Arthur. "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung." Vol. 1. Trans. R B. Haldane and J Kemp. The World as Will and Idea. 7th ed. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1883. 4 vols. 157. Print.

404 "If therefore all mathematics affords us an exhaustive knowledge of that which in the phenomena is quantity, position, number, in a word, spatial and temporal relations; if all etiology gives us a complete account of the regular conditions under which phenomena, with all their determinations, appear in time and space, but, with it all, teaches us nothing more than why in each case this particular phenomenon must appear just at this time here, and at this place now ; it is clear that with their assistance we can never penetrate to the inner nature of things. There always remains something which no explanation can venture to attack, but which it always presupposes ; the forces of nature, the definite mode of operation of things, the quality and character of every phenomenon, that which is without ground, that which does not depend upon the form of the phenomenal, the principle of sufficient reason, but is something to which this form in itself is foreign, something which has yet entered this form, and now appears according to its law, a law, however, which only
short, the fact that there simply are things cannot be explained away by a description of the behavior of those things. Any act that attempts to explain the world necessarily proceeds from this blind spot, the fundamental and incomprehensible moment of decision that objectifies the world and allows for its phenomena to be comprehended under the heading of “natural laws.” In this way, the Will is fundamentally different from a law, be it a law of Nature or the law of the land. The law acts to canalize and constrict nature: laws must by definition stand against human nature in some basic sense or they would themselves be obsolete. If we all naturally acted in accordance with the law, there would effectively be no need for it. From this perspective, the law, and not the Will, is the equivalent of force (or as Palti argues, “poder”) because the force-of-law deployed in enforcement paradoxically both originates with and is usurped from those that the law is enforced against. The phenomena of the Will naturally emerge unless force intervenes determines the appearance, not that which appears, only the how, not the what, only the form, not the content.” Op. cit. 157-158.

405 “But certain original forces will always remain over; there will always remain as an insoluble residuum a content of phenomena which cannot be referred to their form, and thus cannot be explained from something else in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason. For in everything in nature there is something of which no ground can ever be assigned, of which no explanation is possible, and no ulterior cause is to be sought. This is the specific nature of its action, i.e., the nature of its existence, its being. Of each particular effect of the thing a cause may be certainly indicated, from which it follows that it must act just at this time and in this place; but no cause can ever be found from which it follows that a thing acts in general, and precisely in the way it does. If it has no other qualities, if it is merely a mote in a sunbeam, it yet exhibits this unfathomable something, at least as weight and impenetrability. But this, I say, is to the mote what his will is to a man; and, like the human will, it is, according to its inner nature, not subject to explanation; nay, more—it is in itself identical with this will. It is true that a motive may be given for every manifestation of will, for every act of will at a particular time and in a particular place, upon which it must necessarily follow, under the presupposition of the character of the man. But no reason can ever be given that the man has this character; that he wills at all; that, of several motives, just this one and no other, or indeed that any motive at all, moves his will. That which in the case of man is the unfathomable character which is presupposed in every explanation of his actions from motives is, in the case of every unorganized body, its definitive quality—the mode of its action, the manifestations of which are occasioned by impressions from without, while it itself, on the contrary, is determined by nothing outside itself, and thus is also inexplicable. Its particular manifestations, through which alone it becomes visible, are subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason; it itself is groundless.” Op. cit. 161-162. Schopenhauer’s argument as to the inscrutability of motivation and action resonates with Hume’s claims regarding the essential divorce between the passions and reason.

406 “La ‘libre concurrencia’ no sería, pues, más que otra forma de conquista donde si unos ganan es porque otros necesariamente pierden; el "precio justo", sólo un engaño; y toda transacción, un robo legalizado (de lo
to prevent their emergence, impede their continuance, or unnaturally prolong their survival. Understood within the paradigm of Ramírez’s thought, this means that law, as a phenomenon that institutionalizes force against the natural creative and destructive movements of voluntad, is an artificial construct. It follows from that realization that the very notion of “law” must be declared impotent for the purposes of either grounding a system of knowledge (e.g. la philosophie positive) or establishing and maintaining a system of governance. Writing in 1868, Ramírez declared that:

El socialismo antiguo y moderno, han cometido el error de buscar en una alianza con el cuerpo administrativo, su poder y su influencia; su salvación, su progreso, se reduce á emanciparse. Exista el gobierno, pero exista aislado; asociación, libertad, igualdad, fraternidad ven con odio lo que se llama ley, pero nacen del contrato: la lucha es entre la ley y el contrato!  

Ramírez’s dividing-line is clear: the top-down model of governance by “administration” stands in opposition to all of the virtues of the emancipated civic mind, namely, association, liberty, and fraternity. With his characteristic acumen, Palti places a fine point on this distinction by signaling the absolute opposition between law and contract in Ramírez’s thought:

La guerra entre ambos [la ley y el contrato] resulta del hecho de que expresan, respectivamente, regímenes de funcionamiento social opuestos entre sí: el mutuo consentimiento funda las asociaciones civiles, la ley crea el poder (la soberanía); las obligaciones libremente asumidas no necesitan de la fuerza para ser observadas, la ley sólo aparece junto con el intento de imponer tales obligaciones a los contrayentes contra su voluntad; la ruptura de un pacto es un acto de disidencia (y, por lo tanto, no es punible), la violación de la ley es un crimen. La ley (la soberanía), en síntesis, comienza donde la voluntad termina; por lo tanto, la primera no puede nunca fundarse en la segunda. La voluntad presupone necesariamente un fundamento trascendente, un absoluto; resulta, en fin, indisociable de la metafísica. “Yo no quiero soberanos —insistía

contrario, si el intercambio fuera equivalente no habría ganancia ni, por lo tanto, conveniencia para ninguna de las partes). No es otra cosa, finalmente, lo que sucede con los sistemas de poder; su acumulación en algún punto (el poder administrativo) supone una expropiación antecedente del capital político que existe disperso en la comunidad (el poder social), dado que los recursos, tanto económicos como políticos, que el gobernante pone en juego, ‘no los cria, solamente los muda’. El antagonismo entre ambos (los poderes administrativo y social) es así inevitable.” José Palti, Elías. La invención de una legitimidad: razón y retórica en el pensamiento mexicano del siglo XIX (Un estudio sobre las formas del discurso político. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005. 389-390. Print.

Ramírez—ni uno solo, ni varios, ni muchos, ni el pueblo, ni la... ¡Soberanía! metafisica/teología." (my emphasis).

The law constrains and stifles the natural outgrowth of human relations and associations, meaning that the law is naturally opposed to the very liberty that it purports to guarantee as a function of the new, positive order it promises to usher in. Furthermore, for Ramírez, the opposition between a liberty that demands emancipation from artificial (viz. not natural) restraints and the discursive bodies of law (be they scientific, judicial, political, or social) that bind the naturally-emergent voluntad of the people is applicable to all domains of existence. Only the irreducible voluntad, what Elías dubs “la contingencia propia a toda interacción social,” can ground Mexico’s national ambitions, but the ground is itself fundamentally abyssal and enigmatic. Nature, the wellspring of the Will, is incapable of bearing the weight of any sort of permanent, transcendental Order. What is instead required is the cultivation of a form of government capable of recognizing the limitations implicit in its own foundations.

Structures of knowledge are just as susceptible to staid imitation as governmental ones, so Ramírez also insists on foregoing the search for a transcendental form of liberty in favor of the concrete liberty to decide and act freely in the face of an unknowable future. Taken in their aggregate, the distinctions noted between Ramírez and Barreda illuminate the stark difference between the projects of the two thinkers:

Ser positivista venía a ser así para él lo opuesto que para Barreda: sólo en lo que es natural podía el hombre expresarse libremente y hacer manifiestas sus facultades creativas; el artificio, en cambio, era lo que impedía su libre desenvolvimiento —y esto comprendía, para Ramírez, todo tipo de institución, incluidas las universidades, las profesiones liberales, el matrimonio y, fundamentalmente, los gobiernos representativos—; todos meros vestigios de la edad oscura colonial destinados fatalmente a desaparecer. La libertad humana, para Ramírez, sólo podía comprenderse como la posibilidad de realizar nuestra voluntad y satisfacer nuestros deseos sin

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vnomos sometidos a constreñimiento externo alguno. Un contrato que no se pueda romper tan voluntariamente como se asumió (es decir, cualquier intento de regulación) será siempre, para él, un acto de coerción, un fraude diseñado y sostenido para el sometimiento de una de las partes contrayentes (obviamente, la más débil).409

Ramírez’s voluntarist perspective causes him to question how any form of government can maintain its legitimacy, while Barreda argues that that legitimacy is itself a *fait accompli*. This basic difference forever separates Ramírez’s voluntarist materialism from Barreda’s “positive philosophy.” Ramírez’s thought cannot be harmonized with the sort of technocratic, scientific reductivism pursued by Barreda’s *positivismo* or Comte’s *philosophie positive*. It is therefore impossible to bridge the gap between the two thinkers’s formulations of the schema “MEANS – BASE – END.”

For Ramírez, liberty is a condition produced by maintaining the freedom of natural tendencies against institutionalization and their subsequent ossification into structures of administration.410 Since the process of guaranteeing that liberty remains unbound is a continuous one, Ramírez’s thought holds that liberty can never be substantially presupposed in the way that Barreda would like. For Ramírez, liberty is never taken as a given available for the enjoyment of any rational agent. The battle for liberty is a persistent struggle, meaning that emancipation of the body and mind can only be achieved by constantly subverting any configuration of association not based on mutual consent.

410 Palti also recognizes the importance of the notion of liberty in Ramírez and its connection to Ramírez’s materialist/voluntarist position vis-à-vis Nature and the political: “Como vimos, para Ramírez, la libertad consistía en la ausencia de constreñimientos a las inclinaciones naturales. Y esto suponía, a su vez, la idea de la existencia de fuerzas activas operando a la materia, un concepto que alineaba sus ideas a una tradición particular de pensamiento. Su monismo no era médico-biológico, como el de Barreda, pero no por ello era una forma de mecanicismo (una de las dos categorías fundamentales en la historia de ideas dentro de las cuales supuestamente cabrían todos los sistemas de pensamiento), sino que se fundaba en un concepto químico-fisiológico de raíces vitalistas-materialistas.” Op. cit. 358.
This is the first key difference in what would be Ramírez’s version of Barreda’s equation: Barreda presupposes liberty—which he defines as intellectual liberty—as both the means through which progress may be attained and the ground upon which that progress will stand; Ramírez refuses to submit to that vision of a scientific utopia and offers up liberty as a goal in its stead. For Ramírez, the nature of liberty itself means that its very definition cannot be taken for granted or eternally determined. This is why voluntad must be allowed to express itself politically and socially through the only means of ordering capable of accommodating the volatile nature of spontaneously emerging voluntary association, to wit, the contract of mutual consent. To return to the equation, Ramírez’s answer to the problem of how to free and canalize voluntad is to propose association through the contract of mutual consent as the MEANS of progress. Again, this stands in opposition to the pre-existent atmosphere of liberty posited as a neutral ground for social and scientific progress by the positivists.

Furthermore, as liberty is taken to be natural, the foundational domain addressed by Ramírez is also essentially natural, although the meaning of “Nature” must be carefully defined in order to avoid conflation with competing positive models. In doing so, Ramírez’s concentration on literature comes into focus. As Palti masterfully argues, for Ramírez, the spontaneous liberty of natural forces is also operative in political and social relations:

Encontramos aquí los fundamentos físicos de los agrupamientos sociales. Para Ramírez, la diversidad humana es, en última instancia, una determinación natural, la cual deriva de la estructura corpuscular del mundo. Las partículas, piensa, se mueven en diversas direcciones comunicando al universo entero en el propio fluir de la materia, adquiriendo configuraciones singulares a medida que atraviesan medios diversos. ‘Ley física invariable—aseguraba— es que los cuerpos simples con sólo cambiar su posición en un compuesto, pueden producir las más complicadas y maravillosas apariencias.’ Así el universo es constantemente remodelado por la continua reorganización interna.
Because the spontaneous emergence of political relations is homologous to the forces of Nature, the endeavor to understand Nature must depart from a conception of its object that takes the fundamental instability of all knowledge into account. This means that the structures that purport to give knowledge of truth, be it social, political, or scientific, must all be razed and reestablished for the Reform necessary for progress. By insisting that all knowledge and thereby all relations between truth, Nature, and humanity be grounded in an irreducible unknown, Ramírez attempts to carry out in all domains what Nietzsche would later extol as the necessary de-deification of Nature, the first step in a process of redeeming mankind by first redeeming nature from its slavery to law:

Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed? How could it grow and multiply? We have some notion of the nature of the organic; and we should not reinterpret the exceedingly derivative, late, rare, accidental, that we perceive only on the crust of the earth and make of it something essential, universal, arid, eternal, which is what those people do who call the universe an organism. This nauseates me. Let us even beware of believing that the universe is a machine: it is certainly not constructed for one purpose, and calling it a "machine" does it far too much honor. Let us beware of positing generally and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars; even a glance into the Milky Way raises doubts whether there are not far coarser and more contradictory movements there, as well as stars with eternally linear paths, etc. The astral order in which we live is an exception; this order and the relative duration that depends on it have again made possible an exception of exceptions: the formation of the organic. The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms. Judged from the point of view of our reason, unsuccessful attempts are by all odds the rule, the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune which may never be called a melody—and ultimately even the phrase "unsuccessful attempt" is too anthropomorphic and reproachful.

Rethinking community and reimagining it in a national mold would also require humanity to rethink both its own nature and Nature itself.

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The de-deification of Nature and the radical voluntarist redefinition of a new natural humanity requires Ramírez to reject the second and third terms of Barreda’s argument as well. As Nietzsche and Schopenhauer see it, even if there were a transcendental structure governing Nature, it would have to exist beyond the bounds of human reason and comprehension. The mutualist approach to governance attends to this uncertainty and allows human organization to spontaneously flourish instead of attempting to engineer its growth. The “will of the people” can never be comprehended by Barreda’s positive order, and must thereby remain alienated from the progress that it promises. Ramírez forcefully maintains that the voluntad of the pueblo can never be realized through the action of a removed institutional order or the representative abstraction of the ballet-box:

Ramírez answers Barreda’s proclamation of order with the assertion that the BASE is in need of an all-encompassing renovation of norms in order to accommodate the spontaneous indeterminacy of the Will. The determination that the MEANS of advancement must be association through the contract of mutual consent paves the way by furnishing an organizational device capable of negotiating structural evolution in the face of the fundamental volatility of the Will. However, it is in the move to the END of the equation
of political action that the fundamental difference between Barreda and Ramírez becomes most palpably evident.

Ramírez’s thought opposes the notion of “liberty” *qua* the spontaneously emergent Will as manifested through mutual contract and association to Barreda’s vision of “progress” as the END of political action. In comparing “liberty” and “progress,” the directionality implied by each concept becomes significant. As its etymology makes explicit, “progress” implies a definite forward motion, the meaning of which is then extended to include an evolution or advance in the *status quo*. “Liberty,” by contrast, bespeaks a condition the immediacy of which renders it susceptible to either gain or loss. The ambiguity implied in the goal of progress is no less grave than that implied by the notion of liberty. Nevertheless, while the notion of progress begs the question regarding the legitimacy of its aims and end, Ramírez’s thought locates an advantage in the ambiguities similarly present in the notion of liberty.

Ramírez’s thought situates “liberty” as an END in opposition to Barreda’s assertion of “liberty” as the MEANS for the construction of a new age, and this is important for two reasons. Firstly, Ramírez insists that the declaration of “liberty” and its official adoption as a maxim are in no wise equivalent to its meaningful instantiation:

En vano se proclama en México como base de todas las instituciones sociales, la libertad y aun la soberanía de los individuos; en vano, porque las instituciones políticas tienen tanto de imperfecto como de meticuloso; en vano, porque las relaciones internacionales desconfian del individuo; en vano, porque el derecho penal se funda en la esclavitud del culpable; y, en vano, porque el derecho civil conserva la tutela de la autoridad para sancionar y regularizar las obligaciones que de cualquiera compromiso celebrado entre los particulares reciben su nacimiento y su fuerza.⁴¹⁴

Liberty must be realized and maintained for all strata of Mexican society; indeed, Ramírez notes that obtaining this same “liberty” had been the true objective since the beginning of the Independence movement:

El oráculo habia revelado que el sistema colonial era ruinoso; que las clases privilegiadas eran incompatibles con la industria, la agricultura y el comercio, y que la libertad era la esperanza del mundo; y nuestros padres decayeron la independencia y descargaron los primeros golpes, de cuyas cicatrices no se curarán jamás los hombres de la espada y del incensario.  

In the face of endemic political caciquismo, Ramírez holds that Hidalgo himself had acknowledged that only the naturally emergent Will of the pueblo could rightfully lay claim to sovereignty:

Sabía muy bien que el pueblo, entregado á sus instintos, tarde ó temprano se reclina en el regazo de la democracia. Sabía que el mundo ya no comprendía el lenguaje de los reveladores y de los inspirados. Sabía que el Sinaí tempestuoso donde el legislador encuentra las tablas de la ley, es el mismo pueblo que ya quiere dictarlas antes de recibirlas. Comprendía, en fin, Hidalgo, que las constituciones y los programas revolucionarios, no merecen que el ave de Mahoma los baje del cielo, sino cuando esas instituciones sociales son el vivo reflejo de la voluntad del pueblo. 

This is why “liberty” can never be a beginning or a means for Ramírez: liberty signifies equal freedom and equal opportunity in all domains, and obtaining and maintaining it requires a colossal struggle for the total reform of all areas of human activity:

La inteligencia humana es una, la misma en todos sus actos, y por eso la constitución es una; es la misma en todos los derechos que consagra, en todas las reformas que realiza. La libertad de enseñanza, la libertad de reunión, la libertad de comercio, la libertad de la prensa, la libertad de cultos, no son más que la libertad de la inteligencia humana, así en el niño que sacude las alas de su espíritu sobre un nido de flores, como en el infatigable especulador que derrama todas las riquezas

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de la industria; como en el ciudadano que se desvela por el bien procomunal; como en el poeta que canta; como en el sabio que ilumina y como en la conciencia que con la autoridad del misticismo recorre los alcázares del cielo. *El mexicano es libre, y todos los hombres pueden ser mexicanos*.\(^{417}\) (My emphasis)

The universalism implied by the first and last lines of the above citation are particularly important here because this description of liberty answers a question that seems to plague Ramírez’s work: granted that Ramírez claims that liberty is necessary for spontaneous association, can national unity also be derived from that liberty? If the promises of progress ring hollow, what assurance is there that the cultivation of mutual association will make possible the unity necessary for cooperation at the national level?

Palti raises this issue directly and signals the absence of concern for “allegiance” in Ramírez’s work:

> De este modo, en su discurso habrían de superponerse dos lenguajes diversos. Ello le permitiría dislocar efectivamente la noción liberal-republicana de la *Ley*, basada en el concepto deliberativo de la opinión pública, revelando su aporética inherente (aunque situado en el extremo opuesto del espectro ideológico, su crítica de dicho concepto no sería menos radical que la de los conservadores), pero no le haría posible aún reencuadrar el problema de la *allegiance* en los marcos del nuevo *conceito estratégico de la sociedad civil*. (Original emphasis)\(^{418}\)

The apparent dearth of concern for allegiance in Ramírez’s thought leads Palti to assert Ramírez’s “complete incapacity for thinking [the] state politics” of his time.\(^{419}\) It is here, however, that we must go beyond Palti’s engagement with the conceptual underpinnings

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\(^{417}\) *Op. cit.* 165. The astounding universality implied by the final claim of this citation should give us pause in restricting Ramírez’s emancipatory pretensions to the national level.


\(^{419}\) This conclusion is in fact fundamental to Palti’s argument and leads him to posit the rethinking of political economy as the third conceptual center of Ramírez’s corpus (the others being physiological and linguistic): “Ramírez, en fin, no abandonaría tampoco entonces su ‘radicalismo ininterrumpido’, pero, hacia esos años, el mismo iría volviéndose cada vez más anacrónico. Agotada la ‘vía revolucionaria’ como medio de acceso al poder, pronto se tornaría evidente que cualquier oposición al régimen podría hacerse oír y, eventualmente, tornarse efectiva sólo por intermedio de los propios mecanismos institucionales y canales de negociación política y social por él provistos. Ramírez, sin embargo, era inherentemente incapaz de pensar la política estatalizada que entonces se impone (al menos, no sin modificar antes profundamente su concepto de la misma). Las razones para esta imposibilidad suya se observan mejor en el tercero de los componentes que forman (junto con la fisiología y la lingüística) la red de sus obsesiones sistemáticas: la *economía política*.” *Op. cit.* 386.
of Ramírez’s thought. In defining the role played by the antinomic pair “natural/artificial” in Ramírez’s work, Palti points out that the thinker’s struggle stems from the impossibility of reconciling the spontaneous, volatile nature of the phenomena of the Will with the sort of unified cooperation needed for the forms of mutual association that he promotes as the hope for the future. Palti finds no means of fomenting national unity within Ramírez’s thought and sees the thinker as fundamentally incapable of surpassing the deadlock of constructing society on the grounds of a fundamental antagonism. Nevertheless, in the following section I will argue that Ramírez does in fact perceive a possible unifying force emergent alongside the volatile spontaneity of the Will. Whereas Lizardi had previously sought to unify the proto-national community through the universal language of sentiment, Ramírez would invert that proposition in his own contributions to the nation-building process. Instead of using language to show how sentiments could be reconciled and unified, Ramírez appeals to the unity of sentiment and language to realize his radical thesis of Reform. Ramírez alludes to that unifying force in his extensive theorization regarding language.

420 “Sin embargo, esta suspensión del antagonismo, a diferencia de lo que ocurría con Barreda, no formaba un sistema en su discurso; de hecho, chocaba de plano con sus puntos de vista de la naturaleza y la sociedad, lo que lo llevaría a oscilar conceptualmente, moviéndose de manera simultánea en dos direcciones opuestas; es decir, mostrando el antagonismo entre las inclinaciones e intereses individuales como irreductible y, sin embargo, eventualmente evitable; como algo natural (inherente en el hombre, producto de la misma diversidad y variabilidad de sus apetitos) y, empero, sólo artificialmente generado. Tal aparato argumentativo, aunque poco consistente, resultaría de todos modos funcional a su empresa de combatir al régimen juarista.” Op. cit. 384.

421 Although I will not focus on it here, Ramírez also made specific philological contributions that, as Arellano signals, have yet to be investigated: “[Ramírez] dominaba más de nueve lenguas indígenas y siete idiomas extranjeros, incluido el sánscrito y el arameo, por lo que se propuso descifrar los jeroglíficos mayas, publicando su afamado *Diccionario de términos mayas-quiché-náhuatl*, que luego editó Thompson en Inglaterra En la Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología existen tres diccionarios elaborados por Ignacio Ramírez que nunca han sido estudiados y mucho menos divulgados.” Arellano, Emilio. *La nueva república: Ignacio Ramírez el Nigromante*. Mexico City: Planeta, 2012. 99-100. Print.
3.5 “It’s Only Natural”: An Anatomical Account of Language and Association

Ramírez’s thinking presents language as a direct correlate of political organization and, as Palti recognizes, literature, and specifically prose, are home to the very same sort of antagonism that Ramírez argues is inherent to the social field. Ramírez holds that there is an irreducible tension in language between each word’s identity with itself and the signifying network that allows each word to have a relative significance with respect to other words:

El ‘lenguaje’ de Ramírez es, en fin, proceso, parole, que se rebela siempre contra los constreñimientos que le impone la rígida malla de la langue. Entre una y otra se establece una guerra permanente: ‘El sentido propio es una excepción en los signos: esfuéranse éstos por romper esa prisión y volar por los campos del estilo figurado.’ La prosa, en última instancia, no es sino el campo para su interacción agonal.

La elaboración de la noción de la prosa como el punto de convergencia entre forma y contenido fue correlativa en Ramírez al proceso de revisión de su concepto político que sigue a su descubrimiento de una nueva instancia en la constitución del sistema de las relaciones humanas: las asociaciones espontáneas.422

Ramírez’s voluntarist materialism extends to all domains of phenomena and provides a means of joining together his linguistic and political projects. The thinker acknowledges that language emerges under a variety of socio-historical conditions and that a plurality of factors are involved in the maintenance of a language. However, undaunted by that wealth of possibilities, Ramírez still argues that the emergence of language is universally grounded in associative practices:

Obedeciendo el hombre á las leyes de su organización, expresa sus pensamientos por medio de diversas modificaciones musculares: la imitación, en determinados grupos de individuos,

The problem lies with Palti’s interpretation of the role of “prose” in Ramírez’s thought. By conceiving of prose in a purely linguistic matter, he fails to recognize the connections that Ramírez traces between literature and political action.

Palti is hardly the only critic that fails to seriously engage with Ramírez’s literary theory and how it relates to the rest of his corpus; Miguel Ángel Castro also mentions Ramírez’s literary and literary-theoretical production, only to then argue its trivial status in comparison with Ramírez’s dominant political concerns. Of recent critics, Leonardo Martínez Carrizales comes the closest to recognizing the radical character of Ramírez’s theory of literature. He rightly notes that Ramírez’s thinking bears little trace of the sort of patriotic, reconciliatory literary project that would subsequently be embraced by his most famous student, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Instead of a vessel of nationalistic

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424 Martínez Carrizales’ observation of the absence of similarity between the literary projects of Ramírez and Altamirano is an accurate one: “Sin embargo, los tres *Estudios sobre literatura* publicados en *El Renacimiento*, compendio de las *Lecciones* publicadas sólo hasta 1884, ya muerto el autor, no contienen – como ninguna otra página de Ramírez acerca del mismo asunto – una sola nota de reivindicación patriótica ni de encomio nacionalista. En el papel de maestro de literatura, El Nigromante no hizo el panegírico de la sublimidad de los poetas líricos, ni del ardor cívico de los poetas épicos, ni de las virtudes imitativas del narrador con respecto del paisaje y la historia mexicanos. Nada hay en las enseñanzas literarias de Ignacio Ramírez que apunte hacia la dirección patriótica, romántica y nacionalista que tanto importó a Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Nada hay sobre esta materia ni en las lecciones dictadas en la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria por Ramírez, y recuperadas por Altamirano, ni en ningún otro testimonio de las labores de nuestro escritor al frente de una cátedra consagrada a la literatura. En vez de ello, advertimos un silencio a propósito de cuestiones patrióticas en la perspectiva escolar que Ramírez tuvo de la literatura; un silencio que conviene considerar detenidamente sobre todo por corresponder al tribuno cuyos labios no escatimaron palabras, ni en la hora ni en las situaciones adecuadas, para celebrar la Independencia de la patria.” Martínez Carrizales, Leonardo. “Ignacio Ramírez, teórico de la literatura” *La palabra de la reforma en la república* de las letras: una antología general. Ed. Liliana Weinberg. Mexico City: F.L.M, 2009. 413. Print.
fervor, Carrizales rightly sees Ramírez’s work as a radical attempt to re-ground literature, but his account fails to understand precisely just how profound a reconceptualization of literature is involved in that process. Consequently, his argument damns Ramírez’s literary theorization with faint praise by at once extolling it as a measure of the thinker’s brilliance and conceding the general irrelevance of his results in the light of modern science:

Es posible discrepar de los supuestos y los postulados esgrimidos por Ramírez en su elaboración teórica, pero no se puede soslayar su aspiración a un entendimiento sistemático y coherente de la literatura, organizado de acuerdo con el paradigma del lenguaje.426

Nevertheless, Carrizales does recognize one essential element of Ramírez’s theory that most critics ignore: Ramírez strives to ground language, and human language in particular, in physiology.427 Palti also indicates Ramírez’s push toward a physiological account of language, and further highlights how Ramírez conceptualizes both the practical function and the signifying economy of language as a social, associative phenomenon:

Fue en este contexto que Ramírez elaboró, en los años de la República restaurada, su concepto social “maduro”, tratando de integrar sus ideas psicofisiológicas en una teoría del lenguaje (“el lenguaje —decía— no es más que una manifestación fisiológica de la organización humana”) y, finalmente, articular ambas en una doctrina política. La idea de un lenguaje de acción proveerá entonces el punto de partida para sus reflexiones sobre el lenguaje (y, en última instancia, sobre la política). En el lenguaje sitúa Ramírez, como vimos, el fundamento primitivo de la sociedad, ese eslabón perdido que une la naturaleza con la cultura; aunque espontáneamente generado (esto es, aunque carece de reglas fijas que establezcan el significado de su material significante, el cual

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427 Ibid.
Both critics realize that Ramírez’s thought on language is intimately connected with his theorization regarding nature and politics. However, the foregoing citations evince that their respective understandings of that connection lead them to divergent interpretations of the significance of *el Nigromante*’s literary works. Ramírez’s theorization of literature responds to the questions raised elsewhere in his thought. National unity and sentimental community can only be constructed on the foundation of fellow-feeling. Ramírez’s thinking clears the way for a new, unifying national sentiment by appealing to the linguistic commonalities made manifest across the spectrum of human experience.

Ramírez’s works on literature give an account of how a unifying sentimental articulation can be accomplished through *natural channels* and by *natural means*.

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429 After considering the similarities between Martínez Carrizales’s and Palti’s respective understandings of Ramírez’s *Lecciones literarias*, it should not surprise that they come to very similar conclusions regarding the ultimate values of those works: both critics ultimately judge them to be a failed or incoherent project symptomatic of the chaos and conflict resultant from the struggle for political and mental emancipation and advancement in the Mexican 19th Century.

430 Determining the precise dates of production of Ramírez’s literary-theoretical work is a difficult task. From Carrizales we have confirmation that Ramírez’s three *Estudios sobre literatura* originally appeared in Altamirano’s *El Renacimiento*, and were republished in the first tome of that collected periodical in 1869. His *Lecciones de literatura* were published posthumously in 1884. José Luis Martínez confirms that the *Estudios de literatura* bear no date and adds that Ramírez’s *Dos lecciones inéditas sobre literatura* date to 1855. Palti further refines the dating with his observation that *Lecciones de literatura* alludes to the death of his wife Soledad. As she died in 1872, the *Lecciones* must have been written between that year and his death in 1879. Cf. Martínez Carrizales, Leonardo. “Ignacio Ramírez, teórico de la literatura” *La palabra de la reforma en la república de las letras: una antología general*. Ed. Liliana Weinberg. Mexico City: F,L,M, 2009. 442. Print; Luis Martínez, José. *La expresión nacional*. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993. 137. Print; José Palti, Elías. *La invención de una legitimidad: razón y retórica en el pensamiento mexicano del siglo XIX (Un estudio sobre las formas del discurso político)*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005. 373 FN 123. Print.

431 Although Palti pursues a different line of argumentation, he nevertheless glimpses the possibility that I now examine in his analysis of the role of grammar in Ramírez’s linguistic theory: “La tercera instancia en la conformación de un lenguaje, la *gramática*, es la que articula esta normatividad, introduciendo un principio de necesidad en las relaciones entre signos establecidos de manera convencional. Se observa así una revalorización de las formas, las que aparecen ahora como artificios esenciales para combatir las "patologías lingüísticas". Y esto lleva a Ramírez a introducir una distinción fundamental. Para él, el reino de la gramática
Following the path tread by Lizardi and Smith, he argues that there is a naturally-emergent form of sympathy that arises historically alongside language in its movement from a primordial “lenguaje de acción” to “phonetic” linguistic practices. But Ramírez also challenges the anthropocentrism of Lizardi, Hume, and Smith. His conceptualization of sympathy extends to both animals and humans—for Ramírez the distinction is generally a minimal one—and is organized and perfected by the particular imitative practices of their communities:

Ramírez further declares that the essentially social nature of language means that even private, inner conversation is both derived from and only intelligible through that primary social register of language:

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La primera necesidad, de puro sencilla no ha logrado detener la observación de los hombres estudiosos; lejos de eso, algunos filósofos, alucinados por sus meditaciones á solas, han supuesto que la palabra no nacía del matrimonio entre el labio y la oreja, ni siquiera han visto que los sordos no son sociables sino en cuanto modifican el lenguaje de acción para remedar y suplir las condiciones del lenguaje verdaderamente fonético: se ha proclamado que se podía hablar, discernir, sin oyentes.

Nos bastará recordar, para desvanecer tal error, que el hombre que medita habla consigo, como pudiera hacerlo con los demás; que se vale de las mismas palabras y de las mismas frases que ha aprendido en sus relaciones sociales y en sus libros; que se traduce á sí mismo los conceptos que depositó en su memoria una lengua extranjera, y que él mismo se hace con frecuencia observaciones puramente gramaticales. Desde que un animal, en sus recuerdos silenciosos, aunque sea durmiendo, fija al grupo á que pertenece cada una de sus sensaciones; desde que dice: yo, tú, aquél, éste, eso, hoy, mañana, Pedro, León, estrella, uno, dos, muchos, especie, género; sin dejar de ser animal, se transforma en hombre. Así es que los signos del lenguaje fonético, ya nazcan de interjecciones involuntarias, ya de recuerdos caprichosos, llevan siempre consigo una marca, y es el bosquejo ó la situación del grupo que se desea reproducir en los oyentes. (Original emphasis)

Even after a careful reading, Ramírez’s conceptualization of naturally-emergent sympathy appears contradictory. As Palti sees it, although Ramírez seems to present natural sympathy as emerging frequently and with great facility, he simultaneously seems to consider sympathy to be an exceptional case within a general panorama of struggle and survival-oriented evolution. This is borne out in a passage from the chapter entitled “El lenguaje de acción” from Lecciones literarias:

Los animales armonizan sus movimientos cuando buscan en común la satisfacción de un deseo; el amor, la amistad, la guerra, los triunfos poéticos y oratorios, nos pueden proporcionar el espectáculo de una pareja ó de una multitud donde todas las miradas tienen el mismo esplendor, donde los brazos se entrelazan, los corazones palpitán, y una misma palabra resuena en todos los labios. Basta la sospecha de cualquiera concordia posible para que nazca la simpatía.

No son estas las relaciones normales entre los seres animales; por lo común el lenguaje de acción representa la lucha, y es, en tal caso, necesariamente ofensiva ó defensiva: admira entonces con la riqueza de sus variedades.

The previous citation, which Palti presents as justification for qualifying natural sympathy as an exceptional phenomenon, shows that Palti’s assessment of Ramírez’s thought misses the point. The chapter in which one finds the citation begins with a paragraph that is crucial for contextualizing Ramírez’s statement about the “normal

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433 This phrase points toward Ramírez’s familiarity with the European philosophical tradition. The phrase itself, “meditación á solas”, is a clear allusion to Réné Descartes groundbreaking refutation of solipsism in Meditationes de prima philosophia (1641).


relationships” between “animal beings”; in what follows, Ramírez argues that the language of action exists as a spectrum of signification extending throughout the entirety of the animal kingdom:

Abundantes son ya las observaciones; debemos por lo mismo entresacar y ordenar las que conducen al objeto que nos proponemos, y consiste en demostrar que hay una escala en el lenguaje de acción de todos los animales; que la sociabilidad es proporcionada a cada grado de ese lenguaje, y que la inteligencia individual necesariamente se retrata en ciertos cambios de forma que presenta la organización humana, bajo el soplo más ligero de los agentes sensorios en que abunda la madre naturaleza. (My emphasis)436

This passage makes evident the shortcoming in Palti’s argument: although sympathy might prove a more elusive phenomenon in some quarters of the animal kingdom, the emergence of sympathy corresponds with a particular animal’s position on the “scale of the language of action” because that scale’s linguistic gradations determine an animal’s degree of “sociability.” Ramírez holds that humanity occupies the highest level of that scale,437 meaning that human sociability is similarly the most developed form of association in the animal kingdom.438 This means that while cooperative, sympathetic action might be

437 Although his philosophy works to contest anthropocentrism, Ramírez nevertheless believes in the comparative superiority of humanity to other animals. The ground of this belief can for him only be natural (e.g. not divine or transcendential). The following passage contextualizes how Ramírez attempts to conceptualize this apparently naturally-emergent hierarchy while at the same time avoiding its permanent reification. His discourse, entitled “Los habitantes primitivos del continente americano,” delivered in 1872 to the Sociedad de Geografía y Estadística, gives an account of the gradient scale occupied by humans and other animals: “Estudiarse puede el hombre en la especie, en las razas y en el individuo. La especie. Desde las bestias al hombre, dice Flourens, hay una cadena de matices progresivos. Sábese, por otra parte, que los vertebrados superiores se encuentran dotados de las mismas facultades, y que algunas de éstas se desarrollan extraordinariamente en el hombre, hasta servir para caracterizarlo. Y por último, el hombre se aproxima de tal suerte al mono, que los animales antropomorfos se manifiestan superiores al salvaje, mientras muchas naciones degeneran hasta confundirse con los monos.” Ramírez, Ignacio. Obras de Ignacio Ramírez. Vol. 1. Ed. Ignacio M. Altamirano. Mexico City: Oficina tipográfica de la secretaria de fomento, 1889. 2 vols. 205. Print. In the light of Ramírez’s radical reassessment of nature, the reference made in this passage to Jean Pierre Flourens (1794-1867) is particularly interesting because the French physiologist is reportedly the first to have confirmed that the brain, and not the heart, was the central organ of cognition in animals in his Recherches experimentales sur les propriétés et les fonctions du système nerveux dans les animaux vertébrés (1824). Op. cit. 205-206.

438 Despite the evolutionary advancement that Ramírez concedes to humanity, his project goes to surprising lengths to avoid a vulgar anthropocentrism regarding the place of humanity among other conscious beings; rather, he asserts their fundamental equivalency in the domain of Nature: “Esta conclusión es importante, porque asimila la especie humana con todas las especies de animales y de plantas, porque la somete á la ley de todas las creaciones y destrucciones.” Op. cit. 206. Nevertheless, this does not mean that, in purely
exceptional among the other species, humanity itself is nevertheless exceptionally disposed toward the emergence of such sympathy because of the human animal’s inherently advanced degree of sociability.

Ramírez’s attribution of naturally-emergent sympathy to the animal kingdom and to human beings in particular resonates with the emphasis that Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) places on mutual aid as an evolutionary advantage. Being both a geographer and political thinker, Kropotkin insists that Darwin’s notion of “survival” as the law of the natural world be taken in its largest sense to include both struggle and cooperation:

It may be that at the outset Darwin himself was not fully aware of the generality of the factor which he first invoked for explaining one series only of facts relative to the accumulation of individual variations in incipient species. But he foresaw that the term which he was introducing into science would lose its philosophical and its only true meaning if it were to be used in its narrow sense only -- that of a struggle between separate individuals for the sheer means of existence. And at the very beginning of his memorable work he insisted upon the term being taken in its ‘large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny.’

While he himself was chiefly using the term in its narrow sense for his own special purpose, he warned his followers against committing the error (which he seems once to have committed himself) of overrating its narrow meaning. In The Descent of Man he gave some powerful pages to illustrate its proper, wide sense. He pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears, how struggle is replaced by co-

...
Kropotkin’s argument goes on to highlight two basic manifestations of sociability: communication and the “joy of life,” wherein social interaction gives rise to aesthetic pleasure. In doing so it directly parallels Ramírez’s understanding of sympathy and pleasure. However, the two thinkers differ in the way that they each account for language.

Whereas Kropotkin is content to provide a zoological account of the evolutionary value of

439 Kropotkin continues on to ridicule restriction of “survival of the fittest” to the physically strong: “As if thousands of weak-bodied and infirm poets, scientists, inventors, and reformers, together with other thousands of so-called ‘fools’ and ‘weak-minded enthusiasts,’ were not the most precious weapons used by humanity in its struggle for existence by intellectual and moral arms, which Darwin himself emphasized in those same chapters of Descent of Man.” Kropotkin, Peter. Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. New York: New York University Press, 1972. 8-9. Print

440 “Association is found in the animal world at all degrees of evolution; and, according to the grand idea of Herbert Spencer, so brilliantly developed in Perrier’s Colonies Animales, colonies are at the very origin of evolution in the animal kingdom. But, in proportion as we ascend the scale of evolution, we see association growing more and more conscious. It loses its purely physical character, it ceases to be simply instinctive, it becomes reasoned. With the higher vertebrates it is periodical, or is resorted to for the satisfaction of a given want –propagation of the species, migration, hunting, or mutual defence. It even becomes occasional, when birds associate against a robber, or mammals combine, under the pressure of exceptional circumstances, to emigrate. In this last case, it becomes a voluntary deviation from habitual moods of life […] And finally, in several species, such as rats, marmots, hares, etc., sociable life is maintained notwithstanding the quarrelsome or otherwise egotistic inclinations of the isolated individual. Thus it is not imposed, as is the case with ants and bees, by the very physiological structure of the individuals; it is cultivated for the benefits of mutual aid, or for the sake of its pleasures. And this, of course, appears with all possible gradations and with the greatest variety of individual and specific characters –the very variety of aspects taken by social life being a consequence, and for us a further proof, of its generality. Sociability –that is, the need of the animal of associating with its like –the love of society for society's sake, combined with the “joy of life,” only now begins to receive due attention from the zoologists. We know at the present time that all animals, beginning with the ants, going on to the birds, and ending with the highest mammals, are fond of plays, wrestling, running after each other, trying to capture each other, teasing each other, and so on. And while many plays are, so to speak, a school for the proper behaviour of the young in mature life, there are others, which, apart from their utilitarian purposes, are, together with dancing and singing, mere manifestations of an excess of forces –"the joy of life," and a desire to communicate in some way or another with other individuals of the same or of other species –in short, a manifestation of sociability proper, which is a distinctive feature of all the animal world.” (My emphasis) Ibid.
mutual aid and considers language to be merely one element among many in social processes, Ramírez sees language as the primary factor in naturally-emergent sympathy.441

Ramírez’s “language of action” is the most basic form of language, but he is careful to note that that simple form, like its more complex derivatives, is also a natural phenomenon rooted in sociability. Because of this, Ramírez argues that in communal life, humans and other animals are equally engaged in acts of social interpretation:

La propensión artística se aprovecha también de los instrumentos que tiene á su alcance; así la trompa del elefante es una mano; el ave forma su nido con el pico; el castor trabaja con los dientes y la cola; y paseando sus conductos sedíferos la araña y el gusano, forman sus redes y sus capullos.

El animal que obra en todos estos casos obedece á su propio mecanismo; pero el lenguaje de acción comienza cuando alguno de estos actos es observado por los demás animales: en el lenguaje de acción no habla el animal que se mueve, sino el animal que interpreta.442

The social use of language gives rise to interpretative instability. The process of interpretation changes the character of language and transforms it into a process of signification. Moreover, the emergence of language as a process of signification is accompanied by another transformation, namely, the conversion of physiological sensations into signs:

Los movimientos orgánicos que proceden de las sensaciones, no constituyen por sí solos un lenguaje. Para que merezcan este nombre es necesario que el movimiento de un animal, obrando sobre los sentidos de otro animal, provoque en éste ciertas sensaciones y movimientos constantes. El lenguaje de acción en el individuo aislado es un fenómeno tan mudo como la vegetación, la cristalización ó cualquiera cambio de la materia; pero, obrando sobre un observador, se cambia en causa sensoria, da lugar á la reciprocidad, convierte cada movimiento en signo, y provoca la unión ó la separación entre los animales parlantes. Por eso es inconcebible el lenguaje de acción sin la concurrencia de dos ó más animales.443

Ramírez further argues that the conversion of sensation into sign is also reflected internally within the organism on a physiological level. The presence of other beings naturally

441 For Kropotkin, language was only one important phenomenon among many in the panorama of sociability: “As to the intellectual faculty, while every Darwinist will agree with Darwin that it is the most powerful arm in the struggle for life, and the most powerful factor of further evolution, he also will admit that intelligence is an eminently social faculty. Language, imitation, and accumulated experience are so many elements of growing intelligence of which the unsociable animal is deprived.” Op. cit. 37.


converts sensation into sign, but signs themselves are also actively produced through the interaction of sensation and the memory. In this way, sensation and sign are joined together in a chain of metonymic movement. Sensation may be interpreted as a sign, or it might act upon the memory to give rise to another, remembered sensation, which itself may also be variously interpreted as sensation or sign.

This mode of conceptualization makes the sign a product of both external and internal communicative processes. Furthermore, in accordance with Ramírez’s thought, language itself is at once social (because the presence of a group is necessary for its emergence, be it as the internal network of physiological signs derived from redoubled sensation or the external network of signs shared by a community),\textsuperscript{444} physiological (inasmuch as signs are physically produced through the action of sensation upon and within the human organism),\textsuperscript{445} and natural (because all phenomena that engender language and its communication via the sign are naturally emergent).\textsuperscript{446}

\textsuperscript{444} “Por eso es inconcebible el lenguaje de acción sin la concurrencia de dos ó más animales; por eso es el instrumento necesario de la sociabilidad, y por eso toda asociación libre se reduce en lo exterior á un concierto de movimientos orgánicos, y en lo interior á una comunidad de placeres y de dolores. En las asociaciones forzadas todas las ventajas resultan del lado de la fuerza.” \textit{Op. cit.} 29-30.

\textsuperscript{445} “Hemos examinado rápidamente los elementos del lenguaje de acción. Veamos ahora cómo se combinan para merecer ese nombre de lenguaje. Todo lenguaje se compone de signos: todo signo es una cosa que representa otra. Signo es un toque, una impresión; sin el carácter de signo, de llamamiento, es una sensación como otra cualquiera. Cada sensación se convierte en signo desde el momento en que obrando sobre la memoria, causa la aparición de una sensación diferente. Por lo que hemos visto, todas las sensaciones se sirven mutuamente de signos; y esta reciprocidad también es constante entre los movimientos musculares y las impresiones de que proceden. La idea fundamental de signo es la de causa; siempre ocasiona un efecto.” \textit{Op. cit.} 33.

\textsuperscript{446} Ramírez provides the following account of the natural origin of the sign alongside all other sensations: “La impresión periférica producida en el pié por el contacto del suelo y reflejada inmediatamente por el centro nervioso, origina los pasos maquinales; de ese modo también se ocasionan algunos sacudimientos de las piernas; y por un fenómeno análogo, las aveceillas mientras duermen se afirman sobre las ramas donde posan. En la secreción salival la impresión gustativa se refleja inmediatamente sobre las glándulas secretoras. La deglución, la masticación, los movimientos mimicos y la palabra tienen sus centros reflectores en la región encefálica de la médula. En todos estos casos á una sensación corresponde inmediatamente un movimiento; y por lo mismo cada uno de estos movimientos es el representante natural, el signo necesario de una sensación determinada.” \textit{Op. cit.} 15. Furthermore, on the subject of the natural emergence of language he writes that: “Obedeciendo el hombre á las leyes de su organización, expresa sus pensamientos por medio
It is essential to emphasize the ramifications of Ramírez’s claim as to the natural character and derivation of language. First, Ramírez insists that, rather than being composed of “proposiciones sueltas,” the structure of language is located in the emergent connections between propositions. Said differently, the primary dynamic of signification lies in the activity of understanding, and not in the content of any particular element of knowledge. Or, as Ramírez himself puts it: “El enlace entre las proposiciones es la vida del discurso; y la lógica no debe ser más que la fisiología de la inteligencia.” The “logic” that Ramírez mentions is not the language of propositional logic or of scientific hypothesis. It is instead the physiological foundation of what Ramírez posits as three basic forms of human language, only two of which are linguistic in the traditional sense: namely, “el lenguaje de la acción”, “el lenguaje figurado”, and “el lenguaje técnico o en sentido propio.” Ramírez’s understanding of the interplay of these three languages in the process of signification coincides with his recognition of the arbitrary nature of sensation and sign, and leads him to insist that, like the phenomena of the Will, the process of signification by which language produces meaning is in itself spontaneous, open, and indeterminate. \(^{448}\) Far


\(^{448}\) In the following, Ramírez refines the distinction between the elements of his trinitarian view of language before elaborating on the dynamism of the interaction of the same: “Todos estos fenómenos se expresan con frecuencia por medio de tres lenguajes simultáneos: el que se compone de palabras tomadas en sentido propio; el que se forma de tropos; y el de acción, que comprende cualquier movimiento del cuerpo y las más ligeras inflexiones de la voz al tiempo de pronunciarse cada palabra. Y a pesar de sopesarse, por lo expuesto, que cualquiera idioma, aun en su estado primitivo, nunca se ha limitado a enunciar: esta voz es el nombre de tal sensación o de tal objeto; ni a decir: tal objeto o tal sensación se significan por medio de esta palabra: si tal sucediese, la gramática se reduciría a un diccionario, y a un diccionario de puras raíces. Apartándose de esa sencillez estéril, el lenguaje humano se presenta con otra verdaderamente fecunda; siempre contiene dos sensaciones o dos objetos que por medio de su entrelazamiento, producen una tercera sensación o un tercer objeto.” (Original emphasis) \(^{447}\) Op. cit. 74. Ramírez specifically emphasizes the “language of action” as exemplary of the necessarily plural and indeterminate character of interpretation, especially because of its essentially “tropic” or metonymic structure. The following passage makes this clear, and also demonstrates the dynamic interaction of the three distinct modalities of language that he posits: “En nuestro caso, su deseo le causa primeramente un esfuerzo, y con el movimiento resultante ocasiona en nosotros la idea de su
from being an impediment to the process of signification, the fundamental indeterminacy of language is simply taken to be a homologous physiological extension of the same spontaneous dynamism that Ramírez posits as the ground of all natural phenomena.

The crucial point here is that Ramírez recognizes that his argument from anatomy is necessarily a two-way street: what goes out may also come in, and if language is produced and articulated physiologically, it is also possible for language itself to exercise an influence on human physiology. Ramírez acknowledges this latter possibility as well, and his literary theory attempts to capitalize on it. The express –yet often misconstrued or ignored- thrust of Ramírez’s Lecciones de literatura is to pave the way for this second possibility, namely, the possibility of affecting human physiology by using language, and specifically literature, as a means of articulating sentiment and producing a sense of fellow-feeling. This methodological strategy places Ramírez into alignment with Lizardi, Hume and Smith. Hume and Smith provided the groundwork for connecting sentiment and Nature. Lizardi’s literary innovations harnessed the historical potential of sentiment and mirrored Hume and Smith’s insights in a way befitting the objectives of his own literary project. As we will see in the next section of this investigation, Ramírez steps into the breach after Lizardi and re-grounds the providential sentiments of the hombre de bien in the spontaneously unifying productivity of language and Nature.

\[\text{Op. cit.} \text{ 34-35.} \text{ As this passage shows, even muscular action is tropic in function according to Ramírez. He holds that physiological and natural phenomena can also be expressed in linguistic terms, because language itself already pertains to the domain of the natural.}\]
3.6 The Science of Sentiment: Literary Physiology and Physiological Literature

Ramírez’s *Lecciones de literatura* (1884) begins with a lengthy and somewhat bewildering excursus on the anatomy of language. The following passage is characteristic of the work as a whole and requires extensive scrutiny:

(1) Cuando las impresiones comunes se hacen demasiado vivas hasta causar placer y hasta degenerar en dolor, rompen sus canales acostumbrados, inundan con vagos estremecimientos otras regiones, y perturban y agitan las funciones constantes del corazón, de los pulmones y del estómago; daremos á este oleaje de sentimiento el nombre de emociones. (2) La pasión comienza cuando el placer y sus emociones degeneran en vicio; pronto, entonces, sobreviene la enfermedad y la desorganización, y aun la muerte. (3) Pero el placer y el dolor, aunque siempre nacen de las sensaciones comunes, directas ó reflejas, ocupan un sistema nervioso especial, donde una vez establecidos, pueden aislarse; (4) así nos lo manifiesta la observación en estos fenómenos: cualquiera órgano, por medio del uso frecuente, se hace delicado para la percepción y parece que se embota para las emociones; (5) la enfermedad y la vejez separan los placeres y los dolores de sus sensaciones originarias; por medio de la memoria las emociones penosas se convierten en agradables; y por último, la cloroformización adormece los dolores, y la aurora de la embriaguez se refleja entre celajes de placeres. Se deja también enfenrar el sufrimiento por las emociones del amor, del orgullo y del miedo! (6) Parece que el placer y el dolor tienen por centro la sustancia gris de la médula espinal; y no lejos del teatro de las emociones se extienden los variados depósitos del tacto, y sin duda por eso nos figuramos que en el placer y el dolor hay algo de tangible.449 (My enumeration)

This account naturalizes language and forwards a description of an aesthetically-informed, physiologically-driven system of pleasure and pain. This account of the role and functioning of the emotions and the passions is particularly strange given the incongruity between the connection to literature implied by the title of the work and the apparent absence of that connection in the work itself. This passage deploys the same sort of physiological imagery already seen in Ramírez’s theorization of language, but here he joins language, emotion, and passion together in an unusual way. Unpacking the above-cited passage makes the connection between those phenomena and literature clear.

In a fashion similar to that already seen in the thinking of David Hume, part (1) of the cited passage also begins with a purely natural model of sensation that locates the origin of all experience in the sensual impression. Ramírez then goes a step further by positing the concrete physiological functioning of sentiment in terms of emotion and passion, and it is at this point that his account leaves behind its similarities with Hume’s theory of the passions and the emotions.

One distinction is immediately necessary: for both Hume and Smith the passions and sentiment are deeply interconnected, since for them the passions provide an irreducible natural impulse to action that can then be sentimentally canalized; however, for Ramírez, impressions bear directly upon the organs of sentiment and generate the movement of the emotions by stimulating an internal sentimental economy. As part (3) of the above citation shows, the normal action of this internal sentimental economy consists of the production of pleasure and pain provoked by the diverse stimuli that bombard that system. But as part (2) shows, unlike Hume and Smith, Ramírez situates la pasión in opposition to the normal functioning of the sentimental economy: he insists that passion proper only arises when the normal economy of sentiment becomes overwhelmed in a way that causes its normal function to become disorganized, degenerate, and vicious.

The word “disorganization” enjoys a special centrality here, as its deficient character also implies a deficiency in the organism that supports it. Ramírez distinguishes between two different degrees of physiological disorganization. The first is found in part (1) and occurs when particularly “lively” stimuli give rise to a change in the usual

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450 As part (3) of the above passage shows, Ramírez, like Hume, is also careful to note that sensations may either be simple or complex, direct or reflexive.
functioning of the sentimental economy. This change is registered both mentally and physically, and Ramírez does not hesitate to signal the usual fluttering of the heart or chills of suspense that accompany emotion as evidence of the ability of the sentimental economy to exert a direct, physical influence upon the other organs of the body.\footnote{In addition to exerting a direct physiological effect, Ramírez also theorizes in part (6) that the basic components of emotion, namely pleasure and pain, are also physically situated in the spinal cord. Furthermore, Ramírez takes these physiological connections to the end by then positing that, just as the emotions can affect the organs of the body, other bodily faculties and external stimuli (e.g., illness, age, memory, and intoxication) can also act to modify or nullify those same emotional effects.} However, this first degree of disorganization is not yet the sort of afflicted state that Ramírez equates with the emergence of passion in part (2). Whereas this latter state is explicitly held to eventually bring about the infirmity and death of the organism, this former, attenuated form is instead a sort of re-organization, one that realizes new configurations by re-articulating and building upon the possibilities of the existing state of the sentimental economy. Unlike the vicious disorganization of passion, this reorganization is capable of rearticulating the functioning of the sentimental economy without provoking its violent disruption.

The two degrees of disorganization within the internal sentimental economy of the human organism and that sentimental economy itself are all conceptualized by Ramírez in physiological terms. The functioning of that economy expresses itself as the dynamic generation of pleasure and pain, so it follows that pleasure and pain are accordingly first understood as physiological phenomena. But care must also be taken here to add a further qualification to the function of pain and pleasure in this system. The text argues that, granted that pain and pleasure are the basic functional elements of the internal sentimental economy, and furthermore, given that emotions are a product of the combination of the
pain and pleasure generated by that economy, then it follows that the relationship between pleasure/pain and the emotions (part (5)) is one of mutual influence. One consequence of this is that the emotions are also capable of generating, assuaging, and intensifying feelings of pain and pleasure. The idea that pain and pleasure are the two elements constitutive of the internal sentimental economy allows Ramírez to further assert that the emotions are capable of directly effecting the functioning of that economy.

The reciprocally affective relationship between pleasure/pain and the emotions is described as an interaction between a naturally emergent, spontaneous force (the action of pleasure and pain as a reaction to external stimuli) and an organizing structure meant to canalize that force. The assertion of this relationship of reciprocal affectivity between pleasure/pain and the emotions impacts how Ramírez conceptualizes the emancipatory, unifying potential of literature. In the context of Ramírez’s radically materialist approach to science, such a relationship is also posited between the spontaneous emergence of natural phenomena and the ever-advancing —yet never conclusive— attempts of experimental science to quantify and dominate nature. While science harnesses natural forces for its own ends, those same natural forces incessantly produce new challenges and necessities. It is always possible that the adequation of the results of scientific investigation with our best understanding could at any moment demand a total renovation of our structures of knowledge. Said otherwise, while our structures of knowledge, and scientific knowledge in particular, attempt to categorize natural phenomena, they at the same time reduce those phenomena to their “objective” character. Paradoxically, the reduction to the “objective” undermines the possibility of addressing the totality of the phenomena that have been thusly understood.
This kind of reciprocally affective relationship can also be found in its most abstract form in Ramírez’s voluntarist metaphysics. It is precisely because the Will emerges spontaneously and can never be statically contained or subjected to calculation that mutual association proves to be the only form of organization capable of both accommodating naturally emergent relations and receding whenever the will to sustain them has passed. The relation is, nevertheless, still two-sided: just as the Will inexorably dominates and surpasses the organizational structures that seek to canalize it toward mutual benefit, the successful and timely employment of those modes of organization can also impact the way the Will manifests in the future.\textsuperscript{452} The best evidence for this, as per Ramírez’s theory, lies in the increase of capability for mutual cooperation and association that seems to accompany increasing levels of organizational complexity in the evolution of organisms.

Moreover, the same sort of relationship of reciprocal-affectivity is also important in an explicitly-political mode and can be seen in the tension between the free action of the individual within society and the forms of contract that are employed as a means of canalizing those actions toward the aims of the community. Because Ramírez’s though insists on maximizing human freedom, it is necessary for the contract form to adapt itself to the operation of that freedom. This is why contractual unions, which essentially serve as means toward organization through mutual association, must be contingent upon the continuing, voluntary adherence of the parties involved. Although this reliance upon the voluntary is absolutely essential for Ramírez, it is also important to realize that free will and the actions that stem from it are subject to material limitations. The contract form

\footnote{One possible objection to this notion calls to mind a “chicken or the egg?” scenario; what comes first: the structures that subsequently accommodate the Will, or the will to create structures capable of such accommodation?}
places limitations on free will by demarcating and expanding the actions it is capable of realizing. In this way, freedom of human action and the contract form also exist in a relationship of reciprocal-affectivity.

For the purposes of the argument at hand, however, the most significant instance of this sort of relationship of reciprocal-affectivity is that found between emotion and the sentimental economy that canalizes its normal functioning. As already seen, Ramírez holds that the emotions themselves are the product of the interrelation of the pain and pleasure generated within that economy by the action of external stimuli or that of other sensations of pain and pleasure redeployed by the memory or the imagination. As per his account, all of these factors are managed by the organism through the internal sentimental economy that produces a combination of pleasure and pain and may promote or disrupt the harmonious functioning of both the organism and that economy.

Ramírez’s thinking asserts the necessity of these relationships of reciprocal-affectivity in all of the domains mentioned above, but it also goes further by insisting that the harmonious functioning of that relationship on the internal and external levels also depends on the harmonious interaction between those levels, which is to say, between the internal sentimental economy and the external socio-linguistic economy: “Por eso [el lenguaje de acción] es el instrumento necesario de la sociabilidad, y por eso toda asociación libre se reduce en lo exterior á un concierto de movimientos orgánicos, y en lo interior á una comunidad de placeres y de dolores.”\(^{453}\) The harmonious functioning of that relationship is contrasted with a disorderly mode of involuntary operation that, like its

harmonious counterpart, is also made manifest both internally and externally. Its internal
manifestation is the violence of disorderly passion, whereas its external manifestation
results from the involuntary imposition of order and the deprivation of human freedom
through the violence of force: “En las asociaciones forzadas todas las ventajas resultan del
lado de la fuerza.”454

The harmonious or disruptive interpenetration of the worlds external and internal
to organisms in general gives definitive shape to Ramírez’s conceptualization of Nature.
By extending the interpenetration experienced by the human animal to the whole of Nature,
Ramírez arrives at what he perceives as a basic “corpuscular” structure that embraces
humanity in common with the rest of the beings of the world:

Un conjunto de glóbulos, los unos vivos y los otros estériles, unos con prolongaciones y
otros desnudos, tal es el animal llamado hombre. Endurecen esos glóbulos y forman el hueso;
entretéjense simplemente y se llaman membranas; y sumérgense en un líquido y, con él, fluyen,
dentro y fuera del cuerpo.

Atráense los cuerpos mutuamente á larga distancia; y esa doble acción, que se llama
gravedad, impone á la máquina humana ciertas condiciones de equilibrio, sin las cuales su
ingeniosísimo mecanismo se precipitaría sobre el suelo con los resortes dislocados y rotos, y como
una masa sin vida.

Nadamos, como esponjas, en un mar de luz, de calor, de electricidad y de magnetismo; y
sus variadas ondulaciones, bajo los pasos del sol, nos agitan, nos arrastan, nos penetran, y á veces
nos destruyen.455

Los demás cuerpos también nos comunican sus movimientos, ya sean éstos propios, ya
reflejos. Resisten nuestra presión; acarician nuestro olfato; derraman su dulzura sobre la lengua;
estremécense musicalmente en el oído, y cubren de brillantísimas imágenes nuestra retina.456

Ramírez’s argument as to the mutual attraction and co-penetration of natural phenomena
goes so far as to posit that the initial opposition between external and internal world goes
all the way down, in that all humans (and indeed, all living organisms) are themselves an

454 Ibid.
455 Yet another example of a fundamental, reciprocal relationship in Ramírez’s thought is evident here in the
conceptualization of equilibrium as a gravitational relationship between different bodies.
external world with regard to the endless proliferation of internal life-worlds that they contain:

Si hubiese un microscopio que nos permitiese contemplar los elementos globulares de nuestra animada estructura, cada hombre parecería un enjambre de abejas; y éstas, propagándose, edificando celdillas, acopiando víveres, agitando sus alas y zumbando, se escaparían, para no volver, por todos los poros del cuerpo.  

Ramírez’s theorization of our internal sentimental economy and its connection to language and literature must be understood in this context. Because Ramírez is fundamentally a materialist, everything that exists pertains to the same natural world, and the field upon which natural forces act is essentially homogenous due to its common corpuscular nature. It is that corpuscular nature that allows it to adapt and reorganize itself in accordance with the caprices of the irreducible, naturally-emergent Will that undergirds all natural phenomena. When the natural world acts upon the organization of the human sentimental economy, it is capable of changing its function. The catalysts for that change are the basic waves or impressions constitutive of all stimuli. The word, first understood as a phonetic and kinetic phenomenon, is also for Ramírez a sort of wave resulting in an impression registered by the human organism. Ramírez is careful to distinguish “accidental” instantiations of language derived from simple external impressions from words as the substance of language possessed of its properly symbolic, signifying capacity:

Entre los diversos grupos musculares del hombre hay uno que le es característico, y es el de la fonación. Este instrumento se reduce á un tubo con lengüeta, y á varios aparatos que modifican los sonidos fundamentales, dándoles intensidad y tono, y trasmitiéndoles al aire libre con aquellas marcas interesantes que se conocen con el nombre de articulaciones. El aparato muscular de la voz articulada no es exclusivo del hombre: también los pericos hablan. El órgano fonético, lo mismo que los demás órganos en el hombre y en los animales, está sometido á las leyes generales del lenguaje de acción. El miedo hace gritar á la gallina y al hombre; el perro, que aúlla en presencia de sus recuerdos, se queja; el cordero manifiesta sus deseos por medio de balidos; y merced á esta

457 Ibid.
458 In advancing this densely-populated, corpuscular view of the natural life-world, Ramírez’s thought runs parallel to Leibnitz’s view of the vibrancy of the natural world: “The least corpuscle is actually subdivided in infinitum and contains a world of other creatures which would be wanting in the universe if that corpuscle were an atom, that is, a body of one entire piece without subdivision.” R. Ariew and D. Garber, eds., G. W. Leibnitz: Philosophical Essays, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989. VII. 377-378.
Relación inmediata entre las voces y las sensaciones, hay un lenguaje común entre los animales y los hombres. Las interjecciones primitivas pertenecen a este lenguaje.\textsuperscript{459}

This first form of language only starts to signify when it begins to be used socially. The spontaneous association of social life combines with the capacity for symbolic association to transform language from mere “fonación” into “prose” by instilling it with the fullness of a shared universe of meaning. As “prose,” language is capable of a complex mode of expression that is at once productive of and conditioned by the social structures that it supports:

Pero lo que caracteriza la palabra en el hombre, es que ella proviene de una tendencia constante que posee toda impresión humana para reflejarse no sólo en sus músculos correspondientes, sino también en los que forman el aparato fonatorio. Cualquiera sensación, luego que se convierte en percepción, se irradia desde el centro correspondiente hasta producir una voz indeterminada, que temprano ó tarde se fijará por la costumbre. Cuando las percepciones suben á los centros generales, ya van acompañadas con un movimiento muscular, ya van vestidas con la palabra. La simple fonación hace parte de la facultad mímica; la fonación articulada, que se produce por las más pequeñas impresiones, es exclusiva de la raza humana: las dos fonaciones producen dos lenguajes diversos, y el primero es involuntario; el segundo parece arbitrario, porque sus series dependen de las relaciones sociales.\textsuperscript{460} (My emphasis)

The gap between language construed as mere fonación and language in its properly human socio-symbolic modality is mirrored in Ramírez’s account of the gap between the “word” and the “sign.” Whereas the “word” is in the first instance an automatic byproduct of changes of movement in the organism, the sign represents something more. The sign is in one sense nothing more than a sensation, but its persistence beyond its initial emergence as a reaction to an external stimulus allows it to shed its original deictic status and take on the polysemic function of the sign within a greater socio-symbolic context. Within that greater context, it becomes subject to rearticulation by the Will, memory, and understanding.\textsuperscript{461}

\textsuperscript{459} Ramírez, Ignacio. \textit{Lecciones de literatura}. Mexico City: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1884. 20. Print.
\textsuperscript{461} Ramírez locates the action of the intelligence and its component parts in what he dubs “the superior nervous centers” without directly identifying them with the cerebellum: “Pero donde habitan, se mueven y
Having attained to this signifying position, the sign then takes on an oddly dual status in Ramírez’s account. On one hand, it serves as an essential element of human physiology and even allows for communication between the muscular and nervous systems:

Cada sentido, como es de presumirse, tiene su sistema exclusivo de signos. La pintura y la escultura primero, que como bellas artes sirvieron de lenguaje permanente para los ojos; de aquí los jeroglíficos; de aquí la escritura moderna; de aquí las notas musicales y las cartas geográficas; y de aquí la aritmética y la álgebra y la geometría. El habla es el más admirable de los lenguajes para el oído; pero también á éste el canto y la música le han recordado inefables alegrias y profundos pesares. Los sabores y los olores pocas veces se emplean como signos: no sucede así con el tacto, que, fuera de sus sistemas propios, sirve de un órgano supletorio para los ciegos y los sordos. Todos

The sign is susceptible to physiological description and allocation within the biological systems that Ramírez describes because it is itself a natural phenomenon, and this even though it may subsequently be subjected to “artificial” modifications and extensions of its sense and meaning:

Entre los innumerables signos naturales, el hombre ha escogido algunos que, prestándose á combinaciones fáciles y sencillas, le sirven para entenderse con sus semejantes. En esa elección consiste precisamente la arbitrariedad de ciertos signos y lo artificial de ciertos sistemas lingüísticos. Todos los signos son originariamente naturales.  

However, the sign also exercises a direct effect on the psyche of the human organism. Ramírez insists that the sign is the most basic element of human intelligence, which causes him to assert that without the sign any thinking whatsoever would be impossible:

Éstos incalculables grupos de ideas advenedizas se distinguen por un carácter esencial; tienen su raíz en una palabra ajena, y cada una de sus impresiones componentes va sostenida por otra palabra. Algo de esto hay en los otros grupos del lenguaje de acción; pero ellos no se desarrollan sino de un modo imperfecto. Ya se puede comprender, por todas las razones expuestas, cómo es imposible pensar sin el auxilio de las palabras ó de otros signos supletorios; y cómo proviniendo de tantas causas nuestros grupos de impresiones y de movimientos, pueden aparecer como enteramente arbitrarios. Todo está encadenado en la inteligencia.

The communication and co-penetration of the human animal and its surrounding world combines with the communicative potential of the sign in Ramírez’s theory and prompts him to observe a miraculous possibility of human sentimental communication:

Todos los órganos humanos sirven para relacionar al hombre con los séres que lo rodean; pero sólo el aparato fonético, por medio del oído, establece una comunicación continua de las más pequeñas percepciones entre la madre y el niño, el amante y la amada, el sabio y el ignorante; entre los amigos y aun entre los mismos enemigos. Resulta de aquí un fenómeno curioso, y consiste en que cada individuo, además de sus propias combinaciones sensitivas, posee tantas otras cuantas son las personas con quienes ha tratado de palabra ó por escrito, y aun por medio de otra clase de signos. Una sola persona puede sentir como Aristóteles y Platón, como Moisés y Confucio, como Fidias y Vitrubio, como Dante y Abelardo, como algunos centenares de sus antepasados y como otros centenares de sus contemporáneos, y hablar el idioma de cada uno y verse contra su voluntad comprometido por las preocupaciones ajenas. (My emphasis)
As Ramírez understands it, the sign, and particularly its phonetic or graphic instantiation, allows for the sensations, and thereby also the sentiments, of one person to pass to another, and this despite their geographical or temporal distance from one another. Through the sign, the sentiments of another may be captured and communicated so that they might be experienced anew. This miraculous possibility of communication is grounded in the workings of two phenomena mentioned previously in this section, namely, the reorganization of emotion (brought about by a vivifying stimulus that causes the internal sentimental economy to exceed the boundaries of its normal functioning) and emotion’s radical disorganization in the violence of excessive, destructive passion. If we hold, as Ramírez does, that the sign is capable of acting directly upon the sentimental apparatus, then two monumental possibilities appear. First, as in the case of sentimental reorganization, the sign can provoke a temporary modification in the internal sentimental economy, and if this modification is prolonged, it can lead to a permanent change in the functioning of that apparatus. The second case is no less significant: if the destructive disorganization of the organism can be brought about through the operation of signs upon that organism, then signs, in directly affecting the sentimental economy, can also be used to bring about the violent sort of passion that Ramírez recognizes as the risk implicit in that economy’s possibility for change.467

For Ramírez, these possibilities are not just hypothetical flights of fancy brought on by abstract theorization; rather, they are the result of the sort of positive investigation that he has made possible by insisting that literature be approached in the light of the possibilities naturally afforded to it as a linguistic phenomenon. As seen elsewhere

467 This risk is similarly present in Ramírez’s conception of the volatility entailed by the spontaneity of the will of Nature.
throughout his thinking, the theoretical paradigm that he erects conceptualizes the relationship between literature and sentiment as a natural relationship of reciprocal affectivity, and he believes that this relationship can be scientifically grasped and directly manipulated through the action of the sign:

Pero, la literatura ¿puede ser una ciencia? Sí; porque el lenguaje no es más que una manifestación fisiológica de la organización humana; y porque en el mismo lenguaje se distinguen fácilmente los elementos individuales y las funciones sociales; y porque los objetos significados y las diversas clases de signos obedecen á leyes constantes, que una vez encontradas, no será difícil distribuirlas en luminosas teorías.\footnote{Op. cit. 9.}

Literature, then, is not understood here as referring to the specific tradition of written, linguistic production that begins to be analyzed as such on the European continent. To the contrary, literature is both a naturally and \textit{universally} emergent phenomenon and an immanent physiological possibility for human action in a social milieu. Although their productions vary, Ramírez holds that all cultures possess and develop what he calls the “physiological elements of literature,” and he further signals that their emergence is no less arbitrary than the sign that makes them possible:

Los elementos fisiológicos de la literatura han sido igualmente distribuidos por la naturaleza en toda la humanidad; cinco especies de sensaciones; placer, dolor; lenguaje de acción, productor de los jeroglíficos y de la pantomima; música; tendencias trópicas de cada palabra; y determinados intereses sociales. Cada pueblo desarrolla á su modo esos elementos; y, por lo común, lo que se llama invención no es más que la adopción de los usos extranjeros: por eso vemos, con frecuencia, que chinos y griegos señalan una revolución artística ó social, citando los bárbaros á quienes la deben.\footnote{Ramírez, Ignacio. \textit{Lecciones de literatura}. Mexico City: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1884. 9. Print. The universality of literature implied in this passage also leads Ramírez to argue that for this reason the study of literature must similarly be universally extended to the study of the literary production of all cultures: “Creemos nosotros que la literatura, para ser una ciencia, no debe limitar sus estudios á los fenómenos locales; botánica del lenguaje, su flora se compondrá de las floras estudiadas en todos los Parnasos del mundo.” \textit{Ibid.}}

The potential and necessity of literary creation is universal in the human animal, making the potential for modifying the sentimental economy of humanity through the sign equally universal.
In accordance with this understanding, and in a move which would surely strike the reader as altogether bizarre were it not prefaced by six chapters also possessed of the same strange obsession with the physiological, Ramírez begins his chapter on “literary beauty” with a general treatise on human sensation and sentiment:

Las sensaciones humanas, fuera de cada persona, están representadas por fuerzas que obran sobre los sentidos. Parece que toda fuerza se manifiesta por impulsos rápidos, más ó menos repetidos, de donde proviene la forma constante del movimiento: forma que consiste en ondas sonoras para el oído, luminosas para los ojos, y probablemente gustativas, olfativas y táctiles para el tacto, el olfato y el gusto. En este sistema las cualidades de cualquiera sensación dependen del número, posición y duración de ciertas ondulaciones de la materia. La intensidad las aviva.  

What I have called an obsession with the physiological is not just a passing moment at the outset of the treatise. Indeed, that obsession frames the entirety of Ramírez’s exploration of the structure of the aesthetic experience in the human organism. His description of that structure is careful to address the function of sentiment while explicitly connecting it with the aesthetic processes immanent in the literary experience. In doing so, he also furthers

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471 In delimiting his investigation, Ramírez is forced to address the opposition between Nature and artifice characteristic of neoclassical aesthetics (to which his own poetry strictly adhered). Palti makes much of Ramírez’s struggle with this dichotomy, however, at least in the context of his theorization in Lecciones de literatura, it does not seem beyond resolution. Once we take into account Ramírez’s materialist conceptualization of the world, all phenomena therein should thereby be understood to be natural, including humanity itself. With this being the case, rather than being a term standing in opposition to the natural world, the term artificial serves here as a qualifier indicating the presence of human action in the natural world. To the extent that the artificial is different from the natural, it is only because human action has constrained it and forced it to persist beyond its original limits. The artificial, then, is only a specifically dysfunctional or differently functional subset of the phenomena of the natural world. This distinction is formulated in the following passage: “Limitándonos á las impresiones como agradables ó desagradables, los objetos que las causan á una es por la naturaleza sola ó por la naturaleza dirigida en aquellos casos en que el arte puede provocarlas. Entre lo natural y lo artificial hay una gradación insensible: ¿cuándo, por ejemplo, el coito, producto de nuevos seres, es natural? ¿Cuándo es artificial? El avecilla que aprende una canción ofrece mezcladas las influencias naturales y las artísticas. Y no siempre el floricultor podrá determinar hasta dónde ha ayudado á la naturaleza. En medio de esa confusión, por ahora, sólo reconoceremos como productos artificiales aquellos agentes que el hombre arranca á la naturaleza por medio de procedimientos ó de instrumentos humanos.” Op. cit. 103. This distinction also appears capable of extension to certain parts of the animal world as well: “Nos serviremos, pues, de tales recuerdos para resolver esta cuestión: los animales, en general, ¿conocen la belleza natural y la artística? Conocen la belleza natural por el placer ineludible de sus primeras impresiones; la conocen por sus recuerdos; la conocen por las pasiones que le deben; y la conocen por los actos con que la aprovechan. En cuanto al placer artificial, puesto que no se puede negar donde hay conocimiento de las artes, es de afirmarse como existente en las abejas, por lo que toca á su panal; en las aves por lo que corresponde á su canto y á su nido; en el castor, cuando contempla sus construcciones; y en el mono cuando se complace en remediar á los animales humanos. El placer artístico es un hecho en los
the objective of naturally grounding aesthetic experience by insisting that pleasure and pain, rather than being merely products of external stimuli acting on the human organism, are instead inherent properties of those stimuli:

Estos preliminares son necesarios para convencerse de que el placer y el dolor entran como componentes en cada sensación determinada, como su figura, su color, su intensidad, su armonía, su duración y todos sus caracteres, ya sean eventuales, ya constantes. Lo agradable ó desagradable de una sensación no es más que uno de los elementos actuales de la sensación misma. […] Y como las obras literarias no son sino productos del instrumento que se llama lenguaje, la belleza puramente literaria depende en realidad del modo con que por medio del lenguaje se pueden producir sensaciones agradables.472

The need to posit pleasure and pain, which Ramírez takes to be the basic components of aesthetic experience, as phenomena that are present prior to our experiences in the very stimuli that intuitively bring those experiences about may seem a curious strategy, but it has profound consequences for Ramírez’s understanding of the function and aim of literary activity. Locating the core of the aesthetic experience in the stimuli that provoke it serves to universalize that experience: if the aesthetic experience is not located in our reaction to stimuli, but rather in the very stimuli that we are reacting to, then the aesthetic experience is, at least from this external perspective, universally available. That is to say that, granted sufficient similarity to another person, the pleasure or pain generated by an aesthetic experience should, following this account, be in principle identical for two different people.

Nevertheless, things are again more complicated than they appear to be at first glance. Whereas the aesthetic experience remains potentially universal due to the inherent presence of pleasure and pain within the stimuli that affect the human organism, the internal


sentimental economy that regulates and canalizes that pleasure and pain is itself productive of a diversity of emotional states that vary with the particular configuration of the internal sentimental economy of a given individual:

Ni es contestable esta verdad porque no todos los hombres tengan el mismo gusto, ni porque cambie con el tiempo el efecto de cualquiera impresión sensoria. Semejantes irregularidades lo único que acreditan es que el instrumento sensorio sufre pequeños y grandes cambios fisiológicos: la ciencia lo comprueba.473

The difference in the internal sentimental economies of individual human organisms also acts as an explanation for the fact that aesthetic experiences touch the emotions of different people in different ways and at different times:

Los escritores en quienes domina el sensualismo son imperfectos y empalagosos; no pueden competir con los placeres reales. Los escritores filosóficos son sabiamente ridículos, cuando aspiran á la eloquencia y á la poesia, como viejas modistas que ostentan galas juveniles. La verdadera poesía lírica es un ditirambo, una embriaguez, una locura; alcanza su objeto cuando se hace contagiosa. De aquí proviene que hay odas para los jóvenes y para los ancianos, para las mujeres y para los hombres, para los místicos y para los guerreros, porque no en todos los pechos pueden hervir las mismas pasiones.474

Ramírez’s investigation of the nature of linguistic and aesthetic phenomena requires that he give an account of the way in which this aesthetic process, like the others that he describes, is possible from a physiological perspective. In the following passage, Ramírez elaborates a description of the three stages of the process of sensation and makes explicit the way in which the sign penetrates the organism and articulates the internal sentimental economy:

(1)¿De cuántos modos, á su vez, pueden los signos causar impresiones agradables? Esto lo alcanzan directamente, considerándose entónces como objetos: bellezas del lenguaje, la eloquencia, la poesía.

(2)Veamos ya cómo puede expresarse y comunicarse un placer personal á uno ó á varios circunstantes. Tres estados tiene toda sensación desagradable ó agradable: el perceptivo, el afectivo y el discursivo. (3) Lo que place ó molesta en cualquiera percepción, no depende ni de su análisis, ni de sus ideas accesorias; todos los sentidos pueden suministrar directamente sensaciones desagradables ó placenteras. (4) En este caso el orador y el poeta señalan ó recuerdan el objeto causativo: ¡hermosos ojos! ¡mejillas de rosa! ¡la reina de las montañas! ¡el mar inmenso! ¡mortífera serpiente! tal es, en resúmen, el lenguaje en el primer grado de las sensaciones: en el perceptivo. (5) En el grado afectivo se presentan las sensaciones actuales con las pasadas, que

suministra la memoria; entonces se forman imágenes reales y fantásticas; las pasiones se encienden, el cuerpo se estremece, la razón se alarma, y las emociones de placer y de molestia, de ese modo complicadas, se llaman amor y odio. (6) En el tercer grado el aparato del lenguaje se apodera de los elementos anteriores y los clasifica; discurre sobre ellos, y ese estado de la sensación se llama racional, artístico, científico, ideal, puro. La razón procede por clasificaciones y demostraciones, y formula sus objetos en definiciones, en sentencias y en sílogismos ó razonamientos. (7) En el estado intermedio, apasionado, patético, calenturiento, el orador, el poeta, lo mismo que el vulgo, mezclan las frases demostrativas con los argumentos, provocan el placer sensual ó perceptivo y procuran hacerse cómplices en las severas leyes de la inteligencia, y con el fuego del odio y del amor convierten la belleza artística y la científica, de estatuas insensibles, en patria, en naturaleza, en mujeres y en diosas. (8) Los placeres perceptivos entonces aparecen viles si se presentan aislados, y entonces los placeres racionales se califican de vanos y pedantescos, mientras se resisten á girar en el torbellino de la emoción: (9) la belleza, sean cuales fueren sus caracteres, sensuales ó ideales, no se levanta viva, no se mueve poderosa, sino cuando respira odio ó amor, sino cuando palpita y clama oprimida por las pasiones. (10) Sin duda por eso se inventó la palabra estética, sentimiento.

Systematic analysis of this richly theoretical passage illuminates how Ramírez conceptualizes the human aesthetic experience and the paramount importance of the internal sentimental economy in that experience. Part (1) of the passage frames the structure to follow and indicates its salience by signaling that its appeal to physiology is justified by the capacity of the aesthetic sign to act directly upon the organism. What remains to be seen is the variety of ways in which that action may be executed and its manifold emotional results.

Part (2) consists of two essential claims. The first concisely presents the phenomenon of sentimental communicability that Ramírez has already discussed with reference to Plato, Confucius, et.al. While this claim acknowledges that sentiments are in some sense closely held and deeply personal, they are nevertheless susceptible to communication through the sign, and thereby of being widely experienced without totally compromising their intimate, emotive quality. The second claim delineates the three phases constitutive of aesthetic experience, namely, the perceptive, the affective, and the discursive.

The digression contained in part (3) of the passage is symptomatic of its thrust as a whole. As if to reinforce the physiological gamble that its argument depends on, the text reiterates the capability of the sign to directly impact the physiology of the human organism in a way that bypasses and obviates the need for analysis or cogitation. As Ramírez sees it, we do not need to think to be able to feel. Reflection on our sentiment always come about too late, a fact that belies their auxiliary character. This order of events, wherein the ideation of thinking is situated as a moment distinct and posterior to the initial experiential moment of feeling, is also reflected in Ramírez’s ordering of the perceptive, affective, and discursive phases of the action of the sign in part (2): in accordance with this schema, ideation pertains to the discursive phase, whereas feeling and emotions belong to the two prior perceptive and affective phases, respectively.

Parts (4), (5), and (6) of this account describe the three phases of the action of the human organism in their order of occurrence. The first of these phases, perception, coincides with the appearance of the object and the immediate effect of its presence upon the organism.\textsuperscript{476} As the aesthetic features of pleasure and pain are immanent in the stimuli that catalyze the moment of perception, it is also at this moment that the human organism first feels pleasure and pain. However, at this earliest stage in the reception of stimuli, feelings are not yet configured as sentiment. Instead, in the phase of perception, the emotional processes of the internal sentimental economy have only begun to be set into motion. Their further realization is not accomplished until the affective phase.

\textsuperscript{476} As I am here concerned with the specific connection between sentiment and literature in Ramírez’s thought, it is important to note that the two examples of sources of external stimuli that Ramírez posits to begin his account of the physiology of the aesthetic experience are both literary phenomena. To this a more obvious observation might be added, namely, that the chapter of \textit{Lecciones de literatura} in which all of this occurs is entitled “La bellezas literaria.”
It is important to note that simple, immediate feeling pertains only to the level of perception for Ramírez. By the time the internal sentimental economy enters into motion, simple feeling has already become intelligible in terms of the symbolic world of the organism, and sensation already functions as sign. The powers of memory, Will, and understanding are brought to bear upon the objects of desire that have become present, and an emotional state is produced in accordance with which those objects are received and understood. The logic of the understanding then parses the presence of the object, interpreting it in increasingly complex ways. At the same time, the basic aesthetic traits of pain or pleasure already inherent in the stimuli since the phase of perception are also transformed. Part (5) of the passage traces the movement from the simple sensations of aesthetic pleasure and pain to the fundamental emotions of love and hate that emerge in the affective phase.

The initial description of the affective phase gives way to an account of the discursive phase. Part (6) of the passage argues that this moment of the aesthetic experience provides the space for the action of reason, logic, memory, invention, combination, and categorization. The discursive phase is the phase proper to ideation and is capable of supporting understanding through the application of categorization, generalization, and, as a result of their combination, the objectification of particular stimuli. This moment of the aesthetic process produces the ideological configurations that allow for abstraction, inference, and deduction, and it crafts the conceptual apparatus necessary for the construction of artifice (human conditioning of the natural world, technē) and advance through scientific experimentation. The increase in complexity entailed by the constructive action of the discursive phase of perception follows a pattern already
established in the move from the perceptive phase to the affective phase, wherein the sign, a simple sensation with inherent aesthetic properties, passed from being a manifestation of pain and pleasure to being a manifestation of love and hate. In the movement from the affective phase to the discursive phase, Ramírez posits the movement from emotion to idea. At this point, it is important to specify some further peculiarities of this account of aesthetic experience.

A careful reading of the above-cited passage shows that the ostensibly linear movement of the sign from the perceptive through the affective and onto the discursive phase is misleading in its apparent unidirectionality. The fact that the operation of these phases is not chronologically linear is hinted at even before the reader arrives at the description of the seemingly final, discursive phase in part (6). In part (5), Ramírez implies that the temporal arrangement of these phases is necessarily more complex because the processes of the perceptive phase are still operative during the affective phase, as evident when the body trembles (“se estremece el cuerpo”). Furthermore, the discursive phase, which would appear to be subsequent to the affective phase, also participates in the affective phase. Ramírez asserts that reason may be alarmed by the violence of emotional developments, which logically entails that reason, a natural denizen of the discursive phase of the aesthetic experience, must somehow still bear witness to and interact with the action of the affective phase. Part (5) therefore asserts the coetaneity of the perceptive, affective, and discursive phases. At the same time, it should be insisted that although the three phases operate contemporaneously, that does not mean that all three exercise the same force in their interaction. Granted Ramírez’s thoroughgoing materialism and patronage of
scientific advancement, however, it may come as a surprise that it is the second, affective phase that enjoys primacy in their contemporaneous interaction.

The primacy of the affective phase comes to the fore in the movement from part (6) to part (7) of the cited passage. Here the co-penetration of all three of the phases becomes clear as Ramírez posits the interaction and mutual transformation of the sign in its shuttling between the forms of idea and emotion while simultaneously producing sensations registered by perception. The volatility of the dynamics governing this interaction are those characteristic of the affective phase as Ramírez understands it. The intermediate, affective phase is described in part (7) in terms of emotional gradations. Those gradations are presented in order of their decreasing volatility: “passionate, pathetic, warm.” The emotional products of the commingling of the elements of each of the three phases in the dynamics of the affective phase are not to be underestimated. On Ramírez’s argument, the possibility of affecting sentimental change also depends on the dynamic interaction of these phases.

For Ramírez, the affective phase is the site of the formation of our general understanding of and disposition toward the world, which he calls intelligence. This sentimental understanding is the first product of the internal sentimental economy, but the second is no less impressive. Ramírez points toward the symbolic pinnacles of the social imaginary of his day, and argues that they are all products of the affective intermingling of perception and idea with emotion in the internal sentimental economy: in the domain of the political, “Patria”; in the domain of the natural world, “Nature” itself; in the domain of the personal, “Woman”; finally, -and strikingly-, in the domain of the transcendental, “goddesses” (who really needs “gods” when you could have “goddesses” instead?).
These signifiers, “Patria,” “Nature,” “Woman,” “Goddess,” all similarly occupy the position of God, master-signifier, or guarantor of truth in their respective symbolic economies. In the nationalist political ideology of 19th century Mexico, the patria is represented as many things at once: the remote object of desire whose advent requires self-sacrifice, the signifier at once representative of all of the most laudable and the most abject aspects of the national reality, and the cruel super-ego whose mandate lends sacrifice its unrelentingly exigent character. In the same way, “Patria” names both the source of all answers and the ultimate end of all questioning in the political domain just described. In the domain of science and humanity’s technological confrontation with Nature, it is Nature itself that holds all the answers and provokes the necessity of their correspondent questions through the spontaneous, volatile action of its hitherto mysterious forces. Woman and goddesses occupy a similar space vis-à-vis humanity in their conceptualization qua mankind: for the heteronormative ideology of the period, Woman is the ultimate terrestrial, sensual Other, and is mirrored in the opacity of the goddess, the divine Other, both of them overflowing with menacing temptations for the subject of their desire.

All of the foregoing phenomena have played an undeniable role in the historical unfolding of human culture and civilization, and Ramírez’s attribution of them to the interaction of sentiment with the total intelligence of the human organism evinces the central role that sentiment’s regulation and articulation of the passions plays in his thinking. Ramírez’s own term for what I have up to this point referred to as the process of aesthetic experience is “language” (lenguaje). The thinker’s description of the function of language involves the interaction of elements pertaining to all three of the phases investigated in this section, but the text also vehemently asserts that the lifeblood of the process of language is
sentiment itself. Without the affective phase of language, perception would remain mute animal sensibility, and the advanced ideation of the discursive phase of language would be an utter impossibility without the transformative action of the affective phase upon the basic signs of pleasure and pain. This final insistence occupies parts (8) and (9) of the passage and bears repetition in the light of the concepts developed earlier in this investigation:

Los placeres perceptivos entonces aparecen viles si se presentan aislados, y entonces los placeres racionales se califican de vanos y pedantescos, mientras se resisten á girar en el torbellino de la emoción: la belleza, sean cuales fueren sus caracteres, sensuales ó ideales, no se levanta viva, no se mueve poderosa, sino cuando respira odio ó amor, sino cuando palpita y clama oprimida por las pasiones.477

This brings us to the apex of Ramírez’s physiological argumentation as he declares his conclusion with a conjecture that again foregrounds the importance of the sentimental for the operation of language in the aesthetic experience just described: “Sin duda por eso se inventó la palabra estética, sentimiento” (Original emphasis).478 Language and sentiment are unified within the aesthetic experience. In accordance with the reference made to literature in both the title and the body of the text of Lecciones de literatura, the connection between the phenomena of the world as aesthetic objects and the internal sentimental economy of the human organism is here specifically addressed in terms of the relationship between literature and the sentimental economy.

Ramírez’s unique conceptualization of language posits the possibility of directly impacting the internal sentimental economy of the human organism through literature. By affirming the preeminence of the affective phase over the other phases of language, he also envisions a way in which literature might articulate that sentimental economy so that it

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478 Ibid.
bypasses the logical gauntlet of the discursive phase of reason. In a period where superstition and fallacious logic seemed to hold the perceived forces of political, scientific, and economical light at bay, the importance of encountering a means of directly impacting the heart of the public without having to first traverse the byzantine labyrinth of a social imaginary conditioned by three centuries of intellectual subservience must have seemed promising indeed. The capacity of literature to directly touch the hearts and inflame the emotions of readers was more than a theoretical device used by Ramírez to shore up his complex physiological machinations. To the contrary, the possibilities that he afforded to literature go a long way toward explaining the motivation for the style of much of his literary production.

Ramírez knows that feelings, sentiments, and the Patria itself all partake in the nature of the sign, and the sign is at home in the body. The trick, then, would be to figure out how to construct a body out of signs, and more importantly, how to use sentiment to craft a story of the body politic. In the next section, I examine how Ramírez comes to reconceptualize both the nature and destiny of literature in the light of its potential for penetrating and affecting the internal sentimental economy of the human organism.
The stark contrast in critical opinion resultant from attempts to interpret it is indicative of the difficulty implicit in assessing Ramírez’s work on literature. The question regarding that aspect of his writing is generally parsed in one or both of two ways: in the first instance, one asks after the significance of those literary works vis-à-vis the rest of his obra; in the second instance, the question concerns the value of those writings as literary critical works per se. Ángel Castro, for example, begins his evaluation by citing José Luis Martínez’s study of Ramírez. Luis Martínez notes that criticism of Ramírez’s work has often been unduly obfuscated by emphasis on biographical considerations. Ángel Castro then forwards Luis Martínez’s assertion of the relatively negligible value of Ramírez’s literary obra:

En la primera recopilación de la producción nigromantina de 1889, los trabajos literarios, poemas y artículos, apenas rebasan el centenar de páginas. Sus estudios sobre la materia fueron publicados anteriormente, en 1884, y más que trabajos de creación, son, como su título lo indica Lecciones de literatura, fruto de los cursos que impartió en diferentes momentos; se trata de la exposición de sus conocimientos sobre retórica y filología. En efecto, no estamos ante un plan editorial que hubiera descartado de inicio la literatura de Ramírez, sino de una producción marcada por su vocación: inclinación hacia la política y pasión por la discusión de las ideas.

[...] El problema de lectura que presenta la obra de quien ‘sólo ocasionalmente pudo y quiso ser escritor literario,’ obliga a una separación imposible del talento porque ‘en el caso de Ignacio Ramírez –explica Carlos Monsiváis—, como en el de sus compañeros de generación, no son escindibles la vida y la obra, la prosa y la poesía, el ensayo y el discurso, la literatura y la acción pública. Los liberales se conciben unitariamente, son, en su proyecto, el impulso coherente y el dique ante los males de la improvisación, la rapiña y la ausencia de solidaridad.’ Sin embargo, es claro que los entusiasmos y el reconocimiento de los contemporáneos de Ramírez, como los de generaciones posteriores, proceden sobre todo, o en primer término, de la fuerza del discurso y la firmeza de las ideas ‘del eminente pensador, del inmaculado liberal, del gran apóstol de la Reforma’, como decía Altamirano, y en segundo lugar, de su poesía y sus ensayos sobre lengua y literatura.


Continuing down the path laid by Luis Martínez, Ángel Castro goes on to conclude by similarly conceptualizing Ramírez’s works as a sort of Gordian knot: while it is clear that Ramírez invested a great amount of effort in his own works, this argument holds that determining their particular significance for his body of thought remains impossible because of the distortions produced by the turbulent period in which he lived. This makes it all too easy to marginalize Ramírez’s writings, and specifically those treating language and literature -both of these being topics apparently regarded as having limited political application— as Ángel Castro does in the final line of the previous citation. Ángel Castro’s subsequent investigation of those works foregoes their systematic analysis and instead limits the object of investigation to:

[…] Algunas lecturas o consideraciones críticas acerca del diálogo que entabló Ramírez con sus sentimientos y emociones […] para identificar la importancia que tiene dentro de toda su producción y el lugar que se le ha dado en la historia de la literatura mexicana, pero sobre todo, para servir de cauce o preámbulo a una posible experiencia literaria.\footnote{Op. cit. 422.}

It should be of little surprise, then, that the results of his investigation fail to include any significant mention of Ramírez’s works on language and literature.\footnote{Ángel Castro summarizes his assessment of Ramírez’s literary work thusly: “Es evidente que en sus artículos periodísticos y en sus discursos, Ramírez se proponía provocar, difundir por medio de la discusión sus ideas, y convencer; los títulos de sus textos publicados en los múltiples periódicos en que colaboró muestran la esfera de sus intereses, el fundamento ilustrado de sus argumentos y el tono irónico de que tan bien supo servirse. Lo más significativo de la vena poética de Ramírez radica, por una parte, en la intensidad de la defensa de sus ideas y en la fuerza de sus expresiones; por otra, en el humor cáustico con el que acompaña sus reflexiones vitales y su tardía pasión amorosa. Los versos del Nigromante que han transcendido, además de su consistencia formal, conmueven por la profundidad de su pensamiento materialista y desolación sentimental; atraen por su ironía desafiante y cierta gracia. Sus comedias están por abrirse paso para mostrar el papel que tenía el teatro en México al mediar el siglo XIX, el sentido crítico y el tono mordaz con el que pretendía combatir los viejos males y construir un nuevo paradigma de ciudadano.” Op. cit. 432.}
unique function of Ramírez’s work on language and literature within his overall thought, Ángel Castro’s summary of the value of his literary works as a whole is restrained to further showering the thinker with adulation and glittering generalities:

El lugar que Ignacio Ramírez tiene en la historia de la cultura Mexicana reconoce la inteligencia, el trabajo y la sensibilidad de un verdadero hombre de letras, de un hombre de razón. Es frecuente que las palabras o los juicios que hacen los artistas y escritores sobre otros artistas pueden aplicarse a ellos mismos […] Seamos, pues, pródigos en alabanzas y en gloria para el escritor revolucionario que fue Ignacio Ramírez y demos vida a su figura con nuestra lectura.483

This saintly rendering of Ramírez echoes an earlier moment in Ángel Castro’s analysis, where he cites and endorses Gutiérrez Nájera’s description of the rigorous and pioneering analysis of all aspects of life characteristic of Ramírez’s work: “Ramírez destruía; fue el gran allanador de la ruta por donde hoy caminamos; Ramírez dejó en algunas de sus obras acabados modelos literarios; pero Ramírez no fue un buen profesor de literatura” (My emphasis).484 Nevertheless, the mention of “finalized literary models” shows that Gutiérrez Nájera recognizes the systematic character of Ramírez’s theorization of language and literature. In this way, Gutiérrez Nájera actually goes a step further in the right direction than Ángel Castro by refusing to dissolve the cohesiveness of those reflections in the biographical morass that threatens to subsume it. The next step, then, is to follow the possibility that Gutiérrez Nájera opens up by signaling the “completed models” contained in Lecciones de literatura and Ramírez’s other meditations on language and literature.

Carrizales is one critic who takes Ramírez’s literary works far more seriously and sees in them something more than a passing eccentricity. As a result, he accomplishes far more in terms of understanding their particular significances and overall roles in the body of Ramírez’s thought. His summary of the impact of those works is also more

comprehensive because he understands the significance of Ramírez’s literary theorization in terms of the greater whole of Ramírez’s thinking:

No obstante su fama en el discurso crítico, no sería posible apreciar cabalmente la figura histórica de Ramírez al margen de los empeños que dedicó a la geografía, la economía política, las cuestiones laborales, la paleontología, la arqueología, la física, la química y la pedagogía, además del gobierno republicano. La familiaridad de Ignacio Ramírez con estas materias evidencia una estructura de entendimiento profundamente afectada por los paradigmas de la investigación científica en auge durante la época de nuestro hombre de letras, así como también por la influencia de estas construcciones epistemológicas sobre los sistemas de representación social. En consecuencia, Ramírez es un caso notable de la mentalidad que se esfuerza, hacia el siglo XIX, por construir al ser humano, la moral, la vida civil y el gobierno de los pueblos como objetos de reflexión científica.

Ignacio Ramírez llevó a cabo un esfuerzo magnífico por colocar al hombre, a la sociedad y a la naturaleza en el cuadro ya reformado de los conocimientos generales alcanzados por la civilización occidental en el siglo XVIII. De esa tarea epistemológica no escapan ni sus inquisiciones acerca del lenguaje ni las lecciones que consagró a la literatura. Acaso en el campo de la expresión literaria, tradicionalmente reservado en el ethos cultural de Ramírez a una dependencia de las instituciones de la antigua retórica, pueda ponerse con todas sus implicaciones la ruptura epistemológica practicada por nuestro autor. Entre nosotros, Ignacio Ramírez fue uno de los primeros en proyectar la separación de la literatura con respecto a lo que Marc Fumaroli ha llamado la Edad de la elocuencia, este deslindes ha dado paso a la explicación de las letras con base en los procedimientos intelectuales de la ‘Edad científica,’ por así decirlo. En este aspecto estriba nuestro interés por dedicar cierta atención a las lecciones que Ramírez escribió sobre el arte literario.

It is at this point, however, that my argument must also part ways with Carrizales’s because the understanding of literature that he advocates squares far too readily with the positivist perspective that Ramírez’s work strives to rearticulate. That this is the case is evidenced by the summary that the critic provides of Ramírez’s literary achievement:

La consideración del placer provocado por la índole del ‘signo artístico’ lleva a Ramírez a adoptar las nociones tradicionales que describen y clasifican los modos del estilo: ‘Lo hermoso se aplica a la grandeza y regularidad de las formas; lo gracioso a la belleza pequeña, accidental y fugitiva; lo sublime a lo sorprendente por su fuerza o por su tamaño; lo gustoso a las impresiones superficiales.’ En consecuencia, estos ejemplos revelan que la elaboración teórica de Ignacio Ramírez acerca de la literatura, una vez que ha referido a la naturaleza psicofisiológica de los enunciados lingüísticos, sigue el camino tradicional de la teoría poética y retórica de Occidente, sobre todo en cuanto se relaciona con la naturaleza de la emoción causada por el texto literario, la imitación literaria de la naturaleza, los elementos del verso, las figuras de la dicción y del pensamiento, la caracterización de los discursos y su distribución en clases, ya por el modo y los medios de su organización, ya por sus efectos. Ramírez no sintió la necesidad de desentenderse de esta tradición del conocimiento literario, sino de fundamentarla científicamente.485 (My emphasis)


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Unfortunately, Carrizales fails to develop these insights further. His account is insufficiently radical in its assessment of the scope and significance of Ramírez’s theorization of literature. To say that Ramírez thinks that literature must be re-grounded scientifically is problematic in two ways: firstly, as the differences between Gabino Barreda and Ignacio Ramírez’s respective conceptualizations of Nature explored earlier have shown, the mutual adherence of both of these thinkers to the importance of scientific advance in each of their cases involved substantially different commitments to that notion and distinct ways in which the notion was understood. Secondly, because Ramírez’s take on the nature of scientific progress is more radical than the positions staked out by his contemporaries, the importance of reestablishing a foundation for literary studies must be rethought in an equally radical way. Carrizales’ strategy stops short in this regard, and insists that, despite the physiological approach that he adopts, Ramírez’s theory does not represent a substantial break with the traditional understanding of literature in the period:

El pensamiento literario de Ignacio Ramírez no significa un desvarío sustancial con respecto a los problemas establecidos gracias a la teoría poética y retórica propia de la centenaria tradición clásica; sería inútil alegar entre sus atributos el de la originalidad. En cambio, es notable la relación epistemológica que estableció entre estos saberes tradicionales y las facultades lingüísticas del ser humano.  

Carrizales rightly notes that the true shift in Ramírez’s account of language and the aesthetic experience is epistemological, meaning that it deals with the way in which we ask after what we can know. As such, Ramírez’s work on literature also entails a version of the fundamental epistemological question: “what is literature, and how can we talk about it?”

487 Ibid.
Nevertheless, the position that Carrizales advocates has already tacitly assumed a traditional response to this question. This is clear from his description of the physiological mechanism that Ramírez posits as the ground of language:

(1) En la manipulación deliberada de este mecanismo consiste el lenguaje figurado, el estilo y, en última instancia, la belleza, siempre y cuando, según Ramírez, la sensación correspondiente sea agradable. Así la belleza es un efecto producido en el sujeto gracias a la sensación que el enunciado lingüístico despierta en su memoria con base en un referente de la realidad. No se trata de una sensación física en sí, sino de su reflejo a través del tiempo y del espacio: un reflejo construido consciente, convencionalmente, por el escritor. (2) A este respecto, Ignacio Ramírez no ha desechado los conocimientos organizados tradicionalmente por la preceptiva y la retórica de matriz clásica, sino que los ha reformulado en el cuadro de un paradigma científico, determinado por la experiencia: el origen del lenguaje en las sensaciones. (3) La índole de la sensación determina el carácter del enunciado literario y los tipos de géneros en los cuales han de distribuirse las obras. Veamos. (4) Ramírez se pregunta: ‘¿de cuántas maneras puede esa colección de signos, que se llama lenguaje, causar placer en sus oyentes y lectores?’ La respuesta correspondiente supone la distribución tripartita de los géneros literarios con base en el modo de la enunciación: lírica, drama y narrativa.488 (My emphasis and enumeration).

Carrizales’s first sentence demonstrates his awareness of the ultimate aim of literature by tying its function directly to Ramírez’s theorization of how human physiology can be manipulated. However, problems arise in the second and third sentences, wherein he describes the mechanism that is to be affected by that “deliberate manipulation.” This third sentence is of particular interest because it consists of two distinct parts. The second of these is the amorphous claim that the aesthetic function described by Ramírez is concerned with the creation or manipulation of a reflection. The first part of the sentence clarifies the meaning of this obscure statement: firstly, by qualifying that this sort of reflection is the product of a movement through time and space; and secondly, by vehemently asserting what this sort of temporal, spatial reflection is not, namely, “a physical sensation.” The problem with this claim is that, although it should work to buttress Carrizales’s argument in section (2) of the paragraph, it is nevertheless in total disagreement with Ramírez’s writing on the subject. To see this, we need only return to Ramírez’s “La belleza literaria,”

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where the thinker insists on the fundamentally physical character of the aesthetic experience while simultaneously distinguishing between internal and external moments of the aesthetic process:

La sensación agradable, que se llama belleza, es una impresión directa del objeto sobre los sentidos correspondientes, siempre que el placer proviene de una causa externa; pero a todas horas tenemos sensaciones agradables, cuyo placer debe buscarse en la reacción que ejerce el órgano sensorio sobre las impresiones directas, ya sea asociándolas, ya recordándolas, ya analizándolas, y ya componiéndolas de un modo caprichoso. Los sonidos, los colores, las figuras, los acordes, todo esto tiene una belleza componente de su inmediata impresión.489

This citation from Ramírez takes great pains to emphasize that the mechanism being described is physiological, subject to the direct influence of external stimuli, and nevertheless capable of internally perpetuating, recombining, or even producing those — still physical—stimuli. Carrizales fails to recognize that the aesthetic process is at once physical and sentimental. This causes the critic to unnecessarily reduce Ramírez’s contribution to an imposition of positivist empiricism on literature.

If Carrizales holds, as he does in part (3) of the previously cited passage, that the “nature of sensation” determines the way that Ramírez approaches literature, then mistaking the character of that sensation also proves equally—if less felicitously—determinant; This is evident in part (4) of the citation, where Carrizales completes his maneuver by presenting a traditional, tripartite division of literature into lyric, drama, and narrative. That division would make perfect sense were he correct in his assertion that Ramírez had never proposed a “substantial” break with traditional literary criticism. But, in failing to adequately conceptualize sensation within Ramírez’s system, Carrizales also misconstrues the understanding of beauty within the same. This leads him to assert Ramírez’s adherence to a traditional notion of beauty as proof of his acceptance of the

general coordinates of the dominant aesthetic understanding of the period. Here again, Carrizales’ interpretation enters into direct contradiction with the letter of Ramírez’s thought, as the thinker makes clear in an 1874 epistolary exchange with José de Jesus Cuevas:

Y digo: Desde Platón, desde antes, hasta nuestros días, los estéticos maniáticos han procedido, en la elaboración de su sistema, buscando un tipo de belleza; debiendo ser ese tipo perfecto y universal lo han designado en Dios; han explicado la belleza de Dios por sus atributos; en los atributos divinos han enumerado principalmente la sabiduría, el poder, la grandeza, el órden, la verdad, la bondad, la armonía, etc.; en el mundo, en lo general, y en lo particular en el hombre, han considerado la expresión de los atributos divinos como la causa de la belleza sensible; y de todo esto ha resultado que la belleza, en todas sus manifestaciones, sea inteligencia, poder, grandeza, verdad, bondad, órden y armonía.

Cada escritor ha explicado á su modo todas estas cosas; y los metafísicos se han afanado por subalternar á una sola propiedad todas las que constituyen la belleza. Tal es la historia; y, apoyado en ella, me atrevo á decir, contra la teoría de vd., que San Agustín no ha dicho ni la primera ni la última palabra en la cuestión que nos ocupa; el santo no fue más que uno de tantos discípulos que han seguido al filósofo griego.  

Having summarized the predominant aesthetic tradition as he understands it, Ramírez then draws a line between that tradition and his own position by launching a renewed interrogation of the nature of beauty:

¿Es cierto que la belleza consiste en el orden? ¿en la perfección, esplendor del órden? La tabla pitagórica, una botica, un hospital, serán tipos de belleza. Queda proscrito el bello desorden de Píndaro, tan celebrado por Horacio. Y lo sublime en las tempestades y lo gracioso en la mujer y en los niños se clasificarán entre lo feo. La vida, la grandeza, la inteligencia, todos los objetos favoritos de la imaginación tienen que deponer su brillante corona ante el esplendor de un cementerio.

¿La belleza está en la verdad? Lo feo también es verdadero; y, por desgracia, ¡cuán hermosas son nuestras ilusiones! La mitad de la belleza poética se funda en la materia.

¿La belleza consiste en la energía de la fuerza? Protestan contra ese dogma la flor, el ave, la mujer, la música, y la aurora magnética que contempla silenciosa sus galas en el espejo de los polos. La fuerza de voluntad es admirable en las víctimas, pero cuán despreciable es en sus verdugos!

Ramírez’s conceptualization of the interplay between the aesthetic properties inherent in sensations and the internal sentimental economy that I have treated in previous sections underpins the theory of beauty that he here elaborates. On the one hand, aesthetic pleasure, which gives rise to beauty, is inherent in physical, natural sensation: “La mitad
On the other hand, aesthetic experience is also determined by the emotional state of our internal sentimental economy, the processes of which are capable of rendering the ugly beautiful (as in the case of a child or a loved one), or the beautiful ugly (like the mastery of Will wielded by an executioner). Ramírez explicitly opposes this dynamic picture of the interaction of sentiment, literature, and language to the empirical, positivist, or “scientific” vision attributed to him by Carrizales:

In a way that echoes Gutiérrez Nájera’s mention of the “modelos acabados” to be found in Ramírez, this passage confirms that the thinker *does* propose the inauguration of a newly-defined literary vocabulary. This process of reformulation requires more than reliance on experience or translation into a scientific parlance. Indeed, in addition to sensation and beauty, Ramírez redefines the very notion of literature:

There are two distinct definitions of literature present in the passage above. The first indicates that the radical redefinition of literature extends to all practices of signification via the sign. The second then further delimits literature in order to

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492 *Ibid.* Ramírez repeatedly insists that beauty is inherent to physical sensation, as he does in the following example from “La belleza literaria”: “Estos preliminares son necesarios para convencerse de que el placer y el dolor entran como componentes en cada sensación determinada, como su figura, su color, su intensidad, su armonía, su duración y todos sus caracteres, ya sean eventuales, ya constantes. Lo agradable ó desagradable de una sensación no es más que uno de los elementos actuales de la sensación misma.” Ramírez, Ignacio. *Lecciones de literatura.* Mexico City: Imprenta de Francisco Díaz de León, 1884. 102-103. Print.
provisionally make it an object susceptible to investigation, and in this case that investigation deploys a philological strategy in order to physiologically ground the evolution of language. However, as Ramírez is careful to insist in the latter part of the same passage, this delimitation is wholly provisional. It is a heuristic incapable of capturing the nature of language in its totality. Instead, said delimitation recreates literature as an object of scientific analysis. That investigation, therefore, must necessarily preclude some portion of the literary phenomenon, and this is why Ramírez is careful to qualify his investigation as a literary-critical (viz. not literary simpliciter) project:

El método de nuestros trabajos queda indicado; se arregla á la naturaleza de las cosas y á los procedimientos favoritos de la ciencia moderna: analizar, clasificar, experimentar. Debemos comenzar por persuadirnos de que la literatura existe como un hecho independiente de todo convenio entre los hombres, como existen las flores en el campo, las conchas en el mar, los astros en el cielo: si el astrónomo, si el botánico, si el naturalista no ha inventado su mundo, el literato que presuma ser un genio creador, se expondrá á extraviarse para siempre en el caos. El orador, el poeta, cantan ó imitan maquinalmente como las aves; la crítica es una operación diversa.495

Objectifying literature in this way allows Ramírez to ground his theory in the physiology of language. This gives rise to his atomic grammar, which provides an account of how significance is derived from the primordial, monosyllabic particles that become compounded, suppressed, or generalized as language develops. This does not, however, address the phenomenon unto which this scientific methodology is meant to ground an approach, namely, literature in its character as an affective force impacting the physiology of the human organism. As such, the approach that Ramírez deploys at the beginning of his Estudios literarios, from which the above citation is drawn, represents nothing more than a provisional approximation of the question of literature through a preliminary, scientific analysis of the foundational elements of language. This does not mean that in doing so Ramírez succeeds in exhaustively accounting for literary phenomena, nor does he

claim to have done so. To the contrary, Ramírez insists that, rather than being a purely linguistic form, literature is also creative, emotive, fantastic, and sentimental; in fact, he goes so far as to assert that it is these latter elements that constitute the lifeblood of literature. For Ramírez, literature extends beyond the realm of the letter and the cipher to encompass all human communication:

Pero la literatura no concentra exclusivamente su atención sobre lo escrito; se agrada en dejarse deslumbrar con el brillo de la palabra; sabe que la elegancia ostenta sus galas lo mismo en un estrado que en un cuerpo legislativo; lo mismo en un meeting que en los campos de batalla; creación en la fantasía, sublimidad en el sentimiento y colorido en el lenguaje, vuelan con más novedad y aliento en las improvisaciones que en las lecturas.  

Rather than being subject to a static categorization, Ramírez insists that the nature of language evolves along with the nature of humanity. Similarly, literature itself evolves in correspondence with the developing articulation of the internal sentimental economy of the human organism: “Un idioma es el mar de la palabra agitado por el pensamiento humano: cambia sin cesar; cada época y cada hombre forman su leguaje […].” In light of this fact, the distinction that Ramírez draws between the emotional contest generated by the aesthetic experience and the mechanics of the internal sentimental economy wherein that contest takes place is significant. While the mechanics of that economy can and should be described and understood by scientific reason, the dynamics of the sentimental contest that it plays host to and the provocative relationship of literature with those dynamics remain beyond the purview of reason.

Ramírez sustains this point by arguing that it is at the level of passion and the emotions that we as humans are capable of experiencing sympathy through identification with other members of our community:

Todo signo nos obliga á pensar sobre el objeto que representa y sobre otros objetos; esto se nota en las partículas más sencillas y en las frases más complicadas. El fenómeno depende de que al hablar, si no es en obras didácticas ó en cierta clase de índices, las pasiones nos preocupan hasta dominar los esfuerzos de una razón poderosa; la misma imaginación sale y brilla como una llama entre las tempestades de los afectos. Cuando alguno me dirige la palabra, yo voy repitiendo en mi inteligencia las sensaciones que se me tocan; pero éstas pueden aparecer de tal suerte combinadas, que de repente yo las olvido para sentir el placer, el entusiasmo, el temor ó los dolores ajenos. Si un amigo me cuenta que le faltan noventa y cinco pesos para comprar en cien una obra literaria, yo sé que tiene cinco pesos y cierto deseo de adquirir un libro; pero si lo que le falta lo salvaría de un compromiso grave, la impresión que me deja es de una aflicción que corresponde á la suya y á la amistad que le profeso. Un disputador de palabras, aun en artículo de muerte, sólo me despertará ideas de régimen y de concordancia.  

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The essential difference to be noted here is that between the physiological mechanism that interacts with objects in the world through language and the literary models that result from refinements of the sentimental articulations that happen in that interaction. Both mechanism and model have two components: they are both naturally emergent phenomena that are nevertheless prone to re-articulation by external and internal processes. In the case of mechanism, we have the physiological ground of language expressed in the increasingly complex modes of muscular motion, sensation, and sign. On the level of model, however, we find the complex interplay of the poetical provocation that sets the internal sentimental economy into motion and subsequently makes room for the dynamic production and rearticulation of emotion. For Ramírez, the process of sentimental production and articulation can be modified by models derived through two channels, namely, those that emerge directly from Nature and those that are derived from observation and engagement with existing literary practices.  

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499 Ramírez makes these two sources of literary models explicit. On the first hand, regarding nature, he writes that “también la naturaleza nos suministra modelos de hermosura; sorprenderlos y reproducirlos es la verdadera gloria en los artistas de genio.” Op. cit. 474. As for models derived from the studied development of literary practice, Ramírez emphasizes: “Lo importante para el literato es el ejercicio; luchando se forman los generales, pintando se revelan los artistas, y fulminando los rayos de la elocuencia y confundiendo quejidos con la lira, tal vez alcanzarémos ser oradores ó poetas; por lo ménos no nos avergonzará nuestra ignorancia.” Op. cit. 487.
The first group of those models, those emerging directly from Nature, is understood by Ramírez in two ways. Firstly, since the human organism is fundamentally natural and hence capable of being physiologically understood, the models produced through human action in the aesthetic realm are held to be natural as well. However, Ramírez’s insistence on the directness of the transmission of this sort of model seems to point toward another phenomenon in his work, namely, the ways in which Nature, through a threefold process of “composition,” “decomposition,” and “combination,” produces new forms out of itself:

El placer reside en las sensaciones aisladas ó en sus combinaciones. Hay, por lo mismo, tres modos de proceder para el arte: primero, imita á la naturaleza en sus formas simples y en las compuestas; segundo, descompone lo que la naturaleza presenta compuesto; y tercero, hace nuevas combinaciones con los elementos sencillos ó compuestos de la misma naturaleza. Se ve en todos estos casos que es imposible al artista sobreponerse á la naturaleza; lo intenta, es verdad, con frecuencia, pero ya descubrirémos los lamentables resultados que le castigan.500

These three basic modalities of aesthetic creation square readily with the overarching materialism characteristic of Ramírez’s theory. In a move that parallels the pioneering theories of physical conservation of Mikhail Lomonosov and Antoine Lavoisier,501 given that all phenomena are held to be essentially natural, nothing can be taken away or removed from the domain of Nature. If this is the case, then it follows that not only aesthetics, but also all creative pursuits, are restricted in their operation to these same three principal actions of construction (the movement from simplicity toward increasing complexity), deconstruction (the movement from complexity toward increasing simplicity), and combination (of the simple and complex structures resultant from either of the previous two operations).

It is important to note that Ramírez also persists in asserting that this mode of understanding is not exhaustive of the meaning and function of literary phenomena. He instead argues that literature can and should be examined from at least three distinct perspectives: “La belleza literaria, por lo mismo, debe considerarse en los objetos representados por las ideas, en el instrumento literario que es el lenguaje, y por último, en la utilidad de las mismas producciones literarias.” The first of these perspectives furnishes a general epistemology of human experience as a natural creature in the physical world. The second perspective grounds itself in the first and describes the particular function of language vis-à-vis the function of the human organism within the previously delimited epistemological coordinates. After having addressed the specific function of language, the object of investigation may be further delimited in order to examine it as a literary phenomenon. Proceeding through these steps allows Ramírez to engage in a focused analysis of national literary traditions. In doing so, he passes from examination of the aesthetic models furnished directly by Nature to a critical analysis of literary models defined and refined through a tradition of human praxis. Nevertheless, this movement does not prompt Ramírez to forsake his foundational epistemology. To the contrary, instead of seeking out the “national character” of the literary traditions that he examines, he instead bases their examination on the historical possibilities that he holds to be naturally and universally present in the human organism’s creation and use of language:

La palabra tiene una vida que le es propia; luego que aparece un elemento, una raíz, hay atracción, asimilación de otros elementos, y de aquí provienen las formas fijas. En seguida la palabra se apodera de los significados inmediatos, sea por contigüidad física, sea por causalidad y con más frecuencia por semejanza, y entonces trasforma su significación extendiéndola ó restringiéndola,

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produciendo en cada siglo y en cada persona, con el mismo diccionario fundamental, diverso lenguaje.\textsuperscript{503}

As he theorizes elsewhere regarding organization and association, Ramírez holds that isomorphic structures of language, emotion, and thought emerge spontaneously wherever humanity is found. For this reason, his critique of national literary cultures employs a dual strategy: Ramírez first universalizes language and literature, thereby attempting to legitimate all domains of creation of meaning as equally available to human organisms and capable of the production of equally viable structures; then, after having broached the question of other national literatures, Ramírez launches a thoroughgoing cultural critique that concentrates on the third perspective mentioned above, namely, the question of the utility of literary works. Ramírez carries out his critique by tracking down the origin of the foreign and domestic preoccupations of which society must be disabused. Those preoccupations must be isolated and rooted out to make room for the future glories of a truly Mexican national literature and culture. That still-nascent culture, in turn, would then be able to serve as a common site of collective feeling wherein the new nation could imagine itself as a sovereign community of sentiment.

3.8 Literature Beyond the National

The first nation to serve as a target of Ramírez’s opprobrium in his literary theory is France. This is somewhat fitting, especially considering that the following condemnatory passage is taken from an article published less than two years after General Mariano Escobedo (1826-1902) brought the Second French Intervention (1861-1867) to a conclusion in Querétaro (June 19, 1867):

Las naciones que hablan el idioma de Castilla aparecen en este siglo completamente afrancesadas.

La misma lengua en más de una mitad es parisiense, hasta el grado de que, en la prosa y en el verso, las más elegantes frases son verdaderos galicismos.

En el género heróico no conocemos tipo superior al Telémaco; y lo estudiamos y admiramos por más que nos fastidien sus insulsos amores.

Sin ser tan elocuentes como Mirabeau, somos tan insustanciales como Lamartine en la tribuna.

Devoramos en las ciencias á los vulgarizadores enciclopédicos, sin notar que no son extensos en sus tratados sino porque son superficiales.  

Although Ramírez clearly acknowledges the superiority of the French aesthetic tradition, he is nevertheless forced to strike out against a French political discourse that he sees as the source of a counterproductive, authoritarian ideology—exemplified for Ramírez in the notion of “police”—uncrupulously accepted along with France’s other cultural productions. Here, as previously, his fulminations center around the question of utility. It is in the name of this utility, understood within the context of the reformist project enshrined in the Liberal Constitution of 1857, that Ramírez rejects the prevailing French conceptual inheritance in all domains, including the literary:

Aceptamos, siguiendo á nuestros modelos, en la organización social, la última palabra del despotismo: la policia!

¿Ganariamos los mexicanos, si la razón ó el capricho nos condujese á un rápido desafrancesamiento? […]

Nuestras instituciones, sobre todo, reclaman esa emancipación de la influencia galica. Lo que se llama policia se ha sustituido en la Francia á la religion, al feudalismo, á la monarquia y

á los numerosos y recientes ensayos democráticos; es una invención para eslavizar á los individuos con el pretexto de protegerlos; es la corrupción de todas las garantías individuales, y por último, es incompatible con la soberanía del pueblo.

En efecto, el pueblo es soberano, porque los particulares son soberanos: el individuo se degrada desde que para publicar sus pensamientos, necesita recordar que lo vigila un fiscal "de imprenta; el individuo recae en vergonzosa tutela desde que para defenderse de un contrario necesita ocurrir á las armas de los esbirros; el individuo no funge como miembro social desde que en las elecciones recibe un voto y una ánfora de las manos corrompidas y amenazadoras de la autoridad política; el individuo, por último, es un esclavo del terreno desde que para salir ó entrar se necesita un pasaporte, y desde que en su tráfico mercantil teme más una aduana que cien partidas de ladrones.

El sistema administrativo que se funda en estas bases, es el sistema francés; para adoptarlo, necesitamos desgarrar la Constitución de 1857.

El régimen gubernativo personal, es el porvenir de la democracia; pocas autoridades; y esas, sin alcanzar un poder superior al de sus representados, pues no deben tener otro carácter que el de personeros instruidos y expensados, y con un poder especial, para un tiempo brevísimo y fácilmente revocable. Un órden social de esa naturaleza, todo lo atrae consigo; literatura, ciencias, comercio, industria, libertad y gloria; á sus piés se postra la rutina. (My emphasis)

By conceding the superiority of French aesthetic production while simultaneously rejecting the predominance of French ideology as a whole, Ramírez lays out the stakes of his project: what is required is neither the imitation of models, nor the imitation of nature, but rather the practiced refinement of literary technique and the establishment through that process of a body of Mexican literature capable of exerting the full force of affective articulation already latent within human language (and made possible through the action of the human organism’s internal sentimental economy). As Ramírez sees it, the uncritical acceptance and imposition of concepts cultivated in a distinct political and social reality amounts to re-enslavement to a political and discursive paradigm that has little to recommend it above the all-too-recently rejected colonial framework:

Emancipándonos de la España, cambiamos nuestras cadenas por alas; ¿por qué, en seguida, humillar nuestro vuelo para rendir vasallaje á los franceses? Entre éstos y nuestros primeros conquistadores no son sino aparentes las diferencias: aquí Sancho Panza gobernaba una Insula; por allá se ve elevado al imperio.

Pido perdón á Castelar por haberlo invitado á americanizarse; los de raza más ó menos latina, necesitamos medio siglo para ponernos en aptitud de recibir á tan nobles huéspedes; el mismo Castelar, como nosotros, más necesita olvidar el Sena, que el Manzanares.  

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507 It should also be noted that, while at the same time decrying French influence, in this article entitled “El antigalicanismo,” Ramírez expresses a strong preference for other ideological and intellectual traditions, namely the Anglo-Saxon and the German: “Supongo que un cataclismo intelectual nos arrebata de la Francia,
France’s literary glory notwithstanding,\textsuperscript{508} Ramírez’s assessment fits with what he estimates to be the gravity of the Mexican situation. Ramírez thereby signals the necessity

\textsuperscript{508} The glories of French culture were not lost on Ramírez or his closest disciples. The following excerpt from\textit{Las Glorias de México}, written by Juan Dios de la Peza, a student of Ramírez’s, is illustrative of the ambiguity toward French culture that characterizes the thought of the period:

\begin{quote}
La Francia pensadora,
La Francia antorcha y astro;
La que forjó la libertad del mundo,
Irguiendo como yunques los cadalsos.

\textit{Que dio a Voltaire su risa;}
A Rabelais su látigo;
A Bossuet el dominio de las almas
Y á Laplace el dominio del espacio.

\textit{Que es en Rousseau doctrina,}
Y en Lamartine es canto,
\textit{Que á De L’Isle inspiró la Marsellesa,}
Y al gran Gounod la música del Fausto.

\textit{La Francia, flor de amores}
Del rey Enrique Cuarto;
Madre de Taine, de Thiers, de Victor Hugo,
De Massillon, de Condorcet y Arago.

\textit{Que en Mirabeau es palabra,}
Y en Bonaparte rayo;
En Pasteur vencedora de la muerte
Y en Lesseps vencedora del Óceano.

\textit{La Francia, antorcha, estrella,}
Escuela, puerto, faro,
\textit{La que ha sido y será para la Historia}
Una Cornelia que amamante Gracos;

\textit{Esa Francia no vino}
A ser vencida en Mayo,
\textit{Se quedó á defender en la tribuna}
Con Thiers y Favre al pueblo mexicano.

\textit{Esa Francia no surge}
En nuestro drama trágico,
Sino cual otra víctima que gime
\end{quote}
that cultural struggle be accompanied and complemented by overt political struggle. Only
cultural struggle of this sort will allow for Mexico to avoid the “frenchified” fate of Spain:

Consagraremos infatigables una serie de artículos para probar á nuestros compatriotas, que
si en la literatura, de tantos que escriben pocos se acercan á Prieto, á Sierra y á Altamirano; que si
en hacienda no salimos de Zambrano, de Iglesias y de Mata; que si Miranda y Cordero son nuestros
Apeles; que si veinte leguas de ferrocarril nos cuestan diez millones; que si ignoramos la geografía
de la República y conocemos la de la Tierra Santa; que si hemos adoptado la dictadura como un
orden municipal, provincial y nacional; que si estudiamos el latín para entender la misa y no
hablamos una palabra de los idiomas indígenas; y que si llegamos á desesperar de alcanzar un
remedio á nuestros males, la culpa de todo esto por más que se diga en los discursos patrióticos, ya
no debe atribuirse á los españoles sino exclusivamente á los franceses. ¡Dénos el cielo un Hidalgo
para esa independencia! 509

In shifting attention from France to Spain, it is productive to address Ramírez’s
mention of Spanish liberal thinker, writer, and politician Emilio Castelar (1832-1899), with
whom Ramírez engaged in a fierce polemic concerning the true nature of Mexico’s Spanish
inheritance. Although almost all of that polemic has been lost, —save the piece that records
Ramírez’s victory—, a fragment of Castelar’s accusations against Mexico has been saved
for posterity:

Renegáis, americanos de esta nación generosa que tantos timbres tiene en su historia, tantas
prendas en su carácter, tantos fulgores en su civilización. Renegáis de este país, el único que supo
leer en la frente de Colon el enigma de vuestra existencia. Renegáis de este país que ha fundado
vuestras puertos, que ha erigido vuestros templos, que os ha dado su sangre, que ha difundido su
alma en vuestra alma, que os ha enseñado á hablar la más hermosa, la más sonora de las lenguas, y
que por civilizar al Nuevo Mundo se desangró, se enflaqueció como Roma para civilizar el
Antiguo! 510

Ramírez’s reply to Castelar’s Iberian chauvinism unfolds in an article entitled “La
desespañolización” published on October 2nd, 1868, in El Seminario Ilustrado.” Ramírez
launches a no-holds-barred assault on the Spanish cultural inheritance that Castelar lauds
so highly:

¡Mueran los gachupines! fué el primer grito de mi patria y en esta fórmula terrible se
encuentra la desespañolizacion de México. ¿Hay algún mexicano que no haya proferido en su vida
esas palabras sacramentales? Yo, uno de los más culpados, debo a Sr. Castelar, á quien admiro, una

explicación razonada, sobre por qué. En unión de mis conciudadanos, reniego de la nación que, creyendo descubrir en la frente de Colon un camino seguro para robar á los portugueses las Indias orientales, tropezó con nosotros, y desde entonces se ha complacido en devorarnos.  

Having planted the blade deep with the first thrust of his argumentation, Ramírez then goes on to twist the knife by declaring that it is far from evident that Spain can serve beneficially as a model for Mexico—or anyone else for that matter—in any regard; indeed, the horrors of life since the conquest serve as stark reminder to the contrary:

Renegamos los mexicanos de la patria de vd., Sr. Castelar, del mismo modo y por las mismas razones que vd. reniega de ella. ¡Héños aquí fieles á sus inspiraciones! ¿A qué época de la España quiere vd. que nosotros pertenezcamos? ¿Imitarémos á la España actual, donde vd., admirable escritor, es visto como un párrafo j? No, vd. no canoniza el robo del guano ni los asesinatos de Santo Domingo, ni la esclavitud de Cuba; llamándose vd. demócrata, ha dicho sobre la España de hoy: ¡anatema! ¡Imitarémos á la España que Cárlos II el Hechizado, una especie de Maximiliano por derecho hereditario, abandonó como un cadáver á los buitres de Austria y de la Francia? No; hasta los mismos españoles se avergüenzan de esos tiempos que para la religión y el despotismo aparecen como los más envidiables. Tampoco nos designará vd. como modelo, la España de los Reyes Católicos, de Cárlos V y de Felipe II, cuando Dios, en su indignación, entregó al pueblo ibérico toda la tierra, para probarle solemnemente que era indigno de regirla. ¿Qué monumento pusieron esos gentes sobre el mundo cuando lo tuvieron en sus manos? la hoguera de la Inquisición; y lo dejaron caer, fatigados de su peso. ¿Nos designará vd., por ventura, la Edad Média? El tipo más puro de aquella época nos lo conserva D. Quijote; el más puro, porque este caballero siquiera es un loco, y no un bandido […]

Si el Sr. Castelar viniera á la América, veria lo que quieren decir para nosotros sus injustas revocencias; nos ofrece el lecho de rosas en que espiró Guautimotzin. Los que nos han dado su sangre, nos la quieren dar todavía: la sangre del adulterio, del estupro, de la violencia. Nos dejaron templos: y ha sido necesaria una revolución para derribarlos, porque el ídolo que en ellos se adoraba, era el mismo que el Sr. Castelar fulmina en Roma; ídolo que ha extendido desde el Vaticano una man para bendecir los robos de Jecker y las iniquidades de la Francia. Los españoles no han hecho en nuestros puertos sino una cosa buena: salir por ellos. Y, en cuanto á la más hermosa, á la más sonora de las lenguas, ¿no es verdad que el Sr. Castelar compite con nosotros cuando se trata de desfigurarla? ¿Habla el Sr. Castelar como las Partidas? ¿es castizo como Fr. Luis de León? ¿es purista como los Argensolas? Apénas si recuerda á Santa Teresa, y eso en el romanticismo místico de aquellas palabras: ha difundido su alma en vuestra alma. Es un anacronismo recomendarnos un idioma en un siglo en que se aprenden tantos, y todos ellos tienden á confundirse: despójese el Sr. Castelar de algunos arreos españoles, y en vez de parecerse á Saavedra Fajardo, lo confundiremos con Víctor Hugo, con Pelletan, ó con cualquiera otro francés moderno. Si es una ingratitude desespañolizarnos, debemos españolizarnos de nuevo. ¡Qué felicidad para la América convertirse en Santo Domingo!  

The ambiguity revealed in the final lines of the preceding citation reveals the crux of Ramírez’s critique of the French and Spanish literary tradition: because of the prevailing decadence of France and Spain’s apparent cultural submission to that force, the only course

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of action that remains is to salvage whatever possible from the existing literary traditions
and then to craft something new. Ramírez’s ironic assertion of the need to re-hispanize
Spain emphasizes the need for peoples and nations to invent themselves anew, and it is in
accordance with this understanding that he ends “La desespañolización.” Ramírez appeals
to the universal character of humanity’s aesthetic achievements and invites Castelar to
reinvent himself as an *americano*:

Reniega vd., confiese, de esa nación generosa, que tantos timbres tiene en su historia,
tantos fulgores en su civilización. La España que vd. ama, no existe ni ha existido jamás; el talento
de vd. la engendra en su alma democrática; la ve vd. en el porvenir, la dota vd. con las prendas de
su propio carácter; la adorna con los timbres que descubre en las naciones más gloriosas, y se
deslumbra vd. con los fulgores de la civilización que le desea; pero entretanto, para sus paisanos,
vd. no es más que el D. Quijote del progreso. […]

¡Qué ruin sería la América á los ojos de nuestro ilustre antagonista si no aspirara sino á
remedar á la España! Un astro más noble descubre la inteligencia entre las tempestades que rodean
al mundo; con sus rayos descubrimos el trono conservado para la libertad y el altar para la ciencia;
no es el orgullo español ni la ambición francesa quienes hacen desaparecer los Pirineos y precipitan
al mar las columnas de Hércules; es la fraternidad universal: lo que hay de más puro, de más noble,
de más sublime, pertenece á todos los pueblos, todas las glorias se confunden en una. Homero y
Confucio, Washington y Voltaire, Bolívar y Lutero, todo hombre que se apellida grande, lo mismo
pertenece á la China que á la España, y en México son igualmente queridos los nombres de Castelar
y de Hidalgo. La electricidad, el vapor, la imprenta, lo mismo hablan, se deslizan, vuelan cuando se
lo pide un español que cuando se lo demanda un azteca; para entenderse no es necesario hablar
castellano; los que vieron en Babel confundidas, extraviadas sus lenguas, han recobrado la voz y
emprenden de nuevo la conclusión de la torre Prodigiosa, el escalamiento del cielo.

Uno de estos temerarios es vd., como nosotros, Sr. Castelar, y lo que vd. desea no es más
que desespañolizarse: la América va con sus costumbres, con sus instituciones, con sus luchas, con
sus sacrificios, adonde vd. se dirige con sus discursos; cuando los Cacios de la monarquía y del clero
nos enclavan un puñal alevoso, ¿tu quoque?

Y, pues se trata de confundirnos en uno, tanto cuesta ir á España como venir
de ella. Americanícese vd., Sr. Castelar. Los americanos comprendemos á vd. más que los españoles, más
lo amamos, más lo admiramos; aquí hasta el bello sexo le consagra á vd. sus miradas y sus simpatías;
aquí se lucha, en verdad, pero los traidores, los españolizados, ya no se confunden con los buenos;
el triunfo en los Estados Unidos será para la humanidad; el triunfo en México para la independencia
y el progreso: el triunfo en el Perú para la justicia: en nombre de la justicia, de la independencia, del
progreso, de la humanidad, de la gloria, venga vd., amigo nuestro, donde no faltarán olivas y laureles
para su frente; en España lo espera á vd. el cura de su parroquia para negarle un sepulcro. En España
no es Castelar, sino el bastardo de la opinión pública; aquí en México es, desde hace tiempo, uno de
nuestros hermanos.513 514

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514 This polemic resulted in an admission of defeat by Castelar, which was itself also published in *El semanario ilustrado*: “El célebre publicista español don Emilio Castelar ha consagrado á algunos de nuestros compatriotas expresiones de estimación al enviarles su retrato, que han recibido por el último paquete inglés. Nuestro colaborador, el señor licenciado don Ignacio Ramírez, se cuenta entre los favorecidos, y el señor Castelar le consagra un recuerdo tan galante como honroso para el señor Ramírez, de una polémica literaria entre ambos, en los términos siguientes: ‘A don Ignacio Ramírez, recuerdo de una polémica en que la elocuencia y el talento estuvieron siempre de su parte, el vencido. Emilio Castelar’.” Emilio Castelar.
As in his scathing analysis of “frenchification” in “El antigalicanismo,” in the case of Spain, Ramírez is also careful to emphasize that a rigorous critique of that culture does not entail the total rejection of its aesthetic, and particularly literary, traditions. Ramírez has no qualms about praising the Spanish literary tradition, although he is also careful to note the contributions to that language hailing from outside the Christian quarters of the Iberian Peninsula and to link Peninsular cultural production to that of the Americas:

La literatura hispano-americana es un hecho; en su cuna se levanta armada, celebrando las hazañas del Cid y las primeras derrotas de los moros; poco tiempo después sirve de oráculo á la jurisprudencia, imponiendo el Derecho romano á los descendientes de los godos, y al visitar el África y el Asia y al establecerse en el Nuevo Mundo, compite con la elocuencia y la poesía de Roma y Atenas, dividiendo con la Italia la gloria de haber abierto el camino de la instrucción á las naciones modernas. Esa literatura puede á veces aparecer enfermiza, pero jamás en decadencia; ¿no ha producido en este siglo á Bretón de los Herreros y á Espronceda, á Figaro y á Emilio Castelar? Aristófanes tiene más sabiduría, pero no más verba que el cómico español; Píndaro tuvo el bello desorden de la imaginación, pero no el de las pasiones que inmortalizó á Espronceda, acabando por perderlo; á Figaro sólo faltó ser un poco más escéptico para igualarse á Luciano; y Castelar, sacrificando algunas flores que sobrecargan su corona, descubrirá la frente de un Demócra, y encadenará á su elocuencia los destinos de una república en el Viejo Mundo. Y entretanto la literatura española sonríe á sus hijas, que forman el encanto y el orgullo de los pueblos americanos. No terminará este siglo sin que el nuevo continente posea sus clásicos en las letras, como se enrede de sus héroes en las armas.515

Lest we too hastily assume that Ramírez spares Mexico in his critique of national literary traditions, it should be noted that his comments on the Mexican literary tradition are equally biting. Ramírez signals the boundless possibilities of a future Mexican literary culture while simultaneously admitting to the current abject state of that tradition. Rather than flaunting it in a newspaper article as per his usual modus operandi, Ramírez’s most severe analysis of the Mexican tradition is found in a more intimate form of discourse. The

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following passages are drawn from a letter Ramírez wrote five years before his death as a response to José de Jesús Cuevas’s aesthetic inquiries:

Ensayémosla en el exámen de los tres escritores que vd. nos presenta como característicos y modelos de nuestras tres épocas nacionales. ‘Fragmentos aislados y dispersos, son palabras que vd. ha escrito, nos quedan apéneas de la literatura india entre nosotros; pero ellos bastan para juzgarla, como ha bastado un solo hueso para recomponer la osamenta de un mastodonte antediluviano.’ Mucho me temo que al recomponer esa osamenta en vez de un poeta indígena, aparezca un fraile español ó cualquiera otro mastodonte; respetaré en Netzahualcóyotl todo lo que tiene de fabuloso. ¿Hay algo en sus endechas que sea superior al pensamiento y al arte que dominan en la poesía arábigo-española? Dos ó tres poesías líricas no forman una literatura nacional; y si el pueblo azteca tuvo un Parnaso, sería una temeridad medir su extensión y su altura por los fragmentos de un solo peñasco. ¿Por qué elogia vd. á Netzahualcóyotl? Porque creía en Dios y en la inmortalidad del alma, y porque era un poeta triste. Vd. y yo conocemos sobrados escritores con estas tres recomendaciones, y á pesar de ellas son malos: testigo, Terrazas.  

Ramírez resists romanticization of Nezahualcóyotl and instead comes to see him as little more than a typically melancholic poetic voice. The poet king of Texcoco fails to pass Ramírez’s test of utility because the thinker holds that longing for the indigenous past is neither exceptional nor productive for someone interested in the radical reformulation of the whole of Mexican society and Mexican consciousness itself. And if Nezahualcóyotl fails to pass this litmus test, then the mystic charge of Sor Juana’s poetry awaits an even harsher condemnation:

En un siglo en que acababan de brillar Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Calderón y Alarcón; y cuando Garcilaso y Fr. Luis de León y el bachiller Francisco de la Torre circulaban de hogar en hogar; y cuando Góngora y Quevedo se hacían aplaudir aun por sus errores, ¿qué papel representa Sor Juana Inés en la literatura? El de un poeta mediano. ¿Los tiempos le fueron contrarios? Esto no destruye, cuando más, explica su medianía. ¿Por qué ha merecido la pobre monja tan altos elogios del Sr. Cuevas? Porque su poesía es la plenitud humana del amor y la piedad. La traducción de esa frase me da esta otra: Sor Juana era muy enamorada y muy devota. Si estos elementos bastasen para formar una poetisa, en la Sociedad Católica descubriríamos más de nueve musas mexicanas. Ay! no basta estar enamorado para ser poeta; y la monja sólo una vez se acercó á Safo, y fué cuando dijo:

¿Cuándo tu voz sonora
Herirá mis oídos, delicada,
Y el alma que te adora
De inundación de goces anegada,
A recibite con amante prisa
Saldrá á los ojos desatada en risa?

Si la poesía de la monja es francamente prosaica, la poesía de Carpio no lo es menos aunque se vista de turco y camine arrastrando su alfanje por la arena. En sus versos sí se puede descubrir el esplendor del órden; la hora, el lugar, la enumeración, la simetría, nada falta en materia de lugares

comunes, si no es la inspiración cuando pierde de vista á sus modelos. Es también llorón, amante y piadoso como Netzahualcóyotl y Sor Juana. Tiene todas las recomendaciones de un poeta académico. Las mujeres y los niños lo leen como leen las charadas y los Dolores y Gozos de Señor San José, probando con esta conducta que es urgente mejorar su instrucción.  

Ramírez’s assault on literature as practiced in Mexico then reaches a fever pitch as he resoundingly concludes that none of these proposed luminaries is sufficient to bear the weight of a national literary tradition. This leads Ramírez to conclude that, while models derived from other cultures and even from previous epochs of the same culture may continue to be of value, this only remains the case inasmuch as those models can be employed to satisfy the necessities encountered in our ever-changing present:

Si rebajo hasta el mérito vulgar nuestras supuestas glorias nacionales, es porque ha llegado el tiempo de decir la verdad á nuestros jóvenes escritores y artistas: NUESTROS TESOROS SON UNA POBREZA. No despreciamos á los modelos, pero sobre todos los sistemas estudiemos la realidad de las cosas; ¿dónde encontraremos la superioridad si no es en la naturaleza? Si celebrásemos una exposición de obras literarias resultaría más ridícula que las exposiciones de la Academia y del Ayuntamiento. A igual altura se encuentran Netzahualcóyotl y la Arca de Noé, nuestros casimires y Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, y Carpió y el San Agustín de muchas piezas.

Missing from that frustrated and unusual list of putative luminaries (who, after all, would today place the likes of Manuel Carpio in the company of Nezahualcóyotl and Sor Juana?) is the one figure of the Mexican tradition that Ramírez accepts as a proper predecessor, namely, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. His reflections on the only Mexican literato worthy of being the precursor of a national literary tradition are examined in the final section of this part of my investigation.

3.9 Ramírez, Lizardi, and the New Destiny of Literature

There is no need to speculate as to the possibility of a connection between Ramírez and Lizardi because Ramírez himself already elaborated on his relationship with and estimation of the Pensador Mexicano in an 1874 speech read in the Liceo Hidalgo in honor of the same. The position adopted by Ramírez in the execution of his speech could not be more contrary to the caustically critical tone seen in the previous section regarding the poverty of the early Mexican literary tradition. Ramírez begins by first addressing Lizardi as a comrade and fellow traveler:

Cumpliendo con el encargo del Liceo, voy á pronunciar un elogio sobre el escritor nacional José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. Haré, sobre este asunto, una prosa en aquel romance humilde que sirve á los vecinos y vecinas para charlar unos con otros, hasta en la Sociedad Católica; ni soy tan letrado como los poetas y oradores que florecen en la Voz de México; ni el Pensador Mexicano se distingue como escritor elegante y ladino; así, pues, el interés de esta escena literaria se reducirá al tributo de admiración que, un hombre del pueblo á otro hombre del pueblo, rinde con ingenuidad ante una concurrencia tan complaciente como ilustrada.

Approaching the subject in this way provides Ramírez with an opening to identify his projects and concerns with those of the man that he acknowledges as his predecessor. This identification is first accomplished indirectly; the text capitalizes on the cultural currency of the moniker nigromante by repeatedly conjuring up references to the demonic and the diabolical while at the same time situating Lizardi’s work and its importance for Mexican history:

¿Y será digno de alabanzas y de gloria, el hombre que se sirve del verbo creador para envolver la sociedad humana en destructoras tempestades? Vosotros lo decidisteis ante las consecuencias del primer cataclismo provocado por las palabras audaces de un ángel descontento. ¿Quién no conoce á Luzbel, y quién ignora su historia? El mismo Pensador Mexicano ha hecho sobre aquel personaje una pastorela, que el clero ha conocido más que la Biblia. […]

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El *Pensador Mexicano* fué el diablo para la época colonial, en nuestra patria; Hidalgo, el guerrero, fué una máquina de combate; Lizardi, el analizador, fué el rayo que á un mismo tiempo destruye é ilumina: Hidalgo rompió las cabezas; Lizardi las arregló de nuevo.\(^{520}\) (Original emphasis)

This diabolical litany appears within a discursive frame that already ironically utilizes the language of ritual conjuration in order to evoke the sort of black magic associated with necromantic practice:

¿De qué me serviría, señores, ser nigromante si no alcanzase á evocar, ahora mismo, á los vireyes españoles y á sus dignos gobernados? ¿Necesito, por ventura, valerme de alguna fórmula mágica? En mis manos tengo el *dariferio baralipton* de los escolásticos y el cabalístico *silabus* de Pío Nono. ¡Salid espectros!\(^{521}\)

The text then further extends its reconceptualization of the diabolical by making reference to a series of failures that had themselves appeared sinister before their success was understood. In this series, he evokes a fallen angel, Porfirio Díaz, and his wife Soledad as different manifestations of the same sort of disruptive force that jeopardizes the dominant order of the world at the same time that it brings forth the possibility of attaining to utopia.

The following passage unites all of this imagery and generates a sentimental transformation of the subject matter by rendering it poetically affective:

> Al primer plan revolucionario, digan lo que quieran sus enemigos, sólo le faltó, para pasar por bueno, lo que al de la Noria, realizarse. Pero gimieron las alturas con el ¡Ay! de los vencidos; y el caudillo y sus secuaces desaparecieron en una hoguera; y en torno del fuego se formó una costra de lava; y entre las llamas aparecieron los árboles con sus flores y sus frutos; y entre el humo extendieron sus alas y derramaron sus cantos de las primeras avecillas; y la coqueta *iris* levantó sus faldas, provocando las miradas del Sol, hollando las perlas que se desprendían del collar y se derramaban por el seno de una nube celosa y fugitiva, y, de los mares y de la tierra extrajo perfumes donde se agita el embrión de la vida; y existió el Paraíso; y bajo la sombra de un manzano, aquel ángel perdido, la mujer, descubrió el cielo del amor y se resolvió á recorrerlo en las alas de la hermosura!

> El Sol, mi amigo el Sol, que descubrió á mi corazón la virgen y la madre de mis amores; la diosa de la noche que hoy envuelve en su velo de plata un altar convertido en tumba; las estrellas verdes, azules y rojas, guirnalda con que se adorna la sombra que me convida con un lecho misterioso; y la flor, madre de la sonrisa; y el vino, que dulcifica nuestros dolores; y el canto del poeta que nos trasporta á un mundo de delirios; y esos labios en cuya ardiene copa, el beso, el revolucionario beso, alcanza á mezclar la divinidad con la locura; astros, flores, aves, inmortalidad, mujer, todo lo que se llama belleza, admiración alegria y pasión y sublimidad, todo es obra del diablo.\(^{522}\)


After some unpacking, the esoteric imagery of the previously-cited passage sheds light on the general strategy deployed by this text, wherein Ramírez seeks to affectively effect a sentimental transformation of his subject. The realization of this strategy entails a double accomplishment; the past is first made viscerally and passionately present through its rhetorical invocation. Lizardi is then elevated to the status of a revolutionary thinker within that sentimentally-charged historical context.

Interpretation demands that this passage’s historical component be salvaged before it disappears in the vertiginous whirl of poetic transformation that consumes all but the first sentence of the cited text. That first sentence must be understood before an account can be given of the subsequent poetic transformation of its content. The reference to “al de la Noria” is unmistakable in its significance, granted that this eulogy to Lizardi was delivered in 1872, which is to say, less than a year after Porfirio Díaz’s Plan de la Noria and five years prior to that plan’s revival in what would ultimately prove a successful attempt against the government, the Plan de Tuxtepec. After presenting the figure of Díaz, the sentence juxtaposes the Mixtec general and Lizardi and links them through their failed revolutionary attempts. Just as Porfirio Díaz’s attempt to depose Benito Juárez after his unconstitutional accession to a third presidential term,—an event the legitimacy of which was passionately decried by Ramírez,—, went down in flames because of a lack of popular support, Lizardi’s own work had by and large been neglected by the society of his time, trapped as it was within the dominant colonial cultural paradigm. And yet, Ramírez’s subsequent poetic excursus points toward a future canalization of the violent force unleashed by those radical thinkers, and from it hopes for the birth of a “Paradise” where revolutionary thinkers like Lizardi might enjoy their just reward.
It should be noted that the emergence of this “Paradise” in Ramirez’s text brings with it a thinly-veiled autobiographical eruption that lends sentimental impact to the presentation of that image. This moment is first hinted at through the image of the emancipation of Woman, represented as a lost angel who is finally redeemed through love in the new Paradise that he envisions: “Y bajo la sombra de un manzano, aquel ángel perdido, la mujer, descubrió el cielo del amor y se resolvió á recorrerlo en las alas de la hermosura!” The imagery in this obscure passage is immediately clarified at the beginning of the next paragraph, wherein Ramirez cries out to “Sol”, which at once refers to the sun dawning on that new day and the nickname he most frequently used to refer to his wife and dearest companion, Soledad Mateos Lozada, who would die of a cardiac infection only two years later. Like that once fallen angel, it is Sol that has saved the Necromancer from his disillusionment with the radical liberal project (a moment embodied in the same year by the death of Juárez himself): “El Sol, mi amigo el Sol, que descubrió á mi corazón la virgen y la madre de mis amores; la diosa de la noche que hoy envuelve en su velo de plata un altar convertido en tumba”. Ramirez shares this vision of Paradise with Lizardi, but also emphasizes that that moment of emancipation has not yet arrived and cannot be taken for granted. For this reason, the text carefully acknowledges

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525 Much has been made of the fact that Ramirez seems to adopt another object of his poetic affections soon after the passing of his wife Soledad. To that end, Emilio Arellano is insistent that Ramirez’s later poems, previously thought to have been written to Rosario de la Peña, were instead written on behalf of Ramirez’s son Román Augusto and directed toward the woman he would soon marry, Rosario Alfaro Vaschetti. Op. cit. 117.
that, from the perspective of the dominant ideology of the day, the greatest fruits to be enjoyed in that Paradise by humanity all remain the “work of the devil.”

 Appropriately diabolical measures must be employed to realize these benevolent “works of the devil” in the context of 19th century Mexico. Ramírez attributes Lizardi’s greatness to just this sort of diabolical, revolutionary thinking. This leads Ramírez to treat Lizardi in a way that echoes Ramírez’s own subsequent treatment by critics who emphasize the transcendence of his thinking above and beyond his written work. As Ramírez sees it, what matters in the case of Lizardi is his commitment to revolutionary, emancipatory thinking: “El orador revolucionario habla, pero rara vez deja huellas sobre el papel; es un fantasma, el terror y la admiración de los pueblos lo atestiguan!”

 Representing Lizardi in this way allows for the text to parlay Ramírez’s preceding autobiographical excursus into the assertion of an even deeper connection between the two thinkers, one grounded in shared sentiment and derived from the shared experience of a common project:

 Yo recuerdo con ternura la guerra de nuestra Independencia; los proyectiles mortíferos servían entonces de flores y de estrellas á mis progenitores en su lecho nupcial; y mi cuna de espinas ha sido mecedida á los cantos del trágala, y me he adormecido con los anatemas de la Inquisición que maldecían á los insurgentes y á su descendencia. Yo, señores, soy uno de esos malditos! Mi padre, al bajar á la tumba, sabía bien que me dejaba un legado de persecuciones y de reformas; y en su ósculo postrero, dejó ardiendo sobre mi frente la marca de la proscripción y de la gloria: yo sólo tengo miedo á la agua bendita y á las libreas. Mi tímida madre cree, á veces, haber producido al antecristo; pero cuando me contempla en el calvario adonde me han conducido el alteza serenísima de las prostitutas, el presidente de los que juegan rentas y el emperador de los decentes, reconoce en el hijo al padre, y sonríe viendo cómo pasa á sus pies la estela de sus únicos amores. Por eso también yo siempre he levantado un altar para una santa mujer; niño, mi madre; hombre... pudo caer el ídolo, pero mi incensario no ha agotado sus perfumes!

 Ramírez then focuses the sentimental charge brought about by his juxtaposition of maternal and bellicose imagery into an elevation of Lizardi’s aims and a reassertion of the

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527 That emancipation is embodied in the image of woman is not coincidental here, as Ramírez both insists on the emancipation of women as a central component of progress and signals that same fact as the primary insight forwarded by Lizardi.
connection between the two thinkers. Although this passage begins by grounding that connection in the two thinkers’ shared assertion of the necessity of the education and emancipation of women (albeit it the latter to a lesser degree in the case of Lizardi), by the end of the paragraph, Ramírez turns from mother to child and speaks with one voice regarding the aims of Lizardi’s project and those of his own attempts to bring about the mental and affective emancipation of the Mexican people:

El Pensador Mexicano, como yo, como el siglo, adivinó que la revolución es la mujer. ¡Con cuánto amor se dirige á la amante, y á la madre, y á la abuela, para convertirlas en sus cómplices, y para convencerlas de que la nueva generación debe ser enteramente americana y jamás gachupina. Desaten esas manos del niño para que acaricien libremente los pechos de una madre; no dejéis acercar á la tranquila cuna los espectros ni las almas en pena; derrad semillas de verdad y de ternura en la inteligencia y en el corazón de la fecunda infancia; un solo amor reine en el pensamiento de la edad viril, y una prole bien lograda sirva á la ancianidad de báculo y de corona; libertad para el pensamiento; libertad para el trabajo; libertad para las afecciones.\(^{530}\) (My emphasis)

Given Ramírez’s assessment of Lizardi and of their commonalities, his insistence that Lizardi’s thought be understood as transcending his literary works, it is revelatory that his description of Lizardi above echoes Carrizales’ later assessment of Ramírez’s own literary works:

El hecho de que nuestro autor no alcanzara el grado de desarrollo propio de los estudiosos más notables del periodo no debe menguar nuestro reconocimiento a sus apuntes, legítimamente teóricos. Los muchos reclamos de sus ocupaciones civiles y patrióticas restaron tiempo de dedicación a sus esfuerzos como teórico de literatura; sin embargo, éstos nos confirman su mentalidad ilustrada, científica y escéptica.\(^{531}\)

Here again, it is productive to examine why Carrizales’s important analysis, one of only two that examine Ramírez’s literary theory at any length,\(^{532}\) errs in its estimation of those works by failing to appropriately contextualize them in terms of the over-arching materialism and voluntarism that characterize Ramírez’s system of thinking. Carrizales

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does acknowledge the drive toward systematicity and coherency in the Necromancer’s body of thought:

En tales páginas debemos reconocer a Ramírez como uno de los primeros escritores mexicanos en intentar reducir el fenómeno literario a los paradigmas del conocimiento científico y, en consecuencia, situar el estudio de la literatura en el campo de la universidad moderna. Es posible discrepar de los supuestos y los postulados esgrimidos por Ramírez en su elaboración teórica, pero no se puede soslayar su aspiración a un entendimiento sistemático y coherente de la literatura, organizado de acuerdo con el paradigma del lenguaje.\textsuperscript{533}

The “scientific reductivism” that Carrizales’s argument relies upon causes him to pass over the role of the sentimental in the apparatus that Ramírez details in scientific and physiological terms in his literary-theoretical works. In fact, Carrizales explicitly disavows that Ramírez’s works show any concern whatsoever for the question of sentiment.\textsuperscript{534}

Carrizales’s argument that Ramírez has simply transplanted a traditional concept of literature into different, scientific soil causes him to miss the ramifications of Ramírez’s three fundamental literary propositions, each of which I have previously developed in the foregoing investigation: 1) sentiment is the dominant factor in the literary experience; 2) sentiment is naturally canalized and transformed by the internal sentimental economy of the human organism; and 3) since literature can both generate and rearticulate sentiment, it is also capable of directly articulating the sentimental disposition of the human organism.

Recovering the function of sentiment in Ramírez’s works allows us to see how his literary theory gives an account of the means through which aesthetic experience, and literary experience in particular, is capable of directly giving rise to sentimental production

\textsuperscript{533} \textit{Ibid.}.

and transformation. While acknowledging Lizardi as his precursor, Ramírez nevertheless tries to move beyond Lizardi’s efforts at generating sentimental transformation through sympathetic identification to a much more technical approach to the generation of sentiment through a direct manipulation of the internal sentimental economy. But in establishing this lineage between Lizardi and Ramírez, it is also necessary to consider the connection between Ramírez and his most famous student, the universally-acclaimed maestro of the young liberals, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano: as it turns out, it is precisely with regard to this connection that Carrizales’s argument ends up being wrong for all the right reasons.

First, Carrizales astutely summarizes the literary project that Altamirano and his contemporaries would attempt to carry out in and beyond the República Restaurada (1867-1876):

Es conocido el papel que los escritores de la República Restaurada en México asignaron a la literatura en el contexto de sus actividades; un papel de orden romántico y nacionalista, pedagógico y moral. De acuerdo con este modo de ver las cosas, la literatura habría de ser un instrumento de reconciliación política, un método de reconocimiento del paisaje nacional y una oportunidad para reivindicar el sentimiento de la patria. Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, discípulo de Ramírez y la figura más prominente de las letras mexicanas inmediatamente después de la caída del Segundo Imperio, […] concebía a la literatura en el marco del orden civil: instrumento de la educación del ciudadano y prenda de una organización política madura. Así como la República había quedado restaurada, Altamirano proclamó la restauración de la cultura en México entendida como una extensión del orden público.\footnote{Op. cit. 440.}

Nevertheless, a problem emerges when Carrizales concludes that the projects elaborated by Ramírez’s students bear no resemblance to el Nigromante’s own theorization of literature:

Sin embargo, los tres Estudios sobre literatura publicados en El Renacimiento, compendio de las Lecciones publicadas sólo hasta 1884, ya muerto el autor, no contienen —como ninguna otra página de Ramírez acerca del mismo asunto— una sola nota de reivindicación patriótica ni de encomio nacionalista. En el papel de maestro de literatura, El Nigromante no hizo el panegírico de la sublimidad de los poetas épicos, ni de las virtudes imitativas del narrador con respecto del paisaje y la historia mexicanos. Nada hay en las enseñanzas literarias de Ignacio Ramírez que apunte hacia
la dirección patriótica, romántica y nacionalista que tanto importó a Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Nada hay sobre esta materia en las lecciones dictadas en la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria por Ramírez, y recuperadas por Altamirano, ni en ningún otro testimonio de las labores de nuestro escritor al frente de una cátedra consagrada a la literatura. En vez de ello, advertimos un silencio a propósito de cuestiones patrióticas en la perspectiva escolar que Ramírez tuvo de la literatura; un silencio que conviene considerar detenidamente sobre todo por corresponder al tribuno cuyos labios no escatimaron palabras, ni en la hora ni en la situación adecuadas, para celebrar la Independencia de la patria.\footnote{Op. cit. 442.}

This passage is symptomatic of two errors frequently encountered in contemporary critical assessments of Ramírez’s literary works. When it is given any serious attention at all, Ramírez’s literary theory has often been divorced from the rest of his corpus. In most cases, this leads critics to miss the lengths that he goes to in order to reconceptualize the notion of literature itself. This tendency must be firmly opposed: it is absolutely necessary that Ramírez’s thinking on language and literature be reappropriated into the larger context of his thought. In his political writings, Ramírez sought to inflame the passions of his fellow citizens and to extirpate superstitious and erroneous conceptions that stood in the way of their mental emancipation. Similarly, his scientific writings go beyond the exploration of phenomena to furnish a model means of inquiry. In his historical writings, the present is always the primary concern, and the narrative strategies employed therein are meant to reinforce the urgency of Reform in the present moment. In his philological writings, Ramírez shows just as much concern for the genesis and social character of language as he does for its physiological nature. Taken together, these domains constitute a complex but cohesive project of didactic reform, one that constructs itself on the sentimental possibilities of language and literature. The shifting boundaries emergent in Ramírez’s thought may defy initial attempts at disciplinary definition. Resonating with his predilection toward radical interrogation, Ramírez’s project is unified by the questions it
asks, not the answers it seeks. In so doing, it maintains the principles enunciated throughout his corpus. The entirety of that corpus is directed toward one end: the revolutionary emancipation of knowledge, thought, action, and sentiment in all domains. Or, as Ramírez would likely put it, ¡Reforma! This total reform does more than transplant the concept of literature. Ramírez transforms literature in the hope that literature itself might help transform the national community into a sentimental community.

Ramírez leaves us with a vision of literature that conforms to the physiological possibilities of the human organism and the process of sentimental articulation and transformation implicit in the aesthetic experience. This vision presages a new destiny for all things, including literature itself:

\[\text{Hoy los aparatos de algunos sentidos se perfeccionan con el auxilio de la física; la ciencia despoja de sus maravillas a la fábula para derramarlas sobre la naturaleza; y las pasiones se sirven de fuerzas que el hombre antiguo no sospechaba, para satisfacer las necesidades de una sociedad compuesta de reyes. Ya no hay esclavos, ni extranjeros, y la misma mujer se ha emancipado. Los héroes de Homero son bandidos; los dioses, ficciones; los bonzos, dementes; los amores pastoriles, una diversión de niños; las desgracias de los reyes forman el placer de los pueblos; y ya en escasos hogares se consagra al sacerdocio doméstico la inocente y severa matrona: tales mujeres, tales hombres, y las tempestades revolucionarias, y los ferrocarriles, y el telégrafo, y la fotografía, y los antiguos monstruos estremeciéndose en sus lechos geológicos, y los soles adornados con las diversas cintas del iris, y los nuevos universos que más allá de la via láctea se asoman; todo esto tiene que reproducir hoy la eloquencia y la poesía. Su voz de gigante se llama la imprenta.}\]

\[\text{Más humilde fué la misión de la literatura antigua; pero sea cual fuere la perfección à que se considere llegado el hombre, sus placeres nacerán siempre de la hermosura física del objeto, de las relaciones sociales con sus semejantes y de las relaciones imaginarias con seres fantásticos dotados con una belleza indefinible.}^537\] (My emphasis)

From the above, the following points must be emphasized: 1) Ramírez’s elaboration of a literary project aims to provide an account of the grounds whereby “the apparatuses of some senses are perfected through the aid of Physics”; 2) in doing so, he understands literature as a trans-historical, natural, and cultural phenomenon; 3) this conception of literature maintains that literature is capable of acting directly, which is to say, physically,

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on the human organism through the action of the internal sentimental apparatus, and that through that action the sentimental apparatus might be perfected; 4) finally, Ramírez holds that mutual sentiment or fellow-feeling is an essentially social phenomenon of language. Developing language can therefore also develop and perfect the feelings necessary to unify the pueblo through national sentiment. Far from being a negligible moment in the economy determinative of the aesthetic experience, sentiment, and specifically its ability to articulate the human organism and produce fellow-feeling, is an integral part of Ramírez’s project of total emancipation.

The last paragraph of the previously-cited passage makes clear that a concern for producing and managing sentiment through literature is important in the moment in which Ramírez is writing, but the thinker also argues that literature should be a constant companion to historical and civilizational progress. Literature is capable of serving as this accompaniment because of its capacity to touch the sentiments of each person and create sentimental bridges between the members of a community otherwise divided by the disparate conditions of the material realities that sharply divide their respective existences. While taking this into account, we can now summarize Ramírez’s conceptualization of literature and its import to his thought.

Ramírez outpaces the scientific reductivism of his positivist peers by radically emphasizing the necessity of creating flexible structures of mutual association capable of canalizing an ever-changing natural will. The structures of human society and governance are no exception to this necessity, and Ramírez believes that those structures can only properly originate from voluntary adherence to pacts of mutual association. Mutual association is rendered possible by and made manifest through language. Additionally,
Ramírez’s conceptualization of language insists that it is an essentially social phenomenon. The social character of language gives rise to the operation of the internal sentimental economy, a physiological mechanism wherein the will produces, combines, and reproduces sentimental configurations that give rise to the various passions and motivate the subject to action. This sentiment is directly impacted by internal stimuli, and most specifically the sign, which Ramírez holds to be the physical vehicle of aesthetic experience. This leads Ramírez to posit a possibility that Lizardi had also glimpsed: the possibility of using literature as an aesthetic vehicle for ideological penetration, one capable of directly rearticulating the sentimental disposition of readers and producing mutual will, fellow-feeling, and collective national sentiment. But the constraints of the paradigm that Ramírez challenged were no less rigid than they had been for Lizardi, and his sentimental didacticism, though elegantly wrought, had little opportunity to exhibit its potential outside of the realm of theory. The production of didactic national novels would have to wait for Ramírez’s most famous student, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano.

Ramírez’s description of the internal sentimental economy provides a theoretical underpinning that explains the ardent provocations that typify so much of his work. It therefore becomes possible to see why Ramírez’s thought, while quintessentially radical, is nevertheless unified in its approach to all the themes that it treats. The firebrand that emerges in his journalistic writings and public discourses is merely putting into practice what the thinker, in a more academic vein, argues as a real possibility of sentimental connection and emancipation through the aesthetic experience. It is this underlying pedagogical project, one too often eschewed in favor of his more bombastic or gallingly spectacular writings, that must be understood if the gnawing absence of a connection
between Ramírez’s thought and the subsequent literary projects of his students is to be remedied. The massive pedagogical project advanced by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano is connected with that of his master el Nigromante because both authors are convinced that literature can be a source of sentimental transformation and communal reunification. We remain oblivious to this connection as long as Ramírez’s literary theory remains divorced from the value and achievements of the rest of his body of thought.

Ignacio Ramírez is much more than the destructive iconoclast that the critical and historical traditions project. His provocations stem from a well-grounded and comprehensive ontological and epistemological renovation of the dominant ideology of the day, and they are calculated to directly impact his audience in accordance with his theorization of what I have dubbed the internal sentimental economy of the human organism. This attempt at manipulating sentiment provides a link with the literary work of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, but it also connects Ignacio Ramírez with Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Altamirano tries to realize the new destiny that Ramírez envisions for literature by utilizing it to bring about the sentimental reconciliation of the Mexican nation during the unremitting struggles of 19th Century. In the final chapter of this investigation, I will analyze how and why Altamirano falls short of realizing that sentimental reconciliation in his final novel, El Zarco. Despite this failure, Altamirano succeeds in exposing the limits of passionate persuasion and sentimental manipulation in the face of unrelenting social chaos and the ever-pressing needs of nation-building.
Chapter 4
An Emotional Breakdown: Discernment, Reconciliation and Judgment in the Novels of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity…”
-W.B. Yeats

“No escribes como periodista, lo que no puedes sostener como hombre.”
– Francisco Zarco

“Con toda la conciencia de un hombre puro, con todo el corazón de un liberal, con la energía justiciera del representante de una nación ultrajada…”
-Ignacio Manuel Altamirano

"Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."
-Robert Oppenheimer
Fateful shots rang out the 19th of June, 1867 and heralded the death of Maximillian of Hapsburg, the first and only Emperor of the Second Mexican Empire (1863-1867). Republican forces under the control of a young general, Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915), had retaken control of the capital only a week before, signaling the effective end of a half-decade of struggle against French imperialist incursion in Mexico. But although many seemed to see this moment, the commencement of the period commonly known as the República Restaurada (1867-1876), as a sure sign of a new beginning, that very beginning was beleaguered by the consequences of a host of other ends. The triumph over the French in 1867 echoed the repulsion of Spanish attempts at reconquest in 1829, bringing an end to the foreign invasions that had menaced the country since the beginning of the century. Those invasions, however, had exacted their own price, as evidenced by the massive surrender of national territory to the United States through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, and moreover, by the millions of bodies lost to the violence that had almost constantly overshadowed national life since Independence.

As Vicente Riva Palacio (1832-1896) would later comment, by the beginning of 1868, Benito Juárez’s (1806-1872) administration was only beginning to staunch a festering wound in the nation’s body politic: “Nuestras guerras han sido la operación dolorosa y sangrienta del cirujano que corta el miembro gangrenado por amor al enfermo, y no la herida del asesino que busca el exterminio de su víctima.” This diagnosis of national necrosis had been accurate even before the bloodshed of the War of Reform (1857-1861), and the toxicity of that conflict had only been exacerbated by the French Invasion (1862-
1867) that followed on its heels. As Alejandro Cortazar has argued, the psychological scars of over half a century of conflict had produced a “sense of humiliation” within a great part of the national consciousness, and that sense carried much weight in the debate regarding what should be done with the Austrian interloper and his partisans after the toppling of his throne.\textsuperscript{538}

The Liberal party touted the victory over the French as an emblem for the ultimate victory of Mexican sovereignty. In this sense the triumph was a shared one that represented the culmination of the revolutionary actions of the “true Mexican people.” The opening lines of a discourse given in the National Theatre on September 15 is a perfect example of the Liberal reappropriation of the struggle from Independence to that triumphant moment in 1867 as a common ground for national unity:

Conciudadanos: La indignación de la patria, pasando sobre el imperio de los franceses y traidores, los ha visto insultar las glorias de nuestros padres cuando esa raza de Almonte consagraba estos santos días á ensalzar los placeres y ventajas de una tranquila servidumbre; pero yacen fulminados los viles esclavos que sobre las aras de la libertad se atrevieron á levantar su propia ignominia. Ahora, el más puro entusiasmo agrupa en este recinto á los hijos de Hidalgo, engalanados con recientes laureles, para solemnizar el grito de Dolores, repitiendo las mismas palabras del héroe, como si las acabase de pronunciar en nuestra presencia, y como si vibrase todavía la campana de alarma que anunció á los invasores su exterminio.\textsuperscript{539}

After presenting the Liberal ideal of the Mexican pueblo as the children of Hidalgo, Ramírez reiterates the shared experience of suffering visited upon the nation and symbolically fashions unifying ties from the blood of all the members of the fallen national family:

También nosotros tenemos un pacto con la muerte, para alimentarla con sangre, ya sea la nuestra, ya la de los contrarios. En las saturnales de la invasión, en medio de las danzas lúbricas, han sido por el extranjero admirados y aplaudidos los pies de nuestra deshonra; la miseria recorre los campos; la ciencia nos convida con armas tan destructoras como una epidemia; el mar nos ofrece sus filibusteros; los altares y los tronos de los antiguos opresores se derriban; lo pasado y el porvenir

hacen temblar al europeo que naufraga en lo presente; y entre tanto nosotros vivimos y nos regocijamos en medio de las tempestades que envuelven la empavesada nave de nuestra independencia. La guerra de 1810 no ha concluido.\footnote{Op. cit. 184-185.} (My emphasis)

Nevertheless, the symbolic ties evoked by Ramírez did not resonate in all sectors of the population. If the war for emancipation was not yet concluded, it was because the socio-political reality of Mexico still fell short of the vision of modernity embraced by the newly-empowered Liberal Republicans. Familiar obstacles still blocked the way to a new national future, and first among them was the question of how to establish the sovereignty of the pueblo within the architecture of the Liberal \textit{Leyes de Reforma}. Popular sovereignty was impossible without an educated citizenry to support it: how, then, to produce the citizens who would carry the nation toward progress? Furthermore, how could that ideal citizenry be produced in a population already deeply divided among itself?

As Cortazar makes clear, although the victory of Republicanism in 1867 was presented as the result of the nation’s inexorable historical march toward emancipation, the problem of actually connecting with and unifying the nation’s citizenry remained a major preoccupation for Liberal ideologues:

Lo que quedaba en claro era que se había ganado la batalla para imponer un sistema político, y que para mantener el espíritu de dicho sistema político se requería encontrar los medios más apropiados para formar nuevos ciudadanos, esto es, individuos que fueran instruidos con las garantías de un Estado laico, republicano y progresista.\footnote{Cortazar, Alejandro. \textit{Reforma, novela y nación}. Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2006. 73. Print.}

The Liberal ideology prescribed education as a panacea for society’s ills, and Ignacio Ramírez’s most famous former student, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, led the charge to become the \textit{maestro} of a new generation of liberal thinkers. The education that he advocated was itself decidedly national in character. He declared that it was necessary to
teach the people the meaning of their hard-won liberties, as well as the history, cultures, and geography of the nation.

The possibility of achieving that sort of education was crippled by the actual state of the Mexican educational system, which had long been dominated by the Church and, in the majority of cases, had impeded Liberal progress. Now that responsibility for reforming the educational system fell to the Juárez government, the pressing necessity of that change was recognized in the lack of even the most basic components of the Liberal educational model, namely, books. In his collected *Revistas Literarias* (1868), Altamirano laments the fact that:

> No hay libros de texto para las escuelas, y los gobiernos, que debían buscar su más firme apoyo en la enseñanza popular, no se acuerdan de comisionar á personas ilustradas para que los escriban; de modo que nuestros niños seguirán sabiendo muy bien el sistema métrico-decimal, la geografía, los idiomas extranjeros, los principios del dogma católico, y el dibujo y la música, pero no sabrán una palabra de Constitución, de sufragio universal, de división de poderes, de garantías individuales, de soberanía de los Estados, de nada, en fin, de aquello que les es indispensable para entrar la vida del ciudadano, trayendo siquiera nociones elementales que entonces podrán tener mas amplio desarrollo.542 (Original emphasis)

Bearing this complaint in mind, it makes sense that Altamirano’s didactic strategy also begins with an appeal to publishers and the press. More than a mere cultural concern, literature is also envisaged as the primary instrument for the instruction of the pueblo:

> La enseñanza de los principios que forman el credo republicano, debe ser el objeto principal del publicista hoy, si quiere ver en México un pueblo tan ilustrado como el de los Estados-Unidos, en el que no pueda ejercerse mañana tan fácilmente la influencia del soborno de la presión de los ambiciosos políticos, y esta enseñanza debe comenzar á difundirse desde la escuela primaria, por medio de pequeños libros, en que esté desleída la doctrina suavemente, como lo estaba el doctma en los antiguos catecismos cristianos, hasta el folleto y el periódico en que se educa diariamente los hombres ya formados, tocando las cuestiones de actualidad y haciendo la aplicación práctica de los principios aprendidos en la niñez.543 (My emphasis)

As Cortazar’s investigation of the 19th century didactic novel in Mexico has shown, the art of Liberal nationalist literature had already been pioneered by Nicolás Pizarro Suárez in

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his *El monedero* (1861). Altamirano would redefine and redeploy Pizarro Suárez’s Liberal nationalist paradigm, and he would go even further than his predecessor in asserting the primacy of education for the moral, social, and economic improvement of the pueblo. As Cortazar rightly notes, that education propagates an evolving, hybrid sentimental construct. That construct is constituted out of sentiments drawn from different discursive domains and is uniformly focused on the concerns of governing elites within the Liberal state:

Él miraba en la instrucción el medio imprescindible para poder contar con individuos que ejercieran la virtud y el honor republicanos, tales como la dedicación al trabajo –herramienta de progreso— y el patriotismo –entendido como la defensa y la entrega por la soberanía de la nación.

Transmitting the sentimental structure that Cortazar describes as “Republican Virtue” to the people of the national pueblo became an issue of paramount importance. The Liberal dream of a modern Mexican nation needed the support of the pueblo to become a reality. Without a sentimental community to unify it, the national community was condemned to remain a distant fantasy. Ever the true patriot, Altamirano saw a way to win over his conciudadanos without the need for bloodshed. Although he had once been a military man, Altamirano knew that the battle for hearts and minds was a different kind of struggle. Inspired by his master *el Nigromante* and guided by the principles of Liberal Republicanism, Altamirano grabbed his pen and rushed headlong into the maelstrom of a society divided by its sentiments.

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The political convulsions undergone by the country had debilitated the growth of a national culture, but Altamirano reassures his readers that the Liberal renaissance will be cultural as well as political. Literature, he argues, has since time immemorial been the harbinger and preserver of humanity’s great ideas, and Mexican society could only benefit by promoting it:

El fragor de la guerra ahogó el canto de las musas. Los poetas habían bajado del Helicón y subían las gradas del Capitolio. La lira cayó a los pies de la tribuna en el Foro, el númen sagrado, en vez de elegías y de cantos heroicos, inspiró leyes!

Bendito sea ese cambio, porque á causa de él, la literatura abrió paso al progreso, o más bien dicho, lo dió luz, porque en ella habían venido encerrados los gérmenes de las grandes ideas, que produjeron una revolución grandiosa. La literatura había sido el propagador más ardiente de la Democracia.546

More than just a promoter of literary culture, Altamirano was also a major contributor to national literary life in its embryonic stages. Like Lizardi and Ramírez before him, he used the power of the press to his advantage and engaged in frequent polemics until falling from favor in the 1890’s during the second phase of the Porfiriato.547 He also founded multiple newspapers548 and organized recurring veladas literarias where literary exchange was encouraged among the luminaries and youth of his day, regardless of their political stripes.549 But of all the literary forms that he cultivated, Altamirano exalted one in particular above all others as the ideal instrument for accomplishing the ideological penetration of the pueblo and generating a unifying national consciousness: the novel. Just as the pueblo had evolved beyond its colonial constraints through the process of Reform,

548 Of the periodicals that Altamirano published, El Renacimiento is by far the most significant. There Altamirano pioneered a space for both literary expression and literary criticism. Cf. Gonzalez Peña, Carlos. Historia de la literatura mexicana. 17th ed. Mexico City: Porrúa, 1998. 184, 244. Print.
549 As Cortazar observes, the much-lauded ecumenical character of the veladas literarias should be taken with a grain of salt, especially since the vast majority of politically charged pieces presented therein, and subsequently published, have a decidedly-liberal bent. Cf. Cortazar, Alejandro. Reforma, novela y nación. Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2006. 75-76. Print.
the novel had also surpassed its former limitations and had evolved a seemingly-infinite generic plasticity that made it capable of carrying messages to a variety of different publics and addressing them in their own language:

Hé ahí que hemos llegado al tiempo en que la novela, dejando sus antiguos límites, ha invadido todos los terrenos y ha dado su forma á todas las ideas y á todos los asuntos, haciéndose el mejor vehículo de propaganda […] Pero generalmente hablando, la novela ocupa ya un lugar respetable en la literatura, y se siente su influencia en el progreso intelectual y moral de los pueblos modernos. Es que ella abre hoy campos inmensos á las indagaciones históricas, y es la liza en que combaten todos los días las escuelas filosóficas, los partidos políticos, las sectas religiosas; es el apóstol que difunde el amor á lo bello, el entusiasmo por las artes, y aun sustituye ventajosamente á la tribuna para predicar el amor á la patria, á la poesía épica para eternizar los hechos gloriosos de los héroes, y á la poesía satírica para atacar los vicios y defender la moral.550

Altamirano’s faith in the novelistic form is difficult to overestimate. Granted the fundamental place of education in the Liberal Republican project, and the future role of the novel as a tool in that project, literature —with the novel at the forefront— became one of the cornerstones of the Liberal vision of modernity:

Todo lo útil que nuestros antepasados no podian hacer comprender ó estudiar al pueblo, bajo formas establecidas desde la antigüedad, lo pueden hoy los modernos bajo la forma agradable y atractiva de la novela, y con este respecto no pueden disputarse á este género literario su inmensa utilidad y sus efectos benéficos en la instruccion de las masas. Bajo este punto de vista, la novela del siglo XIX debe colocarse al lado del periodismo, de la libertad de enseñanza, del teatro, del adelanto fabril é industrial, de los caminos de hierro, del telégrafo y del vapor. Ella contribuye con todos estos inventos del genio, á la mejora de la humanidad y á la nivelacion de las clases por la educación y las costumbres.551

Altamirano’s novels, and specifically Clemencia (1869), La navidad en las montaños (1871), and El Zarco (written 1885-1889),552 have received more critical attention than any of his other works. While all three of the novels mentioned are almost universally recognized to be didactically informed, the interpretations of the specific messages

552 Lund notes that “the first chapters of what would eventually become El Zarco were drafted as early as 1874; the manuscript was finished in 1888 […] The space between is notable for its lack of a major civil war and is associated with the growing hegemony of the Diaz administration, the so-called Pax Porfiriana.” Cf. Lund, Joshua. The Mestizo State: Reading Race in modern Mexico. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 53. Print.
conveyed by Altamirano’s texts have been many and varied. Indeed, it seems as if the ubiquity of Altamirano’s didactic stylistics often raises more questions than it answers. Nowhere is this more the case than with regard to Altamirano’s final, posthumous novel, *El Zarco* (published in 1901).

* Clemencia and *La navidad en las montañas* clearly express their didactic aims: the newly-minted Mexican citizenry is presented with landscapes and battles that inform the reader about the nation and its recent history. Those novels also provide a frame for interpretation of mid-century political conflict in terms of the “Republican virtues” espoused by the Liberal educational project. But *El Zarco* seems to break with that earlier didactic trajectory by juxtaposing the struggle for legal order in an ideal mestizo pueblo with a form of vigilante violence that puts the very notion of Republican Virtue in jeopardy. Joshua Lund has recently argued that this final inconsistency in Altamirano’s project shows the weaknesses of recent scholarly approaches to *El Zarco* that emphasize its didactic content. On his argument, a careful review of the particulars of the novel reveals that the vigilante Martín Sánchez Chagollan, and not—as is commonly held—, the erstwhile mestizo protagonist Nicolás, is the true center of the novel, and thusly the key to decoding its hauntingly violent conclusion. This leads Lund to disfavor more traditional didactic interpretations of Altamirano’s final novel.

Although I agree with Lund as to the crucial significance of the figure of Martín Sánchez Chagollan in *El Zarco*, in this chapter I stake out a different way forward in the hope of reconciling Lund’s innovative reading with more traditional interpretations of

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Altamirano’s novels as part of a didactic project aimed at constructing national literature, national consciousness, and national sentiment. Rather than rejecting didactic readings of Altamirano’s final novel, I will contend that the peculiarities of *El Zarco* actually represent the simultaneous consummation and deadlock of Altamirano’s attempted inculcation of the sentiments of Republican Virtue. As Lund himself indicates, the presence of the vigilante Martín Sánchez Chagollan in *El Zarco* is a decidedly ambiguous one. I will argue that this ambiguity also acts as a guarantor of the ideological model that Altamirano continues to propound in *El Zarco* in spite of the ongoing absence of the legal guarantees and protections needed to sustain it.

Resolving the critical deadlock identified by Lund requires an understanding of the strategies that Altamirano develops throughout his novelistic project in order to rearticulate the sentiments of his readers into conformity with the still-inchoate ideology of Liberal Republicanism emergent in Mexico in the mid-to-late 19th Century. Altamirano’s first novel, *Clemencia*, is his first foray into the world of sentimental didacticism, but the author proves a quick study and, true to his title, *el Maestro* acts as an adroit manipulator of the sentiments of the people. Focusing on the sentimental processes inaugurated and configured in *Clemencia* and subsequently perfected in *La navidad en las montañas* allows for an explanation of their ultimate failure and its relationship to the anomalous figure of Martín Sánchez Chagollan in *El Zarco*. 
4.1 Christ has Died: Mercy for the Blind

As Cortazar demonstrates, Altamirano’s didactic project operates in accordance with a “doble propósito fundamental”: his novels aim to provide instruction regarding national history and the contemporary political situation, but they are equally concerned with expounding “algún mensaje moralizador por medio de los eventos que trascienden para dar lugar a la reflexión y la acción”\textsuperscript{554}. The attempt to realize that first historico-political criterion is readily apparent in *Clemencia*. After being introduced in Chapter 1 to Dr. L, the narrator who will serve as their sentimental guide through the story to come, the reader is suddenly transported to December 1863, just months after Mexico City had fallen to French General François Achille Bazaine (1811-1888), and Maximilian of Hapsburg, brother of Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I (1848-1916), had been crowned Emperor of the Second Mexican Empire\textsuperscript{555}. That moment of transport is lent plausibility by Dr. L’s experience serving as a medic in the Republican army during the war against the French. That experience makes him a witness to the events narrated in the novel. By Chapter 3 of *Clemencia*, however, it becomes clear that presenting war stories and historical vistas is not the main objective of the novel.

While the presentation of national history fulfills the first half of Altamirano’s didactic purpose, the real action only begins subsequently, when Chapter 3 creates a space for reflection and action by setting the novel’s didactico-sentimental strategy into motion.


The narrative voice, now functioning in an omniscient mode within the recent past, makes the transition from historical to sentimental instruction manifestly clear:

Debo volver aquí en el fastidioso relato histórico que me ha visto obligado a hacer, primero por esa inclinación que tenemos los que hemos servido en el ejército, a hablar de movimientos, maniobras y campañas, y además para establecer los hechos, fijar los lugares y marcar la época precisa de los acontecimientos.

Ahora comienzo mi novela, que por cierto no va a ser una novela militar, quiero decir, un libro de guerra con episodios de combates, sino una historia de sentimiento [...].

As had been the case in Lizardi’s *El Periquillo sarniento*, Altamirano begins his didactic project by providing an account of two contrasting figures, Enrique Flores and Fernando Valle, both of whom hold the rank of Commander in the Republican army. But if their military experience seems to have proved them to be equals, the way that society receives each figure reveals that they could not be more distinct. As the critical tradition has endlessly reiterated, Flores and Valle are differentiated in social, racial, political, and economic terms. Flores is a libertine son of the aristocracy, and his “virile,” “herculean” physique betrays his European bloodline. Alongside his natural charisma and eloquence, those qualities prove sufficient to earn him a valiant reputation (“tenía fama de valiente”) (My emphasis)). And that reputation, in combination with his bewitching appearance, manners, and notorious pecuniary liberality (*viz.* prodigality), spread among his associates and superiors, seems to have earned him the universal admiration of society.

Valle’s lot in life is entirely different. In the eponymously-titled fourth chapter of the novel, Commander Fernando Valle is both racially and physiognomically distinguished from Enrique Flores. Valle has brown eyes and an aquiline nose that suggest his possible mestizo origins, and his tremulous, pale appearance is taken as a sign of infirmity or

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immorality by the society that surrounds him.\textsuperscript{560} Valle’s physical features, rendered physiognomical signs through their putative connection to moral dispositions, are even sufficient to reduce Valle’s palpable proofs of courage to a mere shadow of Flores’ much-lauded and equally ethereal renown for valiance:

Sus jefes le soportaban, y se veían obligados a tenerle consideración porque más de una vez en la campaña de Puebla, primera que había hecho en su vida, había dado pruebas de un valor temerario, de un arrojo que parecía inspirado por un ardiente deseo de elevarse pronto o de acabar, sucumbiendo, con algún secreto que torturaba su corazón.

Hubiérase dicho que, desafiando a la muerte, había querido humillar a sus jefes que combatían con la prudencia del valor reposado y experto.\textsuperscript{561}

The addition of an apparently cold, isolated disposition and a rigorous economy of speech, action, and consumption make Valle’s experience in society the polar opposite of the warm welcome awaiting Flores at every turn.\textsuperscript{562}

Altamirano’s maniquean opposition between Valle and Flores becomes increasingly clear as the novel progresses, with the revelation of their absolute distinction serving as the sentimental novel’s denouement. As such, the initial sentimental configuration of Flores and Valle is the beginning of a process of sentimental instruction that spans the entirety of the novel and is only fulfilled at its end. That process begins with the valorization of both figures in accordance with the “sympathy” with which they are met in society: “[Valle] era justamente lo contrario de Flores, el reverso del simpático y amable carácter que acabo de pintar a largas pinceladas.”\textsuperscript{563} The assertion of their sympathetic differences is the central feature of the descriptions of both characters, but the previous citation also gives reason to doubt the legitimacy of their respective characterizations because of the “broad brush strokes” used to portray them. The initial semi-opaque

\textsuperscript{560} Op. cit. 9.
\textsuperscript{561} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{563} Ibid.
portrayal of the moral character of each of the two figures exerts a countervailing effect in the face of an overwhelming wealth of more ubiquitous signifiers (such as their appearances) that differentially define their significance within the novel. The tension between the figures’s deceptive appearances and the belated affirmation of their respective moral characters generates suspense and narrative engagement on the part of the reader. It also makes room for the didactic inculcation of the ideology of Republican virtue that buttresses the signifying economy of Altamirano’s novels, and that process of inculcation is synonymous with sentimental transformation.

As the author insists, the most important difference between Flores and Valle is a sentimental distinction made in terms of sympathy: Flores is presented as possessing a host of merits, including “la de ser absolutamente simpático,”564 while Valle, “tenia aspecto repugnante y, en efecto, era antipático para todo el mundo.”565 While Flores effortlessly passes from feast to tryst and back again, Valle’s interactions with society are met with constant reverses, and even his successes garner him little more than begrudging suspicion:

> Aplicado con asiduidad a esta para él nueva arma [el cuerpo de caballería] había aprovechado tanto su tiempo, que se le citaba como el oficial más inteligente y más capaz, por lo cual y por su carácter frío y reservado, sus compañeros le profesaban un odio reconcentrado y mortal.
>
> —Evidentemente, este muchacho escondía un Proyecto siniestro, estaba inspirado por una ambición colossal, andaba su camino, y quién sabe… el quería subir, y aparentaba servir a la República como un medio de llegar a su objeto.566

Those doubts lead those around Valle to posit a thesis the exposition and deconstruction of which is the primary function of *Clemencia*. The preceding passage concludes with a statement of that thesis *en nuce*, namely, that an apparent inconformity with society’s ideals of beauty and the good should be equated with a failure of character, *arribismo*, and a

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disposition for immorality. Or, as society has concluded regarding Valle’s motivations: “No era, pues, un patriota, sino un ambicioso, un malvado encubierto.” The novel wills the reader to adopt that judgment from its outset and then gradually provides proofs that they were dead wrong all along. The eventual revelation of the true malignancy of Flores’s character is accompanied by the epiphany of the true nature of Republican Virtue as embodied in the character of Fernando Valle. As readers of the novel, we are given an account of that epiphany, but the true witnesses to it are Isabel, the cousin of Fernando Valle, and Clemencia, the novel’s titular character and the locus of sentimental change in this first phase of Altamirano’s didactic novelisitics.

The case of Isabel and Clemencia is a classic narrative bait-and-switch. Flores sets his sights on Isabel while he and Valle attend mass in Guadalajara, where their unit has been rallied to make preparations for the advance of French forces on the city. Isabel’s beauty drives Flores to insist on accompanying Valle on an unplanned visit to her family home. Although Valle senses that something is amiss, the threat of his cousin’s seduction by Flores causes him to give way to the dandy’s wishes. And then the switch: the visit described in Chapter 9, “La presentación” is only made possible by Valle’s connection to Isabel, but the interactions of both those characters are drowned out by the passionate discourse of Flores with Clemencia. After Flores and Valle depart, both women are left with a lasting impression of Flores’s many graces, and cannot but compare them with Valle’s unsympathetic appearance. But while Isabel’s comments act to situate her as an adherent to the thesis that Altamirano is looking to undermine, Clemencia’s own remarks reveal more insight and allude to a possible future change in her estimation of Valle:

567 Ibid.
—Mamá—dijo la dulce Isabel— yo le confieso a usted que veo en mi primo algo que me
causa antipatía; y por Dios que mis ojos nunca me engañan, y que todo aquello que me disgusta a
primera vista, resulta malo. [...] 

—Tal vez le condenan ustedes demasiado pronto—objetó Clemencia con aire de lástima—
. Yo no le veo nada repulsivo, como Isabel. No es agraciado, no es simpático y, además su
encogimiento, que no parece ser propio de un mexicano, le perjudica mucho. Es muy serio; tal vez,
su carácter se haya agrado con alguna enfermedad, porque en efecto está muy pálido, muy delgado,
y ahora nos lo pareció más, porque le comparábamos con su amigo que está brillante de salud y
frescura.568

The sentimental difference between the two women is only beginning to unfold at this
point. Isabel’s sentiments will remain relatively static as the plot of the novel progresses.
She is a classic portrayal of angelic femininity, at once immaculate and fatally removed
from the material degradation and passions of the world. Her most significant emotional
manifestations are lacrimose moments of pity and benevolent concern, while all of her
behaviors carry an air of religious piety and withdrawal.

As was the case in the dyad Valle-Flores, Clemencia and Isabel are also situated in
opposition to each other, although here the line is drawn with regard to their sentiments
and personalities, and not their intrinsic moral character. The baseline commonality of
their positions in the military informs the initial comparison of Flores and Valle, but when
the author treats Clemencia and Isabel in isolation, common ground is instead found in the
way they valorize the sentimental:

Clemencia se parecía mucho en esto a su amiga. Adoraba la forma, creía que ella era la
revelación clara del alma, el sello que Dios ha puesto para que sea distinguida la belleza moral, y en
sus amigas y amigos examinaba primero el tipo y concedía después el afecto.
Y esto no da derecho a suponer que las dos jóvenes careciesen de talento y de criterio, no;
la naturaleza ha sido pródiga con ellas en dones físicos e intelectuales. Clemencia pasaba por tener
una de las inteligencias más elevadas del bello sexo de Guadalajara. Isabel era citada por su talento.
Ambas estaban dotadas del sentimiento más exquisito. Eran mujeres de corazón.569 (My emphasis)

In light of the fact that Clemencia describes itself as a novela de sentimiento, the usage of
sentiment in the above-cited passage bears unpacking. Altamirano is careful to prepare the

way for sentimental transformation by pointing out that both Isabel and Clemencia possess all of the faculties and intelligence necessary to pass the sentimental trial that he has posed for them. They are both emphatically “women of heart” who should be capable of discerning the sentimental signs of the world around them, and this is important, for it is precisely their sentimental discernment that is going to be put to the test. Success in that test is defined as the proper recognition of Fernando Valle as a Christ-like incarnation of the sentiments of Republican Virtue. But as signaled by the erroneous understanding of Valle initially presented in the text, discerning the proper object of patriotic affection will not be easy.

The text signals the potential difficulty of that test of discernment by pointing out that Dr. L, the narrator that serves as a guide on the sentimental journey through Clemencia, had already himself failed it miserably in his early interactions with Commander Valle:

Francamente, hasta nosotros los médicos, hombres de caridad y que no consultamos nuestras simpatías para ser útiles a los que sufren, hasta nosotros, digo, repugnábamos acercarnos a él, porque sentíamos una invencible antipatía viendo a ese pequeño oficial con su mirada ceñuda, su color pálido e impuro y su boca despreciativa.570

The reader is first disabused of his initial misgivings about Valle in a private conversation where his true patriotic sentiment is contrasted with Flores’s false enthusiasm and ambition. This private conversation between Flores and Valle also fulfills a structural function in the novel’s didactic strategy by allowing the reader to get ahead of the game and to thereby anticipate Clemencia’s subsequent failures of sentimental discernment. Furthermore, as the conversation is essential for the reader’s recognition of Valle as a Liberal Republican Christ, it is also felicitously reminiscent of Christ’s temptation in the desert, wherein the deceiver’s challenges to divine principle are met and rebuffed, even in

570 Op. cit. 11.
the face of hardship. In a parallel to the previous chapter, “Las dos amigas,” in Chapter 11, “Los dos amigos,” the question of sentimental discernment is broached through an examination of the two youths’s impressions of their meeting with Isabel and Clemencia:

[Flores] […] ¡Un corazón virgen a los veinticinco años! ¡En este tiempo en que ya a los doce se tiene novia, y muchas veces querida! Convengo en que no haya usted amado, esta palabra ahora tan convencional; pero habrá usted tenido una querida: ¿quién no tiene hoy, apenas llegada a la pubertad, una triste querida?

[Valle]—Tampoco; me hubiera sido eso difícil sin amar. Las pasiones de los sentidos no han sido hechas para mí. Como desde niño, he carecido del dulce placer de sentirme amado, y como he atesorado en el alma un inmenso caudal de cariño tan ardiente como puro, he deseado con avidez amar; pero hubiera creído profanar mis sentimientos entregándome a las pasiones banales y que gastan la organización corrompiendo siempre el alma.571

The duplicitous Flores is understandably shocked by such a flagrantly-honest admission and attributes Valle’s poetic idealization of love and sentiment to the influence of literature. Valle, however, forcefully defends the authenticity of his sentiments and argues that they are instead merely a natural manifestations of his life experience:

[Flores] —¿Ha frecuentado usted a los poetas?
—Algo; pero le dirá a usted: antes, muy antes de que me aficionara a ese género de lectura, pensaba y sentía lo mismo. Las ideas que tengo no me vienen de los libros, sino de las impresiones que he recibido desde mi infancia. He sufrido, y el mundo, que puedo haber sido para mí un edén, fue un infierno desde los primeros pasos. ¡Feliz quien como usted sólo ha pisado rosas en su camino!572

Shortly after this moment of conversation the tone of the conversation moves from amicable incomprehension to open hostility. As Flores challenges Fernando’s idealism, his depravity becomes more and more apparent, and here again it is important to note that that revelation is couched in sentimental language:

[Valle]—Pero usted habrá sido siempre feliz.
[Flores]—Feliz absolutamente, no; necesitaba yo muchas, muchísimas cosas para ser feliz. Mi ambición es insaciable, mis sentidos exigentes hasta lo imposible.

[Valle]—¿Sus sentidos? ¿Pero usted no tiene corazón?
[Flores]—Quiero, ¿cree usted en el corazón?
[Valle]—¡Cómo si creo! Demasiado, y ahora más todavía.
[Flores]—Arránquemelo usted en la primera oportunidad, Fernando. Créame usted, es una entraña que maldita la falta que nos hace, y que debe acarrear innumerables contrariedades. De mí sé decir que nunca lo he tenido, si no es en la acepción física de la palabra, y me he reído alegrementen

de aquellos que decían ser desgraciados por un exceso de sentimientos. Eso está bueno para urdir cuentos; el corazón es como el diablo, sólo existe en leyendas.

[Valle] —Pero ¿qué horrores está usted diciendo! Apenas me atrevo a creer que habla usted con formalidad.

[Flores] —Pues no lo dude usted, amigo mío, y le aseguro bajo mi palabra de honor, que no soy de aquellos que por haber sufrido algún quebranto terrible en sus esperanzas o en sus pasiones, se hacen los interesantes, diciendo que ha muerto su corazón, que no tienen en el pecho más que cenizas, con otras mil necedades tan ridículas como impertinentes. No; si alguno puede dar gracias a la fortuna por sus coqueterías y sus lisonjas, soy yo, que sin fatuidad he apurado desde muy temprano los goces, y he hecho de mi vida una especie de orgía de buen tono.573

Valle recoils before Flores’s unabashed celebration of libertine decadence and sentimental hedonism, but the biggest provocation is yet to come. The text presents Flores’s false patriotism as the most offensive statement of all. In so doing, it also serves to highlight Valle’s pure Republican sentiment:

[Valle] —Pero digame usted, Flores, con semejantes ideas cuyo origen no me es desconocido ya ¿cómo es que sirve usted en el ejército, y en un tiempo como éste, en que la República anda de capa caída?

[Flores] —Precisamente por eso vengo aquí. ¿Usted tiene fe en el triunfo de la independencia?574

[Valle] —Tengo gran fe, una fe incontrastable.

[Flores] —¿Y usted cree que no morirá en la lucha?

[Valle] —Eso no lo sé: nada difícil es que muera; pero moriré con la conciencia de que tarde o temprano triunfará la República.

[Flores] —Pues bien; yo también tengo fe, y hay algo que me dice que sobreviviré a la guerra. Usted comprenderá que vamos a quedar muy pocos, y de esos pocos me propongo ser uno. El camino así se hace más corto, y yo llegaré a mi fin.

[Valle] —De modo que el patriotismo entra muy poco en los propósitos de usted.


[Valle] —¿Y todo para hundirse después en los goces?

[Flores] —Es claro; en todos los goces, del orgullo, del poder, de la riqueza, del amor, de la gloria. Todos juntos se saborean cuando estás uno colocado muy arriba de sus semejantes.575

In terms of the didactic purpose developed throughout the novel, there could be no better exemplar of the contrast between true national sentiment qua Republican Virtue and its ostentatious, opportunistic imitation. After having seen the truth with their own eyes, both

574 It should be noted that here, as in Ramírez’s discourse cited in the first section of this epilogue, the battle against the French is framed in terms of the battle for “la independencia,” thereby extending the significance of the struggle back to its inception in 1810.
the reader and Valle now countenance a knowledge that Clemencia ignores. In a move anticipated by the title, after the midpoint of the novel Clemencia completely overshadows Isabel by becoming the object of the affections of both Flores and Valle. This shift is accompanied by another, and the test of sentimental discernment that the novel deploys comes to focus its scrutiny almost exclusively on Clemencia. As the text frames it, Clemencia’s self-proclaimed delicacy of sentiment and refinement of education will only be proven worthwhile if she manages to use them to uncover the Liberal Republican Christ that Altamirano has placed right under her nose. As I will show, however, Clemencia will instead deny Valle twice, only to then pass the test moments after the tragedy that she desperately desires to avert.

Clemencia becomes the subject of Altamirano’s didactic project, meaning that the love for the patria and its heroes that she espouses will be probed for its authenticity, and as far as her explicit affirmations go, she certainly seems to be on the right track. In fact, her apparent passion in that regard strikes both terror and fascination into the heart of her friend Isabel:

—¡Clemencia!... Nunca te he oído hablar así... ¡Me encantas y me causas terror!
—¡Oh! Te causo horror porque tú eres dulce y timida, porque tu amor es una lágrima de ángel... mi amor sería una llama devoradora, un volcán. [...] Sería preciso que un grande rasgo de corazón, una cosa extraordinaria me hiciese admirarle, y entonces no habia necesidad demás, le amaría. Yo soy de esas mujeres en quienes el amor entra por las puertas de la admiración. Me parece dificil que llegase a apasionarme de un hombre sin admirarle primero; desdeño lo vulgar, y me siento capaz de amar toda mi vida a un mártir que hubiera perecido en un cadalso, y de convertir su memoria en un culto perpetuo; así como me parece imposible querer a algún pequeño hombre a quien la fortuna elevase sin merecerlo a la cumbre del poder, o a otro a quien suerte caprichosa hubiese dotado de riquezas, o al triste mortal que no contara más que con el atractivo vulgar de una hermosura de Adonis, sólo bueno para decorar mi jardín o para ocupar un lugar en mi aparador de juguetes.  

Granted the criteria that Clemencia espouses, it would seem that she should be rejoicing at having encountered her perfect match in Valle, a proven, dedicated war hero with a disdain for ostentation and an appreciation for virtuous sentiments. The reader could also be forgiven for being fooled by Clemencia’s sentiments since she utters them while feigning an interest in Valle. Either way, her summary comments on the kind of love she is searching for are proof that her sentimental discernment is still insufficient for her to recognize Valle for the Liberal Republican hero that he is:

[Clemencia] […] Yo te digo que no sé lo que quiero precisamente; pero quiero la desgracia, y la desgracia emana de un grande rasgo del corazón.

[Isabel] —Amor imposible entonces. Muy difícil de todos modos, querida niña —dijo Clemencia suspirando y quedándose un momento pensativo.577

Clemencia’s expression of desire reveals the limitations of her sentimental discernment, but the first demonstrable confirmation of her shortcomings becomes apparent at the moment of her first denial of Valle.

The frame narrative that introduces Dr. L to the reader before the commencement of his novela de sentimiento already alludes to the scene of Clemencia’s first denial of Valle, taking place as it does during a gathering of friends on a night in December. In the latter case, that night happens to be the night before Christmas, a night during which Valle is subjected to a sentimental rollercoaster of hope and desperation. In Chapter 23, “La última navidad,” both Valle and Flores attend a Christmas party at Clemencia’s family home. The festivities are first presented as an act of patriotic defiance before the imminent arrival of French forces in Guadalajara. Nevertheless, that superficial manifestation of national pride is rapidly outweighed by the narrator’s observation of the decorations chosen

for the party. Here too, it seems, the exotic and foreign cultural lagniappe of Europe almost entirely dominates the more traditionally Mexican vestiges of Christmas:

En el salón se había colocado ese “precioso juguete alemán”, como le llama Carlos Dickens, el árbol de la Navidad, precioso capricho no introducido todavía en México, y que es el objeto de la ansiedad de la infancia, de la alegría de la juventud y de la meditación de la vejez, en esos países del Norte donde aún se mantiene vivo con el calor del hogar al amor de la familia.

Había sido un capricho de Clemencia poner ése árbol, en cuyas frescas ramas había colocado algunas de sus más queridas alhajas, pañuelos, y pequeños juguetes que habían de repartirse entre sus afortunados amigos, con entero arreglo al estilo alemán: sólo que aquí en vez de niños eran valientes oficiales republicanos los que iban a obtener esos preciosos obsequios, como una muestra de eterno recuerdo.578

Clemencia distributes presents among her guests, and her gift to Fernando Valle turns out to be a handkerchief embroidered by herself and Isabel. Valle, taking the gesture as an affirmation of Clemencia’s reciprocation of love, is overwhelmed by the same sentiment he felt the first time that he saw her.579 That sentiment, a debilitating mixture of love and terror, leaves Valle completely exposed when he later discovers that Clemencia’s ostensible interest in him was only a manipulative attempt to satisfy her jealousy by turning Flores’s attention away from Isabel. Thusly, Clemencia denies the Liberal Republican Christ for the first time, and her misrecognition forcefully steers the work toward its tragic conclusion.

Toward the end of the celebration, Valle spies Clemencia and Flores flirting in seclusion from the rest of the guests. When the two return to the party, an immediate confrontation is narrowly avoided, but Flores’s contemptuous conversation and disdainful air provoke Valle’s indignation sufficiently for the two to agree to duel the next day.580 When Clemencia is finally left to survey the damage done by her amorous deception she worries for the safety of both Valle and Fernando. In this way she exhibits a basic level of

humane sentiment and concern for human life, but she is still far from grasping the lesson that Altamirano would have her learn. That fact is emphasized by the narrator, whose intervention preemptively signals Clemencia’s culpability for the tragedy to come:

El baile se concluyó pronto, Clemencia no estaba contenta ya. ¿Temía por Enrique? ¿Temía por Fernando? ¡Quién sabe! Lo probable es que temía por cualquiera de los dos, pues bien sabía que ella era la causa de lo que iba a suceder.

Así es que otra vez, al recogerse en aquella aristocrática y deliciosa estancia que ya conocimos en la noche del té, volvió a repetir pensativa y llena de remordimientos las mismas palabras

—¿Qué he hecho, Dios mío? ¿Qué he hecho?\textsuperscript{581}

Surprisingly, the duel never occurs. The next day, Valle is confronted by the leader of his unit, who reminds him that dueling is illegal under military law and punishable by death. But it is the jefe’s appeal to Republican Virtue that ends up convincing Valle to abandon his contest for Clemencia and to reinvigorate his already fervent desire to live and die for the cause of the liberation of the patria.\textsuperscript{582} In another twist, it also turns out that the jefe’s efforts at dissuading Valle were to be superfluous, for his erstwhile challenger seems to have mysteriously disappeared.

Although Valle and Flores will not reencounter each other until the final scenes of the novel, the seeds of discord have already been planted. They soon bear fruit with Clemencia’s second denial of Valle. After being wrongly accused of passing messages and troop locations to the enemy, Valle rightly determines that Flores was actually responsible for the treasonous correspondence. All the evidence shows Flores to be guilty, and he is eventually captured and sentenced to death. When Clemencia catches word of the sentence, she is desperate to remedy the situation, and her memory of the altercation

\textsuperscript{581} Op. cit. 81-82.
\textsuperscript{582} Op. cit. 81.
between Flores and Valle on Christmas Eve convinces her that Valle must have framed her beloved as vengeance for his having been spurned:

Entonces Clemencia comprendió todo. Su amor are la causa de la desgracia de Flores. Éste y Fernando eran rivales; el primero había sido preferido, y el segundo, apasionado como parecía estar, y furioso de celos, había maquinado para perderle. No había duda alguna. Fernando era el infame calumniador de Flores, y lo que ignoraba Clemencia era cómo el odioso comandante había urdido una acusación que pudo tener tan buen éxito. Con este pensamiento fijo, Fernando se le aparecería en todo lo espantoso de su carácter miserable y vil. (My emphasis)\(^{283}\)

Misrecognizing Valle’s character again and staining his immaculate virtue with Flores’s treachery, Clemencia denies the Liberal Republican Christ for a second time.

This second denial seals the fates of all three characters, and now all of the necessary elements are in place for the novel’s denouement. Clemencia’s unsuccessful pleas for Flores’s release are followed by a confrontation with Valle, where she swears her disgust for the righteous soldier and vows her undying love for Flores. Believing that Clemencia’s love is unjustly lost to him forever, Valle despairs and immediately resorts to extreme measures in order to restore the happiness of a woman whom he now recognizes as the first and only love of his life. Rather than attempting to convince Clemencia that her accusations against him are mistaken, Valle instead makes the ultimate sacrifice. The night before Flores’s execution, while the guards are distracted, Valle sneaks into Flores’s cell and unceremoniously offers to disguise himself as Flores and die in his stead. As cowardly as he is opportunistic, Flores jumps at Valle’s gift of salvation. Soon he is on his way back to Clemencia, leaving Valle to contemplate the inexorable arrival of his final test of courage and virtue, namely, martyrdom.

The remaining time before the execution is split between the extremes of tortured passivity and futile activity. Valle’s words, “¡No creía yo que había de morir así!” close chapter 32, and the Liberal Republican Christ is left to mourn his impending death in his cell in Colima, an appropriately Mexican Garden of Gethsamane. That passivity is countered by the frantic actions of Clemencia. After having the truth of Valle’s sacrifice revealed to her by an unashamedly unrepentant Enrique Flores, Clemencia’s misrecognition of Valle finally becomes apparent to Clemencia herself. This transformation of Clemencia’s sentimental disposition toward Valle gives rise to an equally significant sentimental eruption as the whole family bemoans their self-deception and indirect condemnation of Fernando Valle:

El señor R [padre de Clemencia]… un momento después supo todo lo acontecido, y fue indecible lo que pasó en su alma.

Aquella fue una escena atroz. En los corazones se sucedían diversos sentimientos, la tristeza, el arrepentimiento, el dolor, pero sobre todo el tedio, el tedio que produce el esfuerzo inútil y el sacrificio tributado a la maldad.

Clemencia realizes that blood will soon be on her hands; it is as if she herself had killed Valle: “A Fernando, sí, yo soy quien le mata.”

Leaving the reader in suspense as to whether or not Clemencia will manage to arrive in time to somehow save Valle’s life, Altamirano takes advantage of the narrative intensity generated to affirm Valle’s character as a heroic standard bearer one last time. Valle commiserates with Dr. L about his life of suffering, ultimately confiding in him that his only crime was that of being a patriotic Mexican of Liberal conviction despised by his wealthy family of prominent conservatives: “Soy de una familia rica de Veracruz, avecindada hoy en México; pero el hogar paterno me negó desde niño su protección y sus

586 Ibid.
goces, a causa de mis ideas y no de mi conducta.” But Valle does not reneg an inch on the Liberal principles that he cherishes, and he chooses to wear his faithfulness to Republican Virtue as a badge of honor:

He ahí mi historia, historia de dolor, de miseria y de resignación; jamás me he sublevado contra la dureza de mi suerte, jamás he manchado mi vida con una acción innoble. He sido liberal, he ahí mi crimen para mi familia, he ahí el título de gloria para mí.

These final confirmations of Valle’s heroic embodiment of Republican sentiment make way for more conclusive assertions of his nature as a Christ-figure. The expression of the affinity between the biblical Christ and his Liberal Republican incarnation is particularly explicit in the description of Clemencia’s rush to the scene of the execution:

Dirían que era una loca; y bien, sí tenía esa sublime locura del corazón cuyas extravagancias, la admiración popular convierte en leyendas, eterniza en cantos y adora en el santuario de su alma. ¿Acaso Clemencia era la primera mujer que se abrazaba al cadalso de un ser querido? Desde el Gólgota, desde antes, ha habido mujeres santas que han perfumado con sus lágrimas el pie del patíbulo en que han expirado los mártires.

Clemencia arrives too late to save Valle, but just in time to witness the apotheosis of her martyr:

Clemencia iba a suplicar a un granadero que la dejara pasar cuado quedó clavada en el suelo, y muda de horror y de dolor. Estaba frente a frente de Fernando, aunque a lo lejos. El joven estaba hermoso, heroicamente, hermoso. No habia querido vendarse, se había quitado su kepí que había puesto a un lado en el suelo y, pálido pero con la mirada serena y con una ligera y triste sonrisa, elevando los ojos al cielo, esperaba la muerte. Los cinco fusileros estaban a dos pasos de él y le apuntaban. Las palmeras a cuya sombra se hallaba, estaban quietas, como pendientes de aquella escena terrible.

Clemencia quiso gritar para atraer siquiera sobre ella la última mirada de Fernando; pero no pudo, la sangre le heló en sus venas, su garganta estaba seca, era el momento terrible... Se oyó una descarga, se levantó una humareda que fue a perderse en los anchos abanicos de las palmas, y todo concluyó.

Valle’s bravery in the face of death impacts the entire crowd, and even the members of the firing squad weep and praise his courage. Finally, society has come to recognize its

587 Op. cit. 120.
591 Ibid.
hero’s true nature, but it has done so too late for there to be a happy ending. “Sacrificio inútil,” the title of the chapter that narrates Valle’s execution, is echoed by the first lines of the epilogue that follows it. Altamirano then delivers a final salvo of historical information that connects the meaning of Valle’s sacrifice with the political defeats suffered by the Republican army in the early months of 1864: “Algunos meses después estábamos derrotados y perdidos en aquel rumbo. Todo el mundo había defeccionado o huía. Los franceses eran dueños de Jalisco y Colima.”

Clemencia’s final scenes challenge any facile interpretation of its ultimate message. The death of its hero and the survival of its villain invert the reader’s expectations in a way that would seem to contravene the author’s espousal of the glory of Republican Virtue throughout the novel. Clemencia’s characters all bear the mark of Altamirano’s sentimental didacticism, so how should the novel’s final reversal be interpreted? The paradox that must be addressed becomes clear when we note, as Cortazar does, that the novel ends problematically with Clemencia’s withdrawal from the world and consignment to a convent:

Clemencia […] al tomar los hábitos como castigo a su pecado, se suicida en vida: gran contradicción ideológica del autor. Así como Pizarro Suárez y otros románticos sociales de la época, Altamirano abogaba por que la mujer tomara parte activa en la sociedad y que no terminara en el claustro religioso como única alternativa, ya fuera a su decepción amorosa o a su salvación de la pobreza. ¿Implicaba algún propósito dicha aberración?

In response to that quandry, Cortazar reads Clemencia’s “suicidio en vida” as a metaphor for the obsolescence of the aristocratic and criollo factions that had dominated national political life until the reemergence of the Liberal power base during the República

Restaurada. Clemencia’s symbolic suicide makes room for a new group to become the torchbearers of Modernity and follow the path of Republican Virtue signaled by mestizo soldier Fernando Valle:

Clemencia dice pretender “darle una lección de franqueza” a Fernando, pero al final es éste quien termina dándole a ella una de moral, de verdad—. Así, sólo por medio de la reflexión (de Clemencia) los referentes “patria” e “integración” lograrían trascender para inscribirse en otra circunstancia donde ya se han superado algunas fallas de la entonces comunidad en proceso formativo (léase México). En este procedimiento reflexivo, a diferencia de Isabel o Enrique, Clemencia es la única que puede redimirse por el hecho de rectificar sus ideas y ponerlas más acordes con su entorno. Esta nueva actitud, aunada a lo simbólico de su característica racial mestiza, debe representar la toma de conciencia hacia la identidad cultural de la nación.594

Cortazar’s interpretation of Clemencia’s living death is persuasive, but it doesn’t tell the whole story. More than an ill-fated hero, Valle is instead a Liberal Republican Christ-figure. Clemencia is Altamirano’s first salvo in the fight for the soul of the nation. Strapped for ammunition, Altamirano fights fire with fire by reappropriating a stockade of religious sentiments that had once been the exclusive province of the Church. The strongest weapon in that arsenal is the image of the sacrificing redeemer, one who snatched victory from the jaws of defeat without the rivers of blood that still stained the Mexican countryside. Valle is the product of Altamirano’s experimentation with combining political, national, and religious sentiment. He is the first appearance on Mexican soil of the Liberal Republican Christ.

Firstly, it should be noted that Clemencia’s self-cloistering is not the only paradoxical moment to be accounted for at the end of the novel. After all, Valle’s substitution also permitted the flight of a traitor to the Republican cause who remains free and prosperous at the end of the novel. The following passage presents Valle’s own thoughts on the contradictions between his duty and his actions:

Mi padre sabrá que he sido un soldado oscuro en el ejército republicano, pero jamás un cirriminal. Conservo su nombre puro, y aun el motivo que me lleva al cadalso es un motivo de que se enorgullecería cualquiera. ¡He faltado a las leyes militares, pero no a las de la humanidad! Quizá hago un mal a la patria, pero para mí ahorro lágrimas y evito la desventura a un corazón que amo con delirio.\textsuperscript{595}

It is strange that Altamirano should jeopardize the integrity of his hero’s Republican Virtue so late in the game, but careful attention to the text makes it hard not to read ambiguity in Valle’s final expression of self-justification. After all, it is one thing to embrace the logic of Antigone and declare the supremacy of humane principle over unduly harsh legalism, but to willingly risk wounding the nation for the selfish pursuit of a woman whose love— as far as he knows—remains impossible \textit{even after} one’s own sacrifice seems difficult to legitimate in terms of Republican Virtue. It is here that seeing Valle as the first of a series of Christ figures in Altamirano’s novels provides a way forward.

There is still one observation that should be added to the biblical allusions already discussed in arguing for the sentimental transformation of Clemencia and the apophantic transfiguration of the Mexican hero Fernando Valle into a Liberal Republican Christ-figure. In accordance with most orthodox Christian dogma, the sacrifice of Christ is understood as a payment for original sin, an undeserved gift from God to humanity that ransoms the souls of mortals from the suffering of hell. Viewed under the same lens, Valle’s sacrifice can be cast in a new—albeit still ambiguous—light. A scene from earlier in the novel provides the key to this interpretation.

While Clemencia still believed in Flores’s innocence, her father mortgaged half of his wealth in order to free him. With the failure of that attempt, and the death of Valle precluding any further need for Clemencia’s family’s wealth, the money is returned to the

family and an extraordinary windfall becomes a reminder of the worthlessness of the material world in the face of the lost promise of spiritual greatness and the transcendence of virtue:

Although this passage fails to completely disambiguate the meaning of Fernando Valle in the symbolic economy of Clemencia, it tips the scales toward viewing him as a Liberal Republican Christ-figure. The sacrifice of Valle redeems the wealth of the Liberal aristocracy, and this in spite of their failure to recognize his heroic value. Considered in accordance with the Liberal ideological paradigm of Republican Virtue forwarded by Altamirano’s project, Fernando Valle’s actions resonate with innumerable sacrifices of liberal patriots from across Mexico who had striven against the seats of ensconced power and privilege from 1810-1857. They too had received little to no recognition in their own time. During Altamirano’s lifetime many were already in danger of being forgotten entirely. Indeed, the restoration and preservation of their memory is one of the motives behind Altamirano’s purposive presentation of the history of the nation and the struggle for popular sovereignty. As long as this metaphor holds, any critique that Altamirano might issue against Valle runs the risk of tarnishing the greater national sacrifice that it reflects on a microcosmic level. The solution is to go all the way in legitimating Valle’s sacrifice, but to do so in the terms that he presupposes for himself, namely, an appeal to humane sentiment.

Valle’s sacrifice represents the triumph of humane sentiment in the face of total adversity. He is universally despised, wrongly accused, and isolated from all comfort, yet he still finds sufficient strength in love to sacrifice himself for the perceived good of his beloved. The selfless character of that sacrifice emblazons Valle with the ineffaceable sign of Republican Virtue and makes him an object lesson in the ideal of Liberal brotherly love. As I have argued, Valle is configured as a sacrificial redeemer of the Liberal national cause in Clemencia, and that claim should now be made more specific. Valle is Christ, but he is Christ appearing to the unbelievers, a Christ who is ignored by the many, embraced by the few, and whose message only becomes clear once he has disappeared from the scene. But Valle is only the first of three visions of Christ in the series Clemencia-La navidad en las montañas-El Zarco. While Clemencia leaves off with a nun’s resigned devotion to her recently-departed savior, the reign of Christ would be restored anew two years later in La navidad en las montañas, wherein Altamirano presents an oniric landscape of renewed religious sentiment and civic reconciliation.
4.2 Christ has Risen: Pax Republicana

Whereas Fernando Valle’s death heralded a possible victory of Liberal principles beyond the immediacy of Mexican military defeats at the hands of the French, in La navidad en las montañas, the kingdom has already arrived in power, and in a uniquely Liberal Republican mode. Carlos González Peña calls La navidad a “cuasi novela, o más bien delicioso cuento largo,” and his description of the work resonates with the predominant interpretation of Altamirano’s second didactic novel:

Su hechizo como narrador novedesco acaso tenga, por virtud de íntima, inefable ternura, aun mayor alcance en el cuadrito de La navidad en las montañas, aquel idilio rústico, de discreta sensibilidad romántica, que el autor sitúa en un pueblecillo de la región suriana durante la guerra civil, a modo de claro, dulce remanso, en medio de los horrores y arrebatados odios que la contienda suscitaba. José Luis Martínez paints a similar picture, noting that “combina en ella, en armonioso contrapunto, las armas y la religión con un delicado episodio sentimental, cuyo marco es el fértil y colorido paisaje de nuestras montañas tropicales.”

While I generally agree with Luis Martínez’s estimation of the work as an “episodio sentimental,” it should nevertheless be insisted that the reconciliation proposed in La navidad aims to unite religious sentiment with Liberal Republican ideology, and not militarism, as the critic’s description seems to suggest. In fact, the ideal pueblo encountered by the protagonist of the novel is remarkable precisely because of the absence of the question of weapons and violence. To see why that absence is so strange, we must consider

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598 Ibid.
the political reality upon which Altamirano projects his harmonious ideal. Cortazar observes that the absence of violence or even discontent in *La navidad* demonstrates that the pueblo is remote both geographically and in relation to the political turbulence of the period in which the events of the novel are putatively situated. At the end of *La navidad*, the authorial voice emphasizes that his traveler’s tale is based in facts recounted to him on Christmas Eve, 1871, which is to say, four years into the Juárez administration’s drive to extend its hegemony and unify the national community under the banner of Liberal Reform. As Cortazar signals, the reality presented in *La navidad* contains little trace of the tumultuous political situation in rural pueblos like that at the center of the novel during the period in which it takes place:

> En aquellos años de guerra civil, el control de la Iglesia se hacía sentir con mayor peso en las áreas rurales. Ahí la Reforma no era bien vista porque, además de obstaculizar los intereses socioeconómicos de la Iglesia, también amenazaba con privar a los indígenas de su tradicional sistema de tierras comunales. Para sacar algún provecho de esta realidad, a veces algunos clérigos recurrian al fanatismo religioso, haciendo uso del poder con que tradicionalmente habían influido en este grupo de gente. 600

The discrepancy between the political reality of the moment and the idyllic setting of the novel has important ramifications for its interpretation. More than merely idyllic, Altamirano’s Liberal Christian pueblo is palpably utopian.

The utopian character and sentimental atmosphere of *La navidad* permeates the work from the earliest chapters on. Chapter I is a brief, elegiac evocation of the setting sun, a clear allusion to the foreclosure of the situation from which our protagonist, a Liberal soldier who has been forced into exile by the political intrigue of the capital, is departing. 601

The new horizon that greets him is deeply charged with nostalgia, and Altamirano clearly

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connects the sentimental didacticism of *Clemencia* to the continuation of that project in *La navidad* by again choosing the night before Christmas as a primary site of the novel’s action. Our traveler finds that evening to be particularly nostalgic, and, through a technique that echoes Sterne’s own utilization of the “vehicular body” in *A Sentimental Journey*, he is instantly transported back to various moments of his childhood. That process of reminiscence reveals cherished memories of both urban and rural celebrations of Christmas and creates a sense of unity that paves the way for the novel’s further attempts at reconciling the disparate sectors of the national community.

While the dreamlike vistas of the novel’s first chapters create the ambience necessary for sentimental experimentation, it is not until the traveler meets a village priest that the second phase of Altamirano’s sentimental didacticism is set into motion. The narrative further capitalizes on the significance of Christmas Eve by placing the traveler and his companion in need of shelter and accommodations. This allows Altamirano to begin his rearticulation of religious sentiment by appealing to the reader’s familiarity with the Gospel of Luke’s account of Mary and Joseph’s sojourn from Nazareth to Bethlehem prior to the birth of Jesus and its parallels with the traveling soldier’s similar plight on a Christmas Eve 19 centuries and a half a world away from its namesake:

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (My emphasis)

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604 Luke 2:4-7 (New Revised Standard Version)
There is also a hint of the Gospel of Luke’s magi, since both they and the soldier are bearers of a unique knowledge that will enable them to divine the importance of what they will encounter at the end of their search. In a further similarity to the magi’s interaction with the nefarious King Herod, as a torchbearer of Liberal Republican civilization, the traveling soldier is similarly charged with protecting the new hope for the Mexican nation, namely, the Juárez government’s foundling mestizo state and the Liberal Republican culture and institutions held to be necessary to establish order and progress in national life.

But even without taking those biblical parallels into account, our unnamed soldier would still have plenty of justification for not holding out hope of finding comfort in the mountainous winter night. His admitted role in the support of the Reform movement and his vehement opposition to ecclesiastical abuses of power provide little reason for him to anticipate being welcomed with open arms in the intensely religious and Conservative climes of rural southern Mexico. When help does seem to appear, the traveler is understandably dubious, especially given that the helping hand is extended by a priest, and a Spanish priest at that:

—Y ¿qué tal? ¿Parece buen sujeto el señor cura?
—Es español mi capitán, y creo que es todo un hombre.
—¡Español! —me dije yo— eso sí me alarma; yo no he conocido clérigos españoles más que jesuitas o carlistas, y todos malos.\(^{606}\)

But the unnamed traveler is in for an even greater shock when he encounters the warmest of welcomes, and more importantly, is allowed to carefully scrutinize Altamirano’s second Liberal Republican Christ-figure, Discalced Carmelite Friar José de San Gregorio.

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\(^{605}\) Mathew 2:1-16 (New Revised Standard Version)

In a strategy mirroring that employed by the author in *Clemencia, La navidad* begins from a position of uncertainty, and it is incumbent upon the figure of the priest to transform the traveler’s sentiments through a show of progressive moral actions. The following passage provides an exemplary moment of sentimental transformation, and as was the case with the emotional peripeties of *Clemencia*, that transformation is confirmed by an overflow of grateful sentiments worthy of the inspirational reforms carried out by Friar José:

—¿De manera, señor cura —le pregunté— que usted no recibe dinero por bautizos, casamientos, misas y entierros?

—No, señor, no recibo nada, como va usted a saberlo de boca de los mismas habitantes. Yo tengo mis ideas, que ciertamente no son las generales, pero que practico religiosamente. Yo tengo para mí que hay algo de simonía en estas exigencias pecuniarias, y si conozco que un sacerdote que se consagra a la cura de almas debe vivir de algo, considero también que puede vivir sin exigir nada, y contentándose con esperar que la generosidad de los fieles venga en auxilio de sus necesidades. Así creo que lo quiso Jesucristo, y así vivió él. ¿Por qué, pues, sus apóstolos no habían de contentarse con imitar a su Maestro, dándose por muy felices de poder decir que son tan ricos como él?

Y no pude contenerme al oír esto; y deteniendo mi caballo, quitándome el sombrero, y no ocultando mi emoción, que llegaba hasta las lágrimas, alargué una mano al buen cura y le dije:

—Venga esa mano, señor; usted no es un fraile, sino un apóstol de Jesús... Me ha ensanchado usted el corazón; me ha hecho usted llorar. No creía yo que existiera un solo sacerdote así en México; jamás he oído hablar a un hombre de sotana o de hábito, como usted acaba de hacerlo.607

Here again, Altamirano portrays a moment of authentic sentimental exaltation that is more complicated than it appears on its face. While the traveler seems to recognize Friar José’s reforms as a return to the true spirit of Christianity, it is also clear that the heterodox approach affirmed by Friar José makes all conceivable concessions to the traveler’s Liberal and anti-ecclesiastical ideological perspective. This seems all too convenient for any meaningful sort of reconciliation between Church and State. After all, it is difficult to see how the unconditional surrender of one of the belligerents could possibly be equated with the sort of well-reasoned compromise that criticism has frequently cited as the thematic

hallmark of *La navidad en las montañas*. And yet, many formidable critics have failed to pierce that superficial image, and have accordingly adopted an overly facile reading of the text that ignores its subtle assertion of the dominance of the new Republican Virtue over traditional Christian morality in the newly-inaugurated epoch of Liberal political hegemony. One example among many of this sort of approach can be seen in Eladio Cortés’s reading of *La navidad*:

*La navidad en las montañas* [...] is a short novel about a traveling army officer who spends Christmas Eve in a small village in rural Mexico. It is a heartwarming portrait of life in the provinces, and it reinforces the notion that simple peasant values are the ones that give Mexico her true strength.608

The final line of the above-cited passage is particularly symptomatic of the critical tendency to neglect the complexity of the didactic message conveyed by *La navidad en las montañas*. Because the work is dubbed “conciliatory” without further ado, the particulars of that putative reconciliation are often neglected. And most interesting of all is Cortés’s omission of any reference to the otherwise widely-recognized *religious* nature of the reconciliation envisioned by the maestro. The very possibility of excluding the fundamental role of religion in the *La navidad*’s proposed model of reconciliation should give us pause and prompt us to return to the functional transformation of religious discourse in *La navidad en las montañas*. The meaning of that functional transformation becomes intelligible if we place the text into conversation with another of Altamirano’s brief works, “El maestro de escuela.”

Originally published in the liberal newspaper *El Federalista* (1871-1877), and reprinted alongside Altamirano’s other “Sketches” (*Bosquejos*) of national life in Maria

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Teresa Bermúdez de Brauns’s anthology of educational texts from Ramírez and Altamirano, *Bosquejos de educación para el pueblo* (1985), “El maestro de escuela” bears witness to the conflict between the Church’s long-entrenched systems of parishioner exploitation and the State’s plans for liberal educational reform in uncompromisingly vitriolic terms. The fact that the sketch claims to address the political situation in 1863, the year in which Mexico City fell to French troops and Maximilian’s Second Mexican Empire was established, goes a long way toward explaining the text’s combative edge. Furthermore, the text’s provocations serve for more than just rhetorical effect; Altamirano’s condemnations also operate as a systematic critique of the Church’s most common and socially-detrimental abuses. The beginning of the text is markedly similar to *La navidad*: a traveling deputy from the Liberal government is passing through a small village on his way to San Luis Potosí when he is obliged by the village elite to pay a visit to the village priest. The author’s critique exhausts what little subtlety it has to offer in Chapter I, “(Lo que son los curas de pueblo),” and the reader would likely pass right over the narrator’s early observation that the village priest’s library prominently features “bonitas novelas de Pablo de Kock” unless the reader is already familiar with Altamirano’s personal dislike for the author. In his *Revistas Literarias*, Altamirano had rejected Paul de Kock’s novels outright, citing their pernicious influence:

609 In his *Revistas Literarias*, Altamirano had rejected Paul de Kock’s novels outright, citing their pernicious influence:

While the mention of Paul de Kock merely gestures in the direction of a moralizing critique of the village priest, that observation is quickly accompanied by an even more sheerly-veiled accusation regarding the village priest’s probable sexual impropriety:

Pasamos al comedor y tomamos asiento. El cura se acomodó junto a Lucesita, que se parecía muchísimo al digno sacerdote, cosa nada extraña, puesto que eran parientes. En cuanto al niño más chico, Lucesita dijo que estaba ya durmiedo.611

The text then advances its critique further by allowing the priest to speak, and the sentiments that his words extol provide more than enough rope for him to be summarily hanged in the court of Liberal Republican opinion:

—Sí; pero me permitirá usted decirle que es un patriotismo indiscreto. De todo lo que usted me ha dicho, y de todo lo que sé, deduzco lo siguiente. Ustedes están perdidos, la República se acabó ya; Dn. Benito Juárez va retirándose a la Frontera, y se dará de santos con no caer en manos de los franceses; las tropas de ustedes están desmoralizadas, mientras que las francesas y las auxiliares de aquí están orgullosas con sus triunfos. Usted ve qué recibimiento les hacen los pueblos; los señores regentes se manejan con prudencia; y el monarca elegido, ese príncipe heredero de cien reyes, y que, según sabemos, es amable y de grandes talentos, es esperado con ansia. Yo creo que la monarquía está fundada en México; y vea usted: yo tengo la convicción de que ella hará la felicidad de nuestra patria, que se acabarán las revoluciones, y sobre todo, ¡imperará otra vez con toda su grandeza nuestra santa religión! […] Esa guerra civil que hoy los devora, va a acabar con su mentida riqueza que no es más que mentira y farsa, como todo aquello que no se funda en la verdadera religión.612

The priest’s words encapsulate a sentiment that could not be more antithetical to the spirit of Republican virtue elaborated in *Clemencia* and enshrined within the utopia of *La navidad en las montañas*. Instead of simply being another parasitic provincial priest, *el cura* in *El maestro de escuela* is almost monstrous when examined under the rubric of Republican Virtue and national sentiment. That monstrosity is emphasized by the absolute contrast that emerges out of the priest’s juxtaposition next to the greatest victim of his constant abuse and humiliation, the story’s eponymous village schoolmaster. The schoolmaster first enters the scene when the priest invites him to join in welcoming the

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freshly-arrived traveling diplomat. The priest beckons to the schoolmaster and offers him a drink, but that unthinking liberality is denied by the schoolmaster, who, as his emaciated countenance attests, is on the verge of starvation.\textsuperscript{613} The schoolmaster’s abject situation is no fault of his own: he is only destitute because he has failed to receive his salary for several months, and as we soon learn, this is because the priest had demanded that the town’s mayor earmark and redirect the schoolmaster’s wages to fund a party for undisclosed purposes.\textsuperscript{614}

The schoolmaster’s poverty is mirrored by the dilapidated state of the village school, which lacks even the most basic of necessities and instructional tools.\textsuperscript{615} All of this misery transpires within view of the village church, and the opulence of that latter structure dwarfs the tiny schoolhouse. Extending that image to the metaphorical level, the dominance over the pueblo exercised by the priest and his church also symbolizes the morass of tacit resistance and open opposition to Reform that obstructs the expansion of the hegemony of the Liberal Republican ideology. Moreover, the impoverishment of learning is apparently almost uniformly the case in the nation: as the schoolmaster informs the traveling diplomat, “no lo dude, señor, así están todos los pueblos.”\textsuperscript{616} Indeed, from the perspective of the Liberal ideology promoted by Altamirano, it would seem that the only thing that the schoolmaster has going for him is his steely adherence to the principles of Liberalism, his now muted—patriotic zeal, and his own internalization of values constitutive of Republican Virtue.\textsuperscript{617} And as “El maestro de escuela” frames the situation,

\textsuperscript{613} Op. cit. 121.
\textsuperscript{614} Op. cit. 122.
\textsuperscript{615} Op. cit. 123.
\textsuperscript{616} Op. cit. 129.
even Republican Virtue will mean precious little until the Church is extirpated from its
dominion over the hearts and minds of the nation’s citizens. The modicum of hope
mustered by Altamirano at the end of the text is hardly convincing in the face of this
monumental challenge to Liberal hegemony:

Es necesario independer al preceptor de toda tutela, particularmente en el campo, y sólo
ejercer sobre él la inspección conveniente, como es natural, cuyo encargo debe cometerse al
municipio o al visitador de escuela.

De esta manera se logrará darle dignidad, y hacerlo más respetable todavía en los pueblos,
porque en esta respetabilidad le viene más que de sus conocimientos, de su independencia. Así dice
con razón Edgar Quinet: “¡Cuántas veces me ha sucedido, admirar el sentimiento de respeto que en
la más humilde cabaña se tiene al maestro de escuela, porque no es ni el servidor del sacerdote, ni
su rival; es su colega, su socio!”

The difference in intensity and provocation evident between the treatment of the Church
and religion in *La navidad en las montañas* and the presentation of the same subject in “El
maestro de escuela” illuminates an antagonism latent in *La navidad*’s utopian dreams of
reconciliation. “El maestro de escuela” shows that Altamirano’s position advocates the
toppling of the power and authority of the Church by the principles of Republican virtue at
every turn, and this continues to be his stance even in *La navidad*, where religious
sentiment and the priest who disseminates it are ostesibly on the same footing with the
schoolmaster whose indoctrination of students provides them with a feeling of national
sentiment, an understanding of *historia patria*, and the practical skills necessary for each
of them to become productive, educated, and engaged contributors to a communal effort
of reimagining the Mexican nation through the lens of Liberal Republicanism.

*La navidad* attempts to disarm these tensions between ecclesiastical authority and
Liberal Reform by deploying a syncretic strategy, but not the type that might usually be
expected. Instead of developing a composite ideology elaborated from a careful

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combination of the most useful elements of religious sentiment and Republican Virtue, in this novel, Altamirano wagers that the quickest path toward reconciliation consists of combining the two parties to be reconciled into a single character from the beginning. After all, who better to marry religious sentiment with educational reform than a character who is at once a priest, an educator, and a vocal adherent to the most immaculate Liberal Republican principles? Enter Friar José, the perfect person for the job, a walking, talking act of ecumenical reconciliation. Or at least that appears to be the case until due attention is given to the way Friar José is developed throughout the novel.

Neither Friar José nor the traveling soldier are static characters in *La navidad*, but the processes of change that they undergo are distinct. Although we progressively learn more and more about each figure, the way that that knowledge impacts those figures is dependent upon the role that they play in the didactic process that lends structure to the novel. Said otherwise, the sentimental change undergone by the traveling soldier is explicitly presented as a product of his reaction to the miraculous and totally-unexpected moral and social virtues of Friar José. At this level, however, it seems that Friar José is completely immune to the sort of sentimental transformation that his example prompts in the traveler. It is only logical that this should be the case, because Friar José, being a perfect exemplar of both liberal and religious virtue, has no lessons left to learn from his Liberal interlocutor, or from anyone else for that matter. The proof of that fact can be seen in the friar’s own startled reaction to the traveler’s effusive praise of his virtues. In this moment of explosive sentimental transformation, the friar manages to mutter little more than the string of signifiers that all converge within his own reconciliatory nature:

¿Qué valen los profanos regocijos de la gran ciudad, que no dejan en el espíritu sino una pasajera impresión de placer? ¿Qué vale todo eso en comparación de la inmensa dicha de encontrar la virtud cristiana,
la buena, la santa, la modesta, la práctica, la fecunda en beneficios? Señor cura, permítame usted aparearme y darle un abrazo y protestarle que amo al cristianismo cuando lo encuentro tan puro como en los primeros y hermosos días del Evangelio. […]

—Pero, señor capitán… yo no merezco… yo creo que cumplo… Esto es muy natural; yo no soy nada… ¡qué he de ser yo! ¡Jesucristo! ¡Dios! ¡El pueblo!

“Jesus Christ,” “God,” “the pueblo”: Altamirano’s didactic project forges those three signifiers into a Trinity that sustains a “civic religion.” Cortazar defines that storied term and describes its nuanced reappropriation of the word “religion” in the following passage:

De esta manera el concepto “religión” connotaba su original concepto de “unión”; era en este caso el dispositivo que conducía a hacer del lenguaje la metáfora “comunidad.” Era una especie de republicanismo atildado con referencias cristianas para llevar a cabo su función en términos de una religión cívica.

While acknowledging Altamirano’s attempt to articulate an innovative “democratico-spiritual” mode of popular unity, Cortazar’s reading of La navidad en las montañas also recognizes a fact that is crucial for my argument: Altamirano’s formulation of “civic religion” represents an unwieldy and volatile confluence of terms. From the “civic” it borrows exclusively Liberal Republican notions of economy, jurisprudence, social interrelation, and humanist morality and culture, while at the same time taking from traditional Mexican Catholicism only the name, “religion.”

Cortazar comments on the process by which Liberal Republican ideology takes on the form of a set of religious sentiments that have no clear and necessary relationship to the ideals of progress and Modernity that they have been chosen to articulate. I agree with his assessment, but here again I would like to push the consequences of that insight further. I have argued that Friar José is the second Christ-figure deployed in Altamirano’s series of three didactic novels. Nevertheless, this second manifestation of Christ is not identical to

the manifestation of that figure in *Clemencia*. As I have shown in the preceding section of this epilogue, Altamirano’s first Christ-figure, Fernando Valle, manifests as a vision of Christ to the unbelievers, a notion which fits well with the novel’s didactic concern for the refinement of sentimental discernment. The great question of that novel, “Who will recognize the savior that has been sent?,” is only answered at the point when Valle forever departs from the presence of Clemencia, whose belated recognition of her hero is ultimately held up as the very cause of his death. The great question of *La navidad*, however, would be better posed in the following way: “What would it be like to live in a community that embraced solidarity, cooperation, and education as fervently as if they were the ‘true principles of Christianity’? This latter question could also be parsed in a second way. Given that “civic religion” is presented in *La navidad* as wholly compatible with both religious and Liberal sentiments, the question of the nature of life in that ideal community is also equivalent to another: “What would life be like after the full realization of the dreams of the Liberal thinkers who had finally regained control of the reins of power?”

The common denominator of both of the questions that I have just considered remains the figure of Friar José, and that makes it possible to finally pin down the significance of the friar in both the signifying economy of *La navidad en las montañas* and that of the greater didactic project traced throughout all three of the novels that I examine here. While Valle’s execution removes him from the plot and lends a decisive note of finality to the last pages of *Clemencia*, Friar José’s presence is an explicit requirement for the functioning of Altamirano’s ideal pueblo. In this he represents the figure of Christ come in Glory described in the Apocalypse of John. As such, his very presence inaugurates and guarantees the rule of justice in the land. His law is his example, and all virtue is
contained within his figure. But this harmony is interrupted by the persistence of a niggling worry prompted by the memory of those who proved to be sentimentally blind in *Clemencia* owing to their position outside of the ideological paradigm of Republican Virtue. To put the matter pointedly: if assimilation into a totalizing ideological structure like that formed in Mexico under the moniker “Republican Virtue” is a necessary precondition for being able to recognize the justice dispensed under the new Liberal hegemony, doesn’t that same fact condemn all of those who remain outside of the scope of interpellation into that hegemonic structure to ignorance and exclusion from those same processes? What guarantees of justice, social equity, and cultural renaissance can a figure like Friar José, that “sublime imagen de Jesucristo sobre la tierra,” provide for those who are not adherents to the Liberal elite’s vision of a Modern future for the Mexican nation? Having missed their chance to recognize the likeness of their Liberal Republican Christ in *Clemencia*, what can be done for the infidels that remain after the reign of “civic religion” manages to consolidate the nation’s sentimental, “felt” community?

Friar José *qua* Christ come in Glory has surpassed any need for further perfection, and neither the symbolic economy of the novel nor the political ideology of Liberal Republicanism furnish any apparent means of reproaching him. In the next section I will explore the problems that stem from the dark side of the regime instated *La navidad* through the rearticulation of Christian religious sentiment. The justice of Heaven begs the question of sovereign violence because its religious coordinates demand that both the faithful and the unfaithful must be judged before admission can be granted. As the

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following analysis of Altamirano’s third Liberal Republican Christ-figure will now show, that paradoxical relationship between justice and judgment produces an antagonism that emerges again in *El Zarco*. The eruption of that antagonism in *El Zarco* threatens to destabilize the entirety of the didactic project elaborated by Altamirano in *Clemencia* and *La navidad en las montañas*. 
4.3 *Christ Will Come Again: Judgment Day*

Altamirano’s *Clemencia*, *La Navidad en las montañas*, and *El Zarco* share a common didactic project aimed at the inculcation and propagation of a politico-social ideology, Liberal Republicanism, and the sentimental framework that supports it, Republican Virtue. *Clemencia* presents a model of Liberal Republican heroism and patriotic selflessness in the Christ-like figure of Fernando Valle. Valle’s paradoxical appeal to humane sentiment and break with the *letter* of the law only serve to reinforce the *spirit* of the law by inspiring a sense of awe before the sacrificial display of, and ultimate disregard for, the novel’s titular virtue: Clemency. The clemency that Valle grants to Flores presages Liberal attempts at reconciling the nation in the period surrounding the triumph of Benito Juárez’s government, but Valle’s execution for Flores’s treason also forewarns of the consequences of belatedly recognizing the truth of the liberal cause. *Clemencia*’s namesake is presented as the epitome of sensibility, “una mujer de corazón.” This makes her failure to properly discern the difference between Flores’s sentiments (ambition and lust) and character (craven libertinism) and Valle’s sentiments (patriotism and *buen amor*) and character (Republican Virtue) an object lesson: desire misfires and misrecognizes its object unless it is directed by virtuous sentiments and an upright character.

Of course, “virtue” and “uprightness” can and have been understood in various and often contradictory ways, but for the purposes of Altamirano’s didactic literary project, their meaning is concretely defined: to be virtuous is to exercise and pursue Liberal
Republican virtues like industriousness and patriotism and forward the humane progress of the national community. To be upright is to believe in and act in accordance with principles including laical and civic education, economic liberty, freedom of thought and freedom of the press. *La navidad en las montañas* presents a liberal utopia and expounds a thesis of “civic religion.” Incorporating the conceptual vocabulary of traditional religious sentiment allows Republican Liberal ideology to forward its hegemony by camouflaging the sentimental structure that supports it (Republican Virtue) in the language of religiosity. In this it looks to fulfill the possibilities of religion as a unifying force *sin más.* However, as my analysis of *El Zarco* will demonstrate, even when Altamirano completely renovates the contents of Christian religious sentiment, the persistence of the form itself hides its own antagonism. As we will see, the pleasures of Liberal Republican Heaven fail to repress the agony of the Judgment Day that makes them possible.

*La navidad en las montañas* evokes the promised utopian future in store for the Republic, and the initial presentation of Yautpec, a pueblo in the *tierra caliente* that serves as the center of action in *El Zarco*, forwards a similar model. Altamirano first tells us that “Yautpec es una población de la tierra caliente, cuyo caserío se esconde en un bosque de verdura.” That sentence subsequently blossoms into a presentation of national landscapes already seen in *Clemencia* and *La navidad*, but this time the author introduces a different function into those landscapes by connecting them directly to the productivity of his ideal pueblo:

> En 1854, perteneciendo todavía Yautpec al Estado de México, se hizo un recuento de estos árboles en esta población, y se encontró con que había más de quinientos mil. Hoy, después de veinte años, es natural que se hayan duplicado y triplicado. Los vecinos viven casi exclusivamente del producto

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de estos preciosos frutals, y antes de que existiera el ferrocarril de Veracruz, ellos surtían únicamente de naranjas y limones a la ciudad de México.623

The text utilizes this image of natural abundance to suggest that the natural landscape that surrounds the pueblo both sustains its needs and allows it to thrive. The first sentence of the previously-cited passage performs two functions at once: first, it signals the natural abundance of the land through its enumeration of fruit-bearing trees; second, it begins the process of locating Yautepec in time by making reference to a survey of those trees in 1854. That latter proposition is the key to the next sentence, whose assertion of the passage of twenty years now places the beginning of the narrative firmly in the year 1874. Signaling the thriving progression of Yautepec in the twenty years from 1854 to 1874 conveys an important proposition through logical implication, namely, that the pueblo has somehow managed to successfully navigate the tumultuous politics of Liberal Reform and the violent reactions aimed at strangling those measures in utero. The narrator is explicit with regard to this point in his description of the pueblo:

En lo politico y administrativo, Yautepec, desde que pertenecía al Estado de México, fue elevándose de un rango subaltern y dependiente de Cuernavaca, hasta ser cabecera de distrito, carácter que conserva todavía. No ha tomado parte en las guerras civiles y ha sido las más veces víctima de ellas, aunque ha sabido reponerse de sus desastres, merced a sus inagotables recursos y a su laboriosidad.624

Those two decades prior to the setting of the novel had seen the War of Reform (1857-1861), when the forces of Liberal Republicanism had contended with Conservatives and the Church for the ability to shape a Modern national future for Mexico; and the Second French Invasion (1861-1867), when the question of popular national sovereignty had been raised and bloodily decided again. The year 1854 is also significant, as it was in that year that the Plan of Ayutla brought an end to the dictatorship of Antonio López de Santa Anna.

623 Ibid.
and commenced the political push for Liberal Reform. The seven-year gap between 1867 and 1874 places the story’s narrative frame after the triumph of Liberal hegemony in 1867, and more significantly, after the death of President Benito Juárez, the “benemérito de la patria,” on July 18, 1872. Placed into the context of Altamirano’s overarching project of didactic novelistics, locating the narrative in this way means that we should no longer see the strife and turmoil of *Clemencia*, during which novel the nation was still battling French and Conservative Mexican forces. We could also reasonably expect for Yautepec to be a utopian site akin to the indigenous mountain village in *La navidad en las montañas*, granted that our introduction to Yautepec in *El Zarco* is set three years after 1871, the year in which the events in *La navidad* occur.

In many ways, those expectations would seem to be confirmed by the narrator’s idyllic description of the population, which offers up an image of the Liberal virtues of industry, economy, peace, and order:

La población es buena, tranquila, laboriosa, amante de la paz, franca, sencilla y hospitalaria. Rodeada de magníficas haciendas de caña de azúcar, mantiene un activo tráfico con ellas, así como con Cuernavaca y Morelos, es el centro de numerosos pueblicilos indígenas, situados en la falda meridional de la cordillera que divide la tierra caliente del valle de México, y con la metrópoli de la República a causa de los productos de sus inmensas huertas de que hemos hablado.625

The narrator’s presentation of Yautepec as a commercial hub is important in two ways. While it signals the incorporation of Yautepec into national life, the fact remains that the efforts of the people and the commercial opportunities that they create are still dependent upon the products of the land. And those products, in turn, are dependent upon the river that winds through Yautepec:

Un río apacible de linfas transparentes y serenas, que no es impetuoso más que en las crecientes del tiempo de lluvias, divide el pueblo y el bosque, atravesando la plaza, lamien
dulcemente aquellos cármenes y dejándose robar sus aguas por numerosos *apantles* que las

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dispersan en todas direcciones. Ese río es verdaderamente el dios fecundador de la comarca y el padre de los dulces frutos que nos refrescan, durante los calores del estío, y que alegran las fiestas populares en México en todo el año.  

As it is presented, the river has two major functions. It is a center of both life and commerce, and it forms part of the pueblo itself, reinvigorating its inhabitants and the creatures of the surrounding countryside as it traverses the plaza of Yautepec. At the same time, however, the river is a boundary that separates the pueblo from the surrounding forest. It acts as a barrier between the wildlands beyond the reach of the liberal project and Yautepec which, for all of the reasons presented in Chapter 1, should be a model of the progress promised by that project: “El río y los árboles frutales son su tesoro; así que los facciosos, los partidarios y los bandidos, han podido arrebatarle frecuentemente sus rentas, pero no han logrado mermar ni destruir su capital.”  

This image of harmony is deceptive, for if the conjunction of the mountains and the river ensure the order and progress of Yautepec, the history of that pueblo hides a legacy of violence and, as alluded to by the title of the following chapter, “El Terror.”

The introduction’s initial transportation of the reader to 1874 is a deceitful maneuver because, as the next chapter immediately admits, the narrative to be recounted actually takes place 13 years earlier, in the August of 1861. This movement back in time permanently changes the tone of the narrative by countering the Edenic vision of Yautepec in 1874 with the horrifyingly grim reality experienced by its inhabitants in 1861, an interstitial year marking both the triumph of the War of Reform and the sudden onset of its bloody and unforeseen sequel, the Second French Intervention, which was sparked by international political intrigue in December of that same year. The ideal future of Yautepec

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626 Ibid.
627 Ibid.
in 1874 is introduced to the reader as it appears on a sunny day so that its bounty and beauty might be properly appreciated. By contrast, the Yautepec of 1861 is first characterized as a place enshrouded in darkness, silence, and a brooding sense of fear:

Apenas acababa de ponerse el sol [...] y ya el pueblo de Yautepec parecía estar envuelto en las sombras de la noche. Tal era el silencio que reinaba en él. Los vecinos, que regularmente en estas bellas horas de la tarde, después de concluir sus tareas diarias acostumbraban siempre salir a respirar el ambiente fresco de las calles, o a tomar un baño en las pozas y remansos del río o a discurrir por la plaza o por las huertas, en busca de solaz, hoy no se atrevían a traspasar los dinteles de su casa, y por el contrario, antes de que sonara en el campanario de la parroquia el toque de oración, hacían sus provisiones de prisa y se encerraban en sus casas, como si hubiese epidemia, palpitando de terror a cada ruido que oían.628

As the menacing nocturnal environment of this passage suggests, Yautepec in 1861 and Yautepec in 1874 are as different as night and day. The didactic message of El Zarco is deployed as a means of reconciling and explaining the reason for that difference, and the text fingers the culprit immediately and unambiguously: the epidemic suffered by Yautepec is a social disease, a group of merciless bandits led by the novel’s eponymous villain, el Zarco. The text acknowledges that rural banditry was a widespread and problematic phenomenon in the period, but the narrative voice fulminates against the plateados in particular, anathematizing them in no uncertain terms:

Y es que esas horas, en aquel tiempo calamitoso, comenzaba para los pueblos en que no había una fuerte guarnición, el peligro de un asalto de bandidos con los horrores consiguientes de matanza, de raptos, de incendio y de exterminio. Los bandidos de la tierra caliente eran sobre todo crueles. Por horrenda e innecesaria que fuere una crueldad, la cometían por instinto, por brutalidad, por el solo deseo de aumentar el terror entre las gentes y divertirse con él.

El carácter de aquellos plateados (tal era el nombre que se daba a los bandidos de esa época) fue una cosa extraordinaria y excepcional, una explosión de vicio, de crueldad y de infamia que no se había visto jamás en México.629

The passage above sets the tone for how the bandits will be treated throughout the rest of the work. The bandit el Zarco functions as a totalizing signifier in the novel, a metaphorical catch-all for the evils that plague the nation and obstruct the Liberal

628 Op. cit. 4-5.
Republican vision of order and progress. By exhaustively demonizing el Zarco, Altamirano appeals to a greater didactic truth, and moves half-way toward the establishment of a good-evil dyad. As Cortazar also recognizes, this allows the text to forward its didactic aims by placing el Zarco qua evil incarnate in opposition to the humble ironworker Nicolás, Altamirano’s indigenous exemplar of cultural mestizaje and Liberal Republican Virtue:

Este tipo de bandido es un individuo que encarna el mal social. Representa el terror, el desorden, y todo lo opuesto a un hombre de progreso. Es la personificación del mismo odio que inspira odio. Por eso, en adelante, simplemente no puede haber término medio para con él: habrá que perseguirlo y eliminarlo. Resolución que esboza el narrador de El Zarco valiéndose de un tono discursivo pautado por una serie de binarismos que marca las diferencias entre individuos de buenas y malas intenciones, de héroes y antihéroes.

El Zarco evade las virtudes republicanas, mientras que Nicolás las profesa como el credo de su existencia. Aparentemente, con esta contraposición de personajes el autor de El Zarco nos anticipaba su mensaje como un fiel portador de la ideología cultural de la política liberal y la retórica oficial positivista (nacionalista), que consistía en destacar la imagen de un personaje indio favorecido por el proceso de trasculturación como ciudadano ejemplar de la comunidad, como mexicano. Cabe señalar, sin embargo, que éste es un tema secundario derivado del tema central sobre la figura del Zarco. A su héroe sólo lo concibe en la medida en que le va atribuyendo a su antihéroe toda una serie de actitudes contrarias.630

The weakness in the construction of Nicolás that Cortazar mentions is an indirect consequence of the overdetermination of el Zarco, who occupies the position of evil alongside the good Nicolás in the dyad that informs the basic didactic structure of the novel. The distillation of el Zarco from the complexity of historical figures like Salomé Plasencia, Severo el Zarco,631 and robinhoodian charros like Chucho el Roto632 produces a figure of evil incarnate and provokes an imbalance in the otherwise finely-tuned didactic machinery seen in Altamirano’s novels thus far.

We have already seen several examples of Altamirano’s usage of didactic pairings to emphasize and valorize the contrasting features of his characters. The most salient of

them is Clemencia’s pairing of Valle and Flores, a prototypical instantiation of the Good-Evil Dyad later occupied by Nicolás and el Zarco. In El Zarco, however, this form of interpretation seems to run into a dead end.

Like Clemencia, El Zarco features a test of sentimental discernment. However, whereas Isabel fades into the background, and Clemencia becomes the primary focus of the test of sentimental discernment in that novel, in El Zarco, the question of sentimental discernment plays out in a way that takes full advantage of the presence of its two primary female characters, Manuela and Pilar. Whereas Isabel and Clemencia represent two contending models of beauty and feminine virtue, the opposition between Manuela and Pilar is configured in a much starker fashion.

In a parallel to Clemencia, Manuela and Pilar are introduced in a chapter entitled “Las dos amigas,” but this time the focus on their “diverse physiognomies” takes an immediate moralizing turn. Pilar, whose name already suggests her future role as an essential partner in supporting the nation, is first pictured as a “hija humilde del pueblo,” a term which hints at the virtues that she will progressively manifest throughout the novel. As the virtues of Pilar are revealed, the vices and delusion of Manuela are paraded before the reader and constantly belie her initial description, which, though itself dubious, is nevertheless the most positive portrayal of her in the novel:

Estaba sentada en un banco rústico y muy entretenida en enredar en las negras y sedosas madejas de sus cabellos una guirnalda de rosas blancas y de caléndulas rojas.
Díriase que era una aristócrata disfrazada y oculta en aquel huerto de la tierra caliente.
Marta o Nancy que huía de la corte para tener una entrevista con su novio.633

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Having fallen in love with el Zarco and still ignorant of the violently perverse reality of his existence among the plateados, the catalyst to the novel’s action occurs when Manuela absconds with the bandit to Xochimancas, the filthy lair where the novel’s villains congregate. As Lund observes, Xochimancas is “a degraded space defined by a total lack of reason, where chaos, passions, mistrust, and greed govern.” Xochimancas soon consumes what little semblance of Manuela’s virtue remains. That contrast enables Pilar to be crowned the virtuous victor at the end of the novel.

Another instance of balancing through pairing is seen in La navidad en las montañas. As I have argued, there the second of Altamirano’s Liberal Republican Christ-figures, friar José, is the improbable epitomy of the reconciliation of Liberal ideology and Republican Virtue with a religious sentimental framework reappropriated from the Catholic church. This is why he must be paired with the traveling soldier, whose anti-religious and patriotic sentiments first allow him to authenticate the true nature of the priest. The traveling soldier furnishes the skepticism necessary to make the existence of such a priest persuasive, thereby facilitating the transmission of Altamirano’s reconciliation. It is important that the priest in La navidad be convincing, and this is also the case in “El maestro de escuela” where didactic balance requires that the priest be totally dominant and abhorrent and the schoolmaster unconscionably abject and victimized in order to project its message of the urgency of anti-clerical measures for religious reform. But extending these models of didactic balance to the pairing of el Zarco and Nicolás shows that it breaks

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down. Those two characters are different, but different in a way that calls Altamirano’s entire national-pedagogical enterprise into question.

The problem is that, in contrast to the clear victory of Pilar’s virtue over Manuela’s vice, Nicolás alone is insufficient to balance the symbolic weight of el Zarco in the narrative. This is proven time and time again by the relative impotence of Nicolás in his confrontations with el Zarco. I emphasize that this impotence is relative because Nicolás does prove himself capable, but only within the bounds of Republican Virtue, the sentiment which otherwise legitimates him as a viable model of the mestizo arbiter of progress advocated by Altamirano. This can be seen in a number of places in the novel, and most significantly in the final confrontation with el Zarco.

Nicolás’s first show of impotence is common to the entirety of the population of Yautepec. The debilitating impact of the years since 1854 on the populace are made explicit after Manuela’s mother, Doña Antonia, discovers a letter indicating that Manuela has departed with el Zarco. Doña Antonia is inconsolable and desperately pleads with Nicolás for help recovering her daughter. Nicolás then seeks out the town’s prefect, who appeals to a passing Republican military troop, and their commander’s impertinent interrogation of the townspeople provides an opportunity for the narrative to give voice to a jeremiad of abuses suffered throughout the Mexican countryside:

—Pues bien, y ustedes, ¿por qué no se defienden?, ¿por qué no se arman?
—Porque no tenemos con qué; todos estamos desarmados.
—Pero, ¿por qué?
—Le diré a usted: teníamos armas para la defensa de las poblaciones, es decir, armas que pertenecían a las autoridades y armas que habían comprado los vecinos para su defensa personal. Hasta los más pobres tenían sus escopetas, sus pistolas, sus machetes. Pero pasó de primero Márquez con los reaccionarios y quitó todas las armas y los caballos que pudo encontrar en la población. Algunas armas se escaparon, sin embargo, y algunos caballos también, pero pasó

Nicolás is fundamentally a citizen, not a vigilante, and the lack of law and order that afflicts Yautépec has materially conspired to make his susceptibility to violence, and that of his fellow citizens, a permanent condition of their existence.

At this point it might be objected that Nicolás does in fact rival el Zarco. After all, when an effort is finally organized to exterminate the bandit, it is Nicolás who deals him a resounding blow to the head with his sable, felling him from his horse and ostensibly putting an end to his invulnerability. But there again, the limitations imposed upon him by Republican Virtue insist that he circumvent attempts to summarily hang the bandits. He instead appeals to the authorities, who yet again manage to subvert justice through incompetence. The result is unsurprising: after the bandit’s paid government lackeys manage to win him a change of venue, the plateados ambush the convoy transporting their leader and set him free. Justice is subverted, evil prevails, and the government’s abject failure to establish law and order proves the unshakeable veracity of Doña Antonia’s lament: “—¿Y a quién quejarme ahora? —exclamó— […] ¡Si estamos abandonados de Dios! —añadió desesperadamente.”

Although the defenselessness of the pueblo is justified by the material conditions imposed on Yautépec by the historical traumas seen in the preceding passages, Nicolás’s own shortcomings are far more glaring, being as they are a product of the Liberal ideological model of Republican Virtue propounded by Altamirano.

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et. al. For this reason, we should extend Cortazar’s description of *El Zarco* as an “avatar infecundo” to the novel’s protagonist as well. It is his strict adherence to Republican Virtue and civic order that guarantees that Nicolás’s experience as a member of Mexico *qua* sentimental community, alongside that of all the citizens of Yautepec, culminates “con el desencanto de no poder combatir los conflictos étnicos y de clase, dejando el problema fundamental aún sin resolver, esto es, crear la gente nacional, o sea, la conciencia colectiva de ser parte de una misma entidad cultural.” Or at least this would be the case, were it not for the advent of Altamirano’s third and final Christ-figure: the vigilante Martín Sánchez Chagollan.

Joshua Lund’s insightful study, *The Mestizo State*, provide a much-needed corrective to critical understanding of *El Zarco* by pointing out that an enigmatic figure generally ignored by the critical tradition, Martín Sánchez Chagollan, is rightfully considered the narrative’s central figure, and not Nicolás, as held by many interpretations centered on the novel’s didactic formulations. This is true for two reasons. Firstly, it is Chagollan who irrevocably puts an end to el Zarco and his minions in the final chapter of the novel. Without him, Nicolás would be left with his self-defeating appeals to authority. Furthermore, the futility of Nicolas’s appeals to the law and the necessity of a figure like Chagollan are a product of what Cortazar recognizes as the primary critique conveyed by the novel:

> Mediante la referencia a la figura histórica del Zarco, la fuerza discursiva parecía conformar más bien una serie de circunstancias que ponían en tela de juicio la ineficacia gubernamental, mostrando, consecuentemente, por qué era necesario que se otorgaran facultades extraordinarias a aquellos individuos que querían tomar justicia por su propia cuenta para proteger a su comunidad.642

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Echoing the novel, Lund describes Chagollan as an “exterminating angel” who annihilates all evil, but it is also important to note Chagollan’s second symbolic function. Chagollan is indeed the executioner, but he is also the judge and jury.

I have called Chagollan a third Liberal Republican Christ-figure, but his appearance in that series does not make him identical to either of his former manifestations. As we have seen heretofore, Clemencia’s Fernando Valle is a belatedly-recognized, self-sacrificing redeemer, while La navidad en las montañas’s Friar José brings about Christ’s reign on the earth through the syncretic reconciliation of the form of religious sentiment with foundational Liberal Republican principles that he embodies. Chagollan is a different matter altogether: he is Christ returned as justo juez, lord of the Day of Judgment. It is Chagollan who is entrusted with separating the sheep from the goats before the paradise of Yautepec in 1874 can be approached. The line drawn by his judgment justifies his extermination of el Zarco, but the very power to paint the world in black and white in this way will continue to haunt the end of the text even after justice is supposed to have been delivered. What’s more, the text of El Zarco itself seems to undermine the suggestion that absolute justice is made possible by the emergence of Chagollan and his posse of vigilantes.

The text is particularly contradictory on this account. It authorizes Chagollan’s actions in a number of ways, while at the same time giving more than one reason to doubt the discernment driving the justo juez’s condemnations. The attempts at authorization begin early in the novel, even before the avenging spectre of Chagollan appears. The

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645 With this metaphor I allude to the story found in Matthew 25:31-46.
defenselessness of the pueblo seems itself a justification for looking to vigilantism as a solution. Once Chagollan does appear on the scene, the narrator notes that he has already sought out authorization from a local official for the extrajudicial hangings of bandits that he had been prosecuting:

[...] [Chagollan] fue a hablar con el prefecto de Morelos y le comunicó su resolución de lanzarse a perseguir plateados.

El prefecto, alabándole su propósito, le hizo ver, sin embargo, los terribles peligros a que iba a quedar expuesto en medio de aquella situación. Pero como Martín Sánchez le respondió que estaba enteramente decidido a perecer en su empresa, el prefecto en cumplimiento de su deber, le ofreció los auxilios que estaban en su poder, y lo autorizó para perseguir ladrones, en calidad de jefe de seguridad pública, y con la condición de someter a los criminales que apprehendiera al juicio correspondiente.646

The one condition imposed on Chagollan by the official is conviently vague, leaving it up in the air precisely what is meant by the “juicio correspondiente;” on its face this would seem to require Chagollan to submit criminals to judicial process, but the subsequent failure to do so, combined with Chagollan’s position in the novel as justo juez, an inerrant source of judgment, gives sufficient reason to doubt such a reading. As the following description of Chagollan shows, his plan for the bandits evinces no trace of mercy or quarter, and much less a respect for individual liberties or the due process of law:

Era el representante del pueblo honrado y desamparado, una especie de juez Lynch, rústico y feroz también, e implacable.

Había suprimido en su alma el miedo, había abrazado con fe a su causa, esperando que en ella daría la vida, y estaba resuelto; pero también había suprimido, entre sus sentimientos, el de la piedad para los bandidos.

Ojo por ojo y diente por diente. Tal era su ley penal.

¿Los plateados eran crueles? El se proponía serlo también.

¿Los plateados causaban horror? El se había propuesto causar horror.

La lucha iba a ser espantosa, sin tregua, sin compasión. [...] Los bandidos debían temblar.

Chagollan’s authorization also stems from his own biography: he can be trusted, the text argues, because he is industrious, honest, and apolitical. His only reason for even joinging

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the fight is his burning desire to take revenge on the bandits who descended on his family home, massacring his relatives and laying waste to his legacy. All that remains for him is then to exterminate those villains and anyone else who looks like them. Both his personal dedication to the cause and the courage he displays act as proofs of the rectitude of his motivations. And going a step beyond the personal, the author also looks to authorize Chagollan through the highest source imaginable within the prevailing Liberal ideology of the time: President Benito Juárez.

Because el Zarco is so overdetermined as a figure of evil, assuring that the pueblo of Yautepec arrives at the promised ideal of progress claimed for it in 1874 requires a guardian figure formidable enough to match the bandit and protect that still-inchoate utopia. The only figure with enough symbolic gravitas to permanently overcome el Zarco is Martín Sánchez Chagollan, and this because he is cloaked in the sentimental affirmation of Benito Juárez. At this point Lund’s study again proves indispensable. He notes that there are two recurrent problems in contemporary interpretations of *El Zarco*. Firstly, the imposition of anachronistic conceptualizations of race, and particularly the neglect of the polysemic value of the terms *indio* and *mestizo* in 19th century Mexico, has resulted in confused interpretations of the didactic schemes so frequently mentioned in readings of Altamirano’s novels. Secondly, said anachronisms have led some critics to see in the figure of Chagollan a justification for the extermination of the opponents of the Liberal nation-building project. There is some truth to this latter claim, but the failure to read the complexity of the figure of Chagollan renders it a half truth: the author is at best ambiguous

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about the violence represented and enacted by Chagollan, but he cannot seem to find a way around its perceived necessity. The strategy adopted to resolve that deadlock becomes most apparent when Chagollan personally pays a visit to the president to discuss his plans for the bandit scourge.

It is important to clarify why Chagollan meets with Juárez. Following in the wake of arguments regarding Altamirano’s advocacy of vigilante violence like those Lund mentions, many critics have read Juárez’s endorsement of Chagollan as a mode of legal justification. However, as Lund notes, the suspension of constitutional privileges and invocation of the extraordinary faculties granted to Chagollan were not strictly illegal. Both practices had their basis in the ancient world, and in the period in which El Zarco takes place the use of both was not without precedent in Mexico. But Chagollan is out for something else entirely: from Juárez he asks for and receives both material support (rifles) and moral authority. The material form of support is a direct remedy to the situation, and it acts as a supplement to the defenselessness bemoaned in the townspeople’s interrogation by the Republican Captain in Chapter XIII. However, the transmission of moral authority from Juárez to Chagollan is more complicated and mirrors in miniature the tests of sentimental discernment and moments of sentimental transformation seen in Clemencia and La navidad.

Instead of receiving a sympathetic welcome, Chagollan is greeted by Juárez’s unyielding, “scrutinizing gaze.” The president attempts to determine the true sentiments of

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Chagollan and is eventually satisfied that a thirst for justice is the motive of his actions. Juárez then greets Chagollan as a fellow patriot and extends his sanction to the vigilante’s actions, all the while reiterating the necessity that Chagollan always work in accordance with justice. Or more precisely, he is to work to restore justice within the fractured domain of law, the restrictions of which the moral authority of Juárez allows him to transcend. And herein lies a paradox inherent to the configuration of Chagollan within the symbolic economy of El Zarco, one that emphasizes his anomalous character among the other denizens of the novel. As we have seen, Clemencia functions as a test of sentimental discernment, meaning that the true character of each individual is not entirely revealed until the end of the novel. And although we are from the beginning more or less aware of the nature of Friar José in La navidad en las montañas, proving the plausibility of the reconciliation that the author envisions still requires that the novel constantly confirm the character of its improbable priest. However, in the figure of Chagollan we encounter the opposite phenomenon, a character whose morality is grounded in rumor, anecdote, and hearsay, and whose reality has the scent of blood about it from his first appearance on. And yet, the reader’s sentimental discernment is not called on to validate this figure, perhaps because it would be too difficult to do so. That job falls to Juárez, and his confirmation of Chagollan is significant because it means that the vigilante has passed Liberal Republican ideological muster.

Although his sentiments stem from an apolitical source (as was also putatively the case in La navidad) prior to his meeting with Juárez, Chagollan’s meeting with the president grants him a moral authority that transcends the need to further legitimate himself legally or judicically. Receiving Juárez’s stamp of approval means that Chagollan’s
sentiments are to be understood as compatible with the Republican Virtue embodied by the *benemérito de la patria*, but because the practice of Republican Virtue is also dependent on the rule of law, it decouples that sentimental construct from its foundations. What remains, then, is a form of sovereign violence that retains the superficial form of justice without making concrete reference to any law beyond the moral law discerned by the one empowered with “extraordinary faculties.” This is the case with Chagollan, and that is why Lund is right to argue that the character represents the “direct expression of sovereignty,” for at least in terms of their judgments, Chagollan and the infallible father of the Republic are effectively identical.652 And even if we may not take the opinion of one to be identical to the opinion of the other, both figures nevertheless agree that Chagollan’s conscience and sense of virtue make him the best man for the job and a “juez muy justo.”653

And thusly emerges Martín Sánchez Chagollan, Christ-figure and *justo juez*, savior of the pueblo and scourge of evil. The end of the text, however, shows that that is not the end of the story. Indeed, while Chagollan seems to have resolved all of the problems in the novel and paved the way for the joyous marriage of the town’s model mestizo couple, Nicolás and Pilar, the visceral justice that he brings and his persistent presence at the end of the novel are far more disturbing than conciliatory.

Chagollan’s figure looms at the end of the novel and casts a deathly pallor over what begins as an exuberant wedding scene celebrated by the whole of Yautepec. El Zarco has been defeated and siezed by Chagollan, and this clears the way for Nicolás and Pilar to

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finally consecrate their union. Granted his adherence to Liberal Republican virtues like laicism, it is important to note that Nicolás first takes Pilar to a civil officiant, and it is not until they proceed toward their religious wedding service that they stumble into Chagollan, who is busy preparing to execute el Zarco in front of a desperate Manuela. Chagollan attempts to hide his gruesome activity, but he fails, and both Nicolás and Pilar are forced to directly confront the price paid for the peace of Yautepec: el Zarco’s brains are splattered across the hillside, Manuela dies instantly of an apoplectic fit, and through it all Chagollan remains a figure ghastly in his impassive resolution. The novel then concludes, but the violence of execution overshadows the promised nuptials, leaving only the memory of Chagollan and his “tropa lúgubre” riding through the distance, an appropriate final position for a figure that, having restored order to the world, must also remain outside of it.

Lund’s thesis regarding the centrality of Chagollan in El Zarco is astute and necessary, but a bone of contention remains in the assertion of that centrality to the detriment of the more traditional, didactic readings of Altamirano. I agree that Chagollan is a structural center of El Zarco, but he is only one of two of the novel’s symbolic centers. Indeed, it is only in response to a lack in the first center that the second center, the one pertaining to Martín Sánchez Chagollan, is invoked. The first center is Yautepec itself, and it is defined by its relationship to the mountains, which connect it to the capital and commerce, and the river, which both guards and sustains the hamlet. The mountains, through that same series of connections, also come to represent the law, while the river represents the wellspring of Republican Sentiment that, as argued in La navidad, naturally overflows out of the hearts of the Mexican people.
But while that picturesque interrelationship may be plausible in the Yautepec of 1874, an issue arises from the fact that in the Yautepec of 1861 the center cannot hold. Bandits dominating the mountains have put an end to even the semblance of law, and the bounties of nature can no longer be transformed into interstate commerce. Altamirano’s critique of the failure of the government to establish law and order makes all of these points clear at the same time that it undermines the didactic model of Republican sentiment developed in the other novels that I have examined here. In the absence of the law, Nicolás’s manifest Republican Virtue ensures his defeat. If Nicolás abandons those principles, he will no longer be a suitable model of mestizo progress. In either case, abandoned to his own whims, Nicolás ends up a loser, and this would be fatal for Altamirano’s didactic aims: to lose Nicolás is also to lose Pilar, which is to say both members of the model national couple, without which Altamirano’s didacticism is forced to abandon the very model it attempts to convey. The author’s solution to this dilemma is to posit another center in the novel in order to reinforce the existing ideal of Yautepec, and the text deploys Martín Sánchez Chagollan to that end.

The persistence of Chagollan at the end of the novel signals the mutual-imbrication of the novel’s two centers. The first, Yautepec, is the didactic center of the novel. In accordance with Liberal Republican ideology and the author’s promises in the text, Yautepec’s good-natured and industrious population naturally comports itself in accordance with the principles of Republican Virtue and Liberal Reform. Furthermore, nature itself provides more than enough resources to sustain the community. Taken together, those two factors should be sufficient for the community to prosper. And yet in El Zarco they do not because of the abject failure of the rule of law. Rather than admit the
failure of his didactic model, the author instead translates the action to a morally-charged, metaphysical sphere, and Chagollan enters the picture, bellowing a challenge at el Zarco and confident that his status as “social indignation in the form of a man” makes him a match for the legendary bandit, who as evil incarnate signifies all of Mexico’s social ills at once. By displacing el Zarco from the didactic sphere, wherein he stands in contraposition to Nicolás, the author completes el Zarco’s transfiguration into a metaphysical scapegoat and then employs Chagollan to make the necessary holocaust. The didactic sphere is saved, Nicolas and Pilar are joined in marriage, and if the author is correct, Yautepec will soon become a model for the rest of the Republic. But the death of el Zarco is not the death of Chagollan, the metaphysical center continues to exercise its pull on the didactic center, and the spectre of the reemergence of sovereign violence continues to abide like the lugubrious riders of Chagollan on the horizon of Yautepec.

How, then, should we interpret the persistence of that second, metaphysical center of signification, and how does its persistence impact the first, didactic center? In moments of interpretative deadlock, analyzing how characters are named often offers insight to the didactic mechanics of a work, and Altamirano’s novels are no exception. For example, in the case of Valle and Flores, the names of each figure reflect the process by which their true characters come to be known to the reader: Valle begins as an obscure figure whose true beauty only arises after a slow acquaintance with the depths of his sentiments, while Flores’s charms glisten and shine at the beginning of the novel, only to wither and fade away in a revelation of their false beauty and rootlessness. El Zarco similarly presents the obvious example of Pilar, but two other names, Chagollan and plagiario, provide the final interpretative key for my argument here.
Lund’s careful analysis of Chagollan cites Juan Robles’s explanation of the vigilante’s strange nomenclature:

Robles explains that prior to his vigilantism he was a silversmith, and the chagollo was the low-grade silver used to make counterfeit coins and iconic figurines for religious purposes, both referred to in popular speech as chagollos. The implication, says Robles, was that Martín Sánchez was a “militar chagollo” — fake, that is, “improvised.”

Significantly, the counterfeit nature of the chagollo is also reflected in the term Altamirano repeatedly uses to describe el Zarco and his bandits, namely, plagiario. On its face the term means a kidnapper, a meaning traceable back to the ancient practice of domination and enslavement referred to in Medieval Latin as plāgĭo. But plagiario is also the word for a plagiarist, and it is that connotation that connects it to the chagollo and Chagollan because el Zarco and Chagollan, though not identical, are still two sides of the same counterfeit coin. The plagiarized images of sovereignty that they offer attempt to secure the perpetuation of Altamirano’s primary concern, the promulgation and protection of the didactic center of the work, but they cheat in the transaction, and the second, metaphysical sphere remains as the reminder of an extant debt. El Zarco represents the violence of lawless civilization, and it is for this reason that Altamirano’s critique of lawlessness demonizes him utterly and to the point of extermination. Said demonization accords perfectly with the goals and principles of Liberal Republicanism, with its dependence on the notions of order and progress. Nevertheless, Chagollan is an even more dangerous counterfeit than el Zarco because he takes the form of Christ as justo juez and issues a judgment that at once reinstates the rule of law while remaining decidedly outside of it.

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Furthermore, the *justo juez’s* persistence after Judgment Day acts a reminder of a violent precedent whose reenactment threatens to endanger the very Liberal Republican order that it establishes. What good is progress and order, then, if the night is still permeated with a sense of dread? In the end, Altamirano pays for his reconciliation with counterfeit coin and receives a fittingly hollow monument to peace in exchange, one that still resonates with the violence of its founding long after the close of the novel.

To conclude by way of summary, I have demonstrated how Ignacio Manuel Altamirano’s novels project an overarching didactic plan aimed at the inculcation of national sentiment, Liberal political ideology, and Republican Virtue. Those three foundational elements are all typified in *Clemencia* by Fernando Valle, who functions as a Liberal Republican Christ-figure through his selfless sacrifice in the name of humane sentiment. Those same three elements are reconciled and recast within the frame of traditional Christian religious sentiment in *La navidad en las montañas*, and that attempt at reconciliation is embodied in Altamirano’s second Christ-figure, Friar José, whose perfect marriage of religious sentiment, Republican Virtue, and Liberal ideology is forwarded as a model for the peaceful restoration and unification of the Republic. As such, he represents the figure of Christ come in Glory to restore justice to the earth. But where Altamirano looked to inhabit only the bodily form of religious sentiment, its repressed heart reemerges violently in *El Zarco*, wherein Martín Sánchez Chagollan, the third Christ-figure, appears as the *justo juez* whose merciless judgment of the unbelievers persists as the unwanted supplement both ensuring and threatening the future emergence of the ideal community of Yautepec. In this final stage, Altamirano’s project breaks down, never to be resumed. Even taking into account its having been written years before its posthumous
publication, *El Zarco* hails from a time that also marks the decline of Altamirano’s influence and voice in Mexican national culture. Many of the next generation would ignore the lesson to be learned from his failed attempt at reconciliation, instead preferring the positivist methodology over *liberalismo puro* and Porfirio Díaz’s clientilistic politics over classical Liberal concepts of civic responsibility and economic and political equality. As a result, the Porfiriato would slide into a night of silent, opaque, and widespread repressive violence. In spite of the warnings of the maestro, Yautepec’s “silencio lúgubre” returned with a vengeance and enveloped the nation until another famous explosion of sovereign violence in 1910. And that revolutionary utopia, like the Yautepec of 1874, would also require its own Christ-figures and its own Judgment Day.
4.4 *Amen: “Once More, with Feeling”*

My investigation began by emphasizing the need to approach the question of sentiment in a new way that takes into account the long history of that concept and the plurality of ways in which it has found cultural, and specifically literary, expression. I hope to have shown that our contemporary prejudices regarding the “sentimental” is an unnecessary phobia. Rather than closing or defining the question of sentiment, I have instead tried to recognize the plurality of ways in which sentiment has been theorized by adopting a model of sentimental disposition that leaves the question open to future elaboration and debate. No matter how we might feel about sentiment, its significance in developing discourses of nation, identity, morality, and social responsibility now stands as a fact to be recognized.

As this investigation has shown, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, the master of the master (Ramírez) of the maestro (Altamirano), incorporates the dynamics of sentiment in innovatory ways in order to propound a didactic method of transforming sentiment in his novels *El periquillo sarniento, La Quijotita y su prima*, and *Don Catrín de la fachenda*. His contribution as a precursor to both national literature and literary-didactic technique is recognized by Ignacio Ramírez, who perpetuates the question of sentiment and its didactic rearticulation through his theoretical works on the nature of literature and its role in educating the pueblo in the rights and responsibilities of citizenry. As we have seen, Ramírez’s total radicalization of the intellectual field allows him to recognize a persistent antagonism produced by the discrepancy between the quotidian experiences of the Mexican people and the homogenous model of progress advocated by the intellectuals of his time. In this way, the Necromancer prepares the way for Altamirano’s project of inculcating
national sentiment, Republican Virtue, and Liberal political ideology. Altamirano takes up the standard after Ramírez and launches a project of literary didacticism that attempts to contend with the antagonism between reality and the ideal against which Ramírez forewarns. When his reconciliatory project eventually fails, it will be because of a failure of sentimental persuasiveness on the part of his model, which fatefully ends up appealing to violence in order to buttress a picture of sentiment that is no longer convincing. In all of these cases, and despite the plurality of forms that it adopts in different discursive contexts, sentiment proves a key term in both the successes and failures of these Liberal nation-building projects in 19th-century Mexico.

As the model of sentimental disposition shows, sentiment is a liminal mode of understanding, situated within the heart of the interpretative crucible between our feelings and our understanding. Our feelings about situations dispose us toward understanding the world differently, and doing so can often inspire new feelings about who we are, our place in the community, and our obligations and responsibilities toward the other members of that community. The authors that I have studied throughout this investigation all attempt to repurpose this basic fact in different ways, and they all share a common concern for generating a much-needed sense of unity, be it civic-religious unity through morality (Lizardi), radical social unity based in educational reform and social mutualism (Ramírez), or ideal social reconciliation under the auspices of the new Liberal hegemony of the República Restaurada (Altamirano). Their common efforts and divergent results serve as a testament to the complexity of sentiment as an intellectual and historical phenomenon. This investigation has shown that sentiment is neither idea nor belief: it is somewhere in
between and is constituted by the stuff of both. For the pure idea may always fail to move us, and an unexamined sentimental compass will often lead us in the wrong direction.
Appendix:

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BIOGRAPHY
Christopher RayAlexander was born on November 15th, 1983 in Lubbock, Texas. He currently resides in Baltimore, Maryland.

EDUCATION

2009 – scheduled defense Oct. 21, 2015
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HONORS, GRANTS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

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JHU Dean’s Teaching Fellowship
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PUBLICATIONS


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Forthcoming 2016 “Prepotencia por importencia: El Santo vs. El Santos and the Struggle for Identity.” 131st MLA Annual Convention, Austin, Texas

2012, April “Bloody Ring, Immaculate Body: Lucha Libre, National Identity, and the Production of the Sublime.” VI Transatlantic Conference at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island


2008, March “¿Por qué me llamas gringo?: una investigación de la gringuedad.” XXVI Biennial Louisiana Conference on Hispanic Languages and Literatures, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

2008, March Co-presentation with Rafael Orozco: “Subject personal pronoun expression in the Caribbean region of Colombia.” XXVI Biennial Louisiana Conference on Hispanic Languages and Literatures, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (paper written by Rafael Orozco with Gregory R. Guy)

2007, July “‘El Zarco’: una conciliación ideológica hacia el establecimiento de la nación mexicana.” Nuevas Jornadas Metropolitanas de Estudios Culturales 2007, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico City

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