

**(RE)PRODUCING MEN: HOMOSOCIALITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATIN  
AMERICAN NATIONAL NARRATIVES**

by

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In this dissertation I dispute the long-held critical tradition that national narratives are best understood by the means in which they allegorize the nation through the heteronormative construct of family. I employ feminist, gender, and queer theories, as inflected with postcolonial studies to read Latin American national narratives' use of allegory—particularly the ways in which the objectification of the female body symbolically aids the cementing of male bonds and rivalries. The (re)production of masculinities through male-male desire and rivalry informs the social constructs of both national embodiment and idealized male citizenship whereas the female body remains subjugated and largely homogenous in its relationship to masculinity and male desire. Eve Sedgwick's concept of the "homosocial" provides the central critical framework through which I dispute and destabilize heteronormative assumptions at the basis of national identity formations. My focus on how masculinities are negotiated through the objectified female body enables an understanding of gender performativities' determinative importance to the hegemonic representations of other marked categories of identity and thus, the taxonomies of bodily discourse that inform them. My literary corpus consists of select nineteenth-century texts that monumentalize national mythos and/or display radical shifts pertinent to nationalism such as

Mexico's reformation period, the abolition of slavery in Brazil, or Argentina's struggle beneath a authoritarian regime. I also look at contemporary renditions of nineteenth-century figures to extrapolate nationalism as a form of gender discourse whose origins are intertwined with the independence movements of the nineteenth century.

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In Loving Memory of  
Dr. Wendy Carse and Dr. Carol Young

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## PREFACE

I never understood the term “meaningless acts of violence” mainly because all acts of violence have a meaning, or rather, a plethora of meanings not only for those who commit them, but undoubtedly for those against whom they are committed. That, and violence isn’t merely an act; in most cases it is, before an act, an emotion or idea. Judith Butler once wrote, “To be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanism of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways” (*Precarious Life* xiv). Her abstract notion that all bodies have a public dimension—both ideologically and physically—has had an explosive impact on my intellectual and ethical understandings of intersubjective dependence and exploitation, violence and love, healing and abuse, and the means by which I am beginning to view the materiality of the body as the locus of an ethical imperative, oddly enough, as it relates to the notion of community.

Following these lines are the two sentences that I have come to know by heart as they are paradoxically as haunting to me as they are instilled with hope: “The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well. Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own” (26). There is something sacred about this concept. Perhaps it is her

ability, in two short sentences, to summarize life as struggle, life as love, life as inflicted pain, or life as a shared experience in which we are infinitely bound to one another. This is, in essence, the idea of community as it reflected through the materiality of the body—specifically, the physical vulnerabilities and pleasures of the body that are at the center of “our being” in the world. This is not to be confused with universalism— “we are one”; rather, in her words, it is something “other than ‘autonomous’ in such a condition, but that does not mean that we are merged or without boundaries” (27).

Imagining community, Butler adds, is essentially the idea that we are both physically vulnerable as well as physically dependent on one another. “Violence,” she continues, “is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another” (27). This alluring approach to an ethical understanding of corporeal vulnerability situates the material body as a sort of primary locus wherein the injured body could serve as a means of recognizing and reformulating our identities in relation to others in ways that recognize human vulnerability and interdependency rather than exploiting them.

She points out, for example, that the more conventional registers for understanding the precarious materiality of our physical existence operates in a framework “in which one’s injury authorizes limitless aggression against targets that may or may not be related to the sources of one’s own suffering” (4) producing more trauma, more violence, and more loss. Conversely, Butler promotes the notion that our vulnerability to others could be just as empowering in the process of disrupting violence as it is threatening in our potential exposure to it. The presumed opposite is also true: any notion that that we are impenetrable, that violation begets limitless (and often abusive) expressions of power can only lead to further violation and further exploitation. This retaliation to injury informs the seemingly endless cycles that can be seen in individuals,



familial units, and/or much larger collective reactions to violence (nationally and internationally) that merely serve to further constitute or continue violent processes.

In reading this dissertation, you will come to find that the “heart of the matter,” whatever the theory may be that accompanies it, is the ways in which bodies are represented through literary and other cultural productions as a means to (re)produce an “imagined community,” most often in reference to national identities. By employing the term “imagined,” I mean, beyond an organic materiality. For example, we know that national borders “exist,” but they are obviously socially constructed. In turn, national allegories, mythos, futuristic projections of the nation, and the very idea of “national belonging,” and so forth are also imagined although one’s national identification certainly has very real consequences. The theoretical thread here, then, is to explore the ways in which bodies, particular kinds of (gendered, racialized, sexualized, etc.) bodies, are employed to imagine community, to represent a nation’s history, or to imagine its future.

It is a project that seeks to understand the body as text—to hold, to examine, to flesh out the many fictions that lodge themselves on certain “kinds” of bodies as they exist within literature, national imaginaries, cultural codes, institutions, laws, and ultimately in our day-to-day lives—that, whether we identify or are perceived as a particular representation of identity (male, female, gay, straight, Mexican, American, and so on), even these categories, as social constructs, cannot be contained “within themselves” either. As such, any representation, recognition, misrepresentation, or misrecognition of these identities reflect and inform our being in the world—our subjective experiences; when certain forms of representation are consistently reiterated they are easily overlooked as self-evident truths. Worse yet, they may play host, as feminism repeatedly argues, to a means of legitimizing a violent act against the body of another.

If masculinity has consistently been defined through the objectification of the female body, as this dissertation repeatedly argues, then it is no wonder why violence against women is a social epidemic. If whiteness has consistently defined itself through the subjection of other racialized groups while largely depicting them as hypersexual, perverted, passive, criminal, irrational, and/or down right evil, as this dissertation argues, then it is no wonder that racism and the countless deaths that accompanies it, is a social epidemic. If heterosexuality and the gender binary continue to be viewed as stable categories of identification whereas homosexuality, transgender, and gender non-conformity are that which exists “outside” of the supposedly solid borders of heterosexuality and/or gender normativity, then it is no wonder that LGBTQI people are violently expunged, murdered, denied equal rights, and perceived as a sexual threat and/or sexual predators. And finally, if national identities consistently rely upon the above-mentioned arrangements of power to articulate who does and does not belong to its fabricated borders—or worse, to legitimize violence both internally and externally against its imagined others, then it is no wonder that the world is an extremely violent place wherein everyone feels vulnerable to things “out of our control.”

No, our bodies are not entirely our own. They are often colonized by the identities that define us, are defined for us, and are defined by us; too many of us are forced to live in the consequences of our representations. The social conditions of embodiment are also informed by the discursive powers that rest upon the surface of our bodies. The recognition of our embodied vulnerabilities, our porous subjectivities, as scary as they may seem, is the first idea, the emotion, which can serve as a preface to an act of social responsibility to revise these fictions writ large. Following Butler, in this recognition of the public dimensions of our bodies, the ways in which the body is, already, a “crucible of social life” (26) we must be compelled to take stock of our

interdependence, to understand that, by “virtue of being a bodily being” that “we are already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own” (28); “to be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanism of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways” (xvi).

## 1.0 PATRIOTS AND PERVERTS: A LOVE AFFAIR

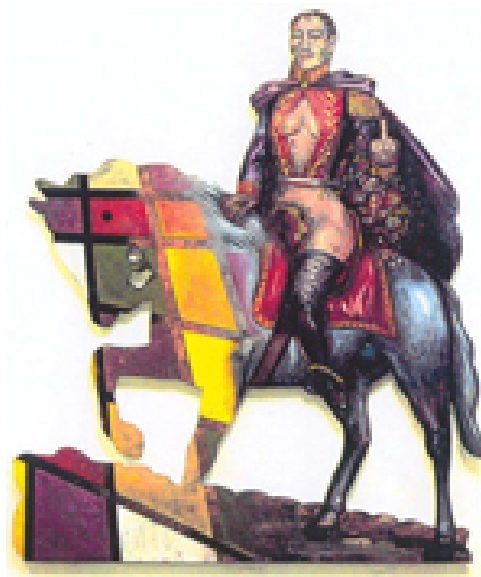


Figure 1. Juan Dávila's *El Libertador Simón Bolívar*

*The myth-creating force of popular fantasy has manifested itself in all times in the invention of 'great men.' The most striking example of this sort is indisputably Simón Bolívar”- Karl Marx*

## 1.1 ON THE SUBJECT(ION) OF NATIONAL EMBODIMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

In 1994, long before the “Hero turned Trans” media frenzy surrounding Caitlyn / Bruce Jenner (U.S Olympian turned air-brushingly attractive woman), Chileans, among others, found

themselves at the center of an international debate surrounding national icons and gender identity. Chile's most popular newspapers such as *El Tiempo* began publishing headlines like: "Bolívar: De Héroe a Travesti" [Bolívar: From Hero to Transvestite]<sup>1</sup> as if the very terms 'hero' and 'transvestite' were somehow polar opposites—it might as well have read: one cannot be a transvestite and also be a hero. The dramatic outcry was in response to the curious case of Juan(a) Dávila, the Chilean artist, who, according to Christopher Conway's *The Cult of Bolívar* (2003), depicted Bolívar in 1994 as a half-naked, yet still heroic (man? / woman?) on his steed in full military attire (fig 1.1). Bolívar's perky lady breasts poke through from his otherwise (manly?) chest while he delivers, with his finger, a giant "fuck you" to the observer.

On the surface, it was but one of many controversial paintings hanging on the walls of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, but the public and political response it generated was rooted well beyond the confines of those institutional walls. The image would cause a vocal international scandal. It was as if Dávila's queer brush symbolically castrated, one might even say penetrated, the symbolic power invested in the image of Bolívar and by default, the symbolism that his body deeply held in multiple national imaginaries—so much so that the Venezuelan embassy issued a formal complaint about the circulation of the artist's work and thus provoked political tensions with Venezuela. Eventually the Chilean Foreign Ministry was forced to apologize to the governments of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador (Conway 2). This begs the question: what is invested so deeply in the curious case of Bolívar's boobs? What is it about gender and nationalism—specifically, masculinity and nationalism, that is capable of cultivating the outrage of Venezuelans or the apologies of Chileans? What did this sole reproduction of

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine throughout this dissertation unless otherwise indicated.

Bolívar's image touch upon that thousands of other images of Bolívar did not? Can Bolívar's body, as it depicted by Dávila, be read as a revision of national narrative in its own right, and if so, what, precisely is being revised? By situating Dávila's image against "more acceptable" renditions of Bolívar body, I hope to make the answer to these questions abundantly clear.

"(Re)producing Men," at its core, is an attempt to understand the many (re)visions of the "national male body," the male body as national icon, and by default, the ever-changing codes of gender, race, sexuality, and class that have (re)produced the quintessential master narratives that envelop both masculinity and nationalism. It is an interdisciplinary study that examines canonical literary productions of select texts that have largely been read as "national narratives" or "foundational fictions" in nineteenth-century Latin America in an attempt to expose another "foundational fiction" of sorts, the "primary subject" of inquiry: hegemonic masculinity.

Informed by queer and gender studies, I extrapolate gender's meaning as a social representation of perceived biological differences, specifically, how it has been defined in different ways at different times within specific social contexts through institutions, iconography, myth, and norms. In short, it is both a fixation and compulsion to map out what has largely been under-examined: how the history of masculinities and other gender codings has shaped the sexed bodies of 'male' and 'female' identity, creating masculine and feminine subjectivities symbolically ascribed to bodies and arguably, the fabricated territorial units that we now recognize as the nation-state. In short, gender is perceived here as having a history of its own—a history that has largely shaped the ways in which we think about and even perceive national and other socially constructed identities.

Although my primary focus will be temporally localized in the nineteenth century, to adequately understand how body, gender, sexuality, race, religion, and class emerge as the

primary social categories that inform the (re)productions of national identities, perhaps it is best to understand how these intersections, specifically with regard to gender and sexuality, continue to hold relevance within our contemporary times.

Chapter one, the introductory chapter, will focus on what is arguably the most foundational text of any era: the human body. For the sake of the theoretical engagement, and for the purpose of this introduction, I initiate this theoretical exploration with what is perhaps the most canonical depiction of the male body in Latin American history—a body that has been a source of constant “reimagining,” stripped bare, and redressed—perhaps to suit the needs of those who claim his body as their own. This is not a traditional text of sorts, but perhaps most accurately named “The Many Bodies of Bolívar.” In my attempts to “uncover” the many (re)productions of the male body in the multi-faceted figure of Bolívar, I address some of the main theoretical threads that will serve to refashion our views on the male body’s symbolic renderings in a variety of cultural mediums, including but not limited to, the very day when Bolívar himself advocated for the creation of a national mythos—a mythos that ironically, he would come to embody. My case in point is to illustrate the broader theoretical framework through which one can begin to understand how both the reproduction of masculinity and embodiment are central to the national imaginary.

Chapter two will be dedicated entirely to the topic of “men giving birth” to the nation through a textual analysis of *Iracema*, a well-known novel written by the Brazilian, José de Alencar in 1865 and emblematic of the romantic, national Indianist novel of Brazil. As a supposed “love story” based on both myth and history, the narrative tells of the birth of the first *mestizo* (Moacir) through the union of the indigenous with the European via the protagonists of Iracema (the indigenous woman) and Martim (a European explorer). Modern-day critics, most

notably Doris Sommer in *Foundational Fictions* (1991), have read the text as an allegory for national identity that is based on the heterosexual union. I examine what this critical lens has failed to articulate by focusing on male-male relationships, particularly the complexities of Martim's relationship with various male tribal authorities in religious and militaristic matters. Moreover, since the text enacts the expulsion of its only female protagonist, I argue that a new hegemonic social order vis-à-vis the negotiation of masculinities occurs through the (eventually dead) symbolic female body and has far more to do with restructuring of masculinity than it does with heterosexual couplings. In turn, Alencar provides his reader with a bizarre configuration of racialized male identities at the novel's end. Tellingly, two men and their baby son stand atop the grave of the dead female body which, at the very least, ought to recast any notion that national identity is articulated through an analogous relationship to heteronormativity.

Chapter two hosts a smaller analysis of a text that preceded *Iracema*, *O Guarani* (1857), also written by José de Alencar. Whereas *Iracema* deals with the supposed union of a white explorer with an indigenous woman, *O Guarani* portrays an indigenous man's obsession with a white woman and whiteness in general. Like *Iracema*, *O Guarani*'s title invokes the sole indigenous main protagonist and is centered upon an interracial heterosexual union. Peri, a male native of the Guaranies, falls in love with the god-like Fidalgo's daughter, Cecília, eventually voluntarily deserting both his tribe and family to protect her at all times like the perfect "noble savage" of the romantic tradition: he who sacrifices all to the service of whiteness. *O Guarani*, in many ways, is a gendered reversal of the homosocial power structures exhibited in *Iracema*. A comparison of both texts allows me to extrapolate how homosocial relations are structured in terms of gender, sexuality, and race.



Chapter three, while commencing with the figure of La Malinche—indisputably an iconic figure within Mexico’s national mythos—explores her subjugated status as the raped/traitorous indigenous mother of Mexico. As her body has been consistently laid down to soak up male authorial anxiety with regard to the national imaginary as other critics have argued, I theorize how and why she has been “refashioned” to suit the changing socio-political needs of her symbolic relationship to (Mexican) male masculinities. My hope is to challenge how other critics, such as Octavio Paz, have interpreted her status as “violated mother” in relationship to male Mexican identity by employing the theory of homosociality as that which might provide unique insight into the more traditional interpretations of her subjugation.

I contrast La Malinche to Iracema’s characterizations because both are examples of how the indigenous female body becomes a depository for national identity (re)formation. I question how and why Mexican (male) national identity has consistently employed rape as a trope to recast its inherited colonial legacy. Here, my dissertation begins to express its concern with the rhetoric of rape as a homosocial construct within and beyond its national contextualization. This same concern will be highlighted in my reading of Manuel Ignacio Altamirano’s *El Zarco* (written between 1886 and 1888 and published in 1901) where the threat of rape and the lack of sexual order informs various masculinities presented throughout the text.

*El Zarco* provides an interesting twist in his configuration of male rivalry by positing the indigenous-looking hero (Nicolás) directly against a white male antagonist (Zarco). In short, Nicolás falls in love with a middle-class white woman named Manuela, who, in turn, loves the bandit, Zarco. Zarco and Manuela couple off but she soon realizes that Nicolás “is the better man.” In turn, Nicolás falls in love with, and eventually marries an indigenous orphan, Pilar. El Zarco, because he is the leader of a group of bandits that terrorize the town and because he

threatens to kill Nicolás and his new bride, is shot down by a rural guard (a characterization who clearly embodies the law). Manuela subsequently dies from grief.

As a narrative brimming with didacticism, it employs a pedagogical stance towards social depiction of certain types of identities. My reading explores the ways in which the private sphere and the public sphere are intricately linked to certain forms of sexual, gender, racial, and class subjectivities. Male rivalry is specifically unique in this text in that it is resolved (through death) only when it is placed within the confines of law and justice. Moreover, the diabolic embodiment of the text's antagonist employs sexual perversion and effeminacy as the primary element which defines his masculinity (or lack thereof). Whereas, again, this novel is consistently read with a focus on heterosexual relationships, I begin to examine the first threads of "heterosexual panic" (in the form of perversion) as a precursor to homophobia in the Mexican context as well as the male-male relationships as they inform modern masculine and national subjectivities.

Between my readings of the figure of La Malinche and *El Zarco*, I briefly examine José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento* (1816), hailed as the first Latin American novel while being recognized for its unique role in the construction of imagined national community in Mexico. Robert McKee Irwin's *Mexican Masculinities* (2003), in its reading of male homosocial bonding within the novel, provides a means through which I take up the question of maturity as it relates to this novel, but also to the Malinche paradigm and the idea of "whiteness as perversion" as it relates to *El Zarco*. As *El Periquillo Sarniento* is a model text for understanding exemplary models of citizenry coded within the search for idyllic male role-models (and thus, rejecting others), I ask how the quest for both maturity and the idyllic displays of masculinity are carried forth to in the latter texts.

Chapters two and three exemplify a (re)writing of colonial configurations between racial and ethnic rivalries and alliances through the tropes of protectionism. My reading of *El Zarco* is an exploration of the changing scope of masculinity and its relationship to nationalism. The narrative's employment of protectionism bears a similarity with chapter four, wherein a "covering up" of racialized violence is indisputably exemplified in the Brazilian novel, *A Escrava Isaura* published in 1875 and written by Bernardo Guimarães. Although it is considered as an Abolitionist text, I argue that *A Escrava Isaura* is more intrigued with the task of reconfiguring an image; that image is not of the black female slave by the name of Isaura, but rather, it has much more to do with how whites (particularly white men) wished to see themselves in relationship to slavery. My reading is informed by what I call an "(en)gendering of terror" that examines the relationship between whiteness, property, hegemonic masculinity and the female body.

As chapters two through four deal largely with either the hyper-sexualization of the male other via the raped body or the threat of rape as rhetorical device for national identification, chapter five is a direct examination of male-male sexual violence as it relates to question of national male embodiment. I engage in a close reading of the Argentine short story, "El matadero" [The Slaughterhouse], written in exile by Esteban Echeverría between 1838 and 1840 and published posthumously in 1871. The novel is political critique of the authoritarian regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas and is read in light of its use of corporal aesthetics, embodiment, conflicting nationalisms and masculinity, predominantly with regard to the text's end: the allegorical (attempted) rape of a man who opposes the current regime.

Finally, my last chapter, "A Place to Call Homo," is a theoretical reflection on how to best contextualize sexual and gender configurations prior to the discursive invention of "the

homosexual” in the late nineteenth century. I examine how both gender and sexuality studies in Latin American contexts have largely ignored the topic of “homosexuality” with regard to the nineteenth century precisely because the linguistic term, ‘homosexual’ was not yet a discursive construct. Employing various models presented by queer theorists, I extrapolate how to “read” the pre-discursive categories of homosexuality in light of the various characterizations of masculinity and sexuality forged throughout my literary corpus. For example, how do non-normative / marginal configurations of masculinity and sexuality—most often as they pertain to villains—provide the seeds for homophobia. How can one understand male-male bonds and their rejection of women without misinterpreting or superimposing our modern-day understandings of sexuality and gender?

As my body of work largely implies, corporeality as it is (con)textualized within the national narrative is figured as the locus for imagining community via interpretation, (mis)representation, and as a primary mediation of desire. The dilemma inherent to the conceptualization of the body as text is that it is not so easily understood or visible for that matter. This is particularly true in what it is perceived to be masculinity ascribed to “the male body.” Elizabeth Grosz writes, “there are ways that the sexuality and corporeality of the subject leave their traces in the texts produced, just as [...] the processes of textual production also leave their trace or residue on the body” (21). The problem that arises is that maleness and “masculinity” (the gender/ed characteristics assigned to the sexed body) have traditionally been viewed as *the* primary and stable subject (biological maleness is perceived as both assumed and natural). Moreover, male desire (as heterosexual desire) is also thought to be a stable category of identification rather than a social construct (Reeser 72).

In combination with this dilemma of visibility and the male authoring subject, my theoretical inquiries stumble upon yet another set of issues with regard to the body: race and citizenship. Robyn Wiegman points to this dilemma inherent in the delineation of power and meaning with regard to the body and the national narrative. She upholds that modern citizenship, in its own right, has long been a “disproportionate system” upheld by the question of embodiment as a series of signs and (in)visible relationships. Because citizenship and propriety march hand-in-hand, anyone interested in the relationship between gender, race, and national identity must contend with a system “in which universalism ascribed to certain bodies (white, male propertied) is protected and subtended by the infinite particularity assigned to others (black, female, unpropertied)” (6). While North and Latin American national contexts differ dramatically with regard to racial configurations, the exaltation of white, male elitism embodied by *los letrados*<sup>2</sup> is also contingent on, in Wiegman’s words, “certain visual relations, where only those particularities associated with the Other are, in a variety of registers” (6). By this I am

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<sup>2</sup> Critical theorist, Angel Rama’s groundbreaking book *La ciudad letrada* [The Lettered City] (1984) popularized this term. Loosely speaking, “*los letrados*” were the institutional and legal administrators who formed part of an elitist society within the colonial context. As their roles changed via the independence movements of the nineteenth century, many assumed positions in journalism, fiction writing, and politics. Often, they had lived and studied in Europe. Several authors included in this dissertation were among their ranks in that they were senators, members of the supreme court and held other political positions in addition to their belonging to an elitist literary establishment.

implying that whiteness (also an unstable category of identification) carries with it the theoretical burden of the unmarked (and therefore not immediately visible) subject.

As this study is concerned with the (re)production of masculinity within narrative, and, because masculinity and the other social categories that inform it (e.g. whiteness) are largely invisible, the means by which I discuss masculinity here is also dependent upon its relationship to the non-masculine, and paradoxically, its masculine others. The configuration of masculinity's power rests upon its relationship and negotiation of subject/object positionings. For example, postcolonial studies have largely dissected the "racist logic" of coloniality (inherent to Wiegman's observations of citizenship) wherein the ideological structuring of the colonial establishment depends on hierarchical subject positionings and the supposed 'fixity' of the stable subject. Homi Bhabha defines 'fixity' as the "sign of cultural/historical/racial difference" that is delineated from "'forms of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (18). In short, "Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible" (19).

George Yancy provides a methodological approach for understanding this process of interpellation wherein the colonial gaze is brought forth through a white/European imaginary. As the "civilizing" missions of the nineteenth-century most certainly operates within this framework whereby certain forms of masculinity differ from O/others, specifically in terms of race, then part of rendering masculinity visible is to understand the tropes of domination and submission as they are written in the national narrative. Using Frantz Fanon as his launching point, Yancy reminds us of this dynamic process whereby the colonizer/colonized are structured hierarchically. From a white/Eurocentric position, the logic of racism would deem itself superior, whereby the other is

“naturally” inferior and fit for domination and control. Yancy observes, “The reality, however, is that the construction of the inferior/monstrous colonized is contingent upon the construction of the European as superior and non-monstrous. The colonized is fixed, because the colonizer does the fixing, and ‘thingification’ of the colonized is dialectically linked to the transcendent/master consciousness of the colonizer” (1-2).

In many ways, discerning the means by which the colonial gaze functions is reliant upon an engagement with allegory, trope, and anxiety. The discursive regime of racism (and I would add, sexism and homophobia) is, again in Bhabha’s words, “something that must be anxiously repeated” (18). The allegorical relationship between bodies is split through a variety of dichotomous subject/object positionings: masculine/authority; feminine/powerless; non-white/bad; white/good and so forth. All of these emerge repeatedly within the context of the national narrative and at times, require no narrative intervention to explain a given character’s position as the “natural” authority or the “obvious” enemy: a god-like Fidalgo, a “blood-thirsty savage warrior,” and an angelic (always virginal) white daughter, to name some examples, are the incestuous literary tropes of the western world that inform many of these narratives.

In turn, these dichotomous relationships as they play out within yet another imaginary—nationalism or the nation—automatically imply the same sort of geo-spatial dimensions inherit to coloniality: inclusion/exclusion (or limited inclusion) based upon the concept of *territorialization* and the social construction of the “national body.” Imagining the embodied nation, therefore, is yet another process of inscription whereby certain discursivities of corporeality are embraced while others are rejected, ironically, through various processes of inscription wherein the body serves as a primary locus of power/disempowerment.

To say the least, to study the means by which masculinity operates, even if its operability is intangible at times, is to study a whole host of other social mechanisms of power that operate through it. The study of masculinities invigorates our understandings of the epistemic regimes of power as they relate to race, class, gender, and sexuality precisely because all of these are interdiscursively constructed and incestuous in their intelligibility. Returning to this question of the body and visibility, the only way to decisively render how meaning is (re)produced and inscribed on the body is to delineate the ways in which the traditionally unmarked categories of say, whiteness or masculinity, are mutually inclusive, ironically, in their processes of exclusion.

In a sense, I am treating masculinity as a sort of metanarrative that hosts many other “textual” components. In doing so, I may be able to schematize how racial, sexual, and gender differences flow together as a series of discursive ideations inherent to how masculinity is constantly being (re)written on the body; consequently, because masculinity is an epistemic regime of power based on difference, one may ascertain how, in its interpellation of those differences, it has changed or not changed over time.

To simplify the task at hand, one might think of this project as a consideration of how bodies and the cultural codes that accompany them are “written” and therefore imagined by both an author and his or her potential reader within a given national narrative; this approach implies a certain visibility and thus, the idea that bodies are both read and interpreted within a specific context to produce specific meanings within a given national arena. I ask: in what ways does the body become marked by language and how do certain bodies delineate power and meaning in relation to “imagined others”; how do certain depictions of the body (through race, gender, sexuality, and so on) either (re)produce or challenge discursive constructs with regard to



“imagining community” as Benedict Anderson has defined it in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983)?

Anderson’s theory of “imagined community” and its limits is discussed in the last segment of this chapter. For now, the basic premise is that via print capitalism (the circulation of periodicals for example), in its employment of the vernacular rather than Latin, led entrepreneurs to establish "national print-languages, “a standardized calendar delineating days of importance, shared institutional experiences, etc. In short, these textual components of print capitalism created the bonds and emotional legitimacy for the social construction of an “imagined community” (Anderson 5-6).

Moreover, when hegemonic representations of national belonging are symbolically contained within certain bodies (most often those of heterosexual, white males) are challenged, what socio-cultural or rather, socio-political “narratives” are also being challenged and how? I would like to add that despite the fact that I consistently refer to ‘identity’ or ‘identities’ throughout this project, I view gender and other forms of identity as discursive formations. My employment of the words ‘male’ or ‘female’ is not an affinity for the gender binary, but a problem inherent to language in its own right. This is also a dilemma I face when employing the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ as again, I view both as discursive constructs that are not mutually exclusive to one another. Despite my obvious affinity for gender and queer theory, this project remains, in my opinion, necessarily informed by feminism above all else. Susan Bordo, Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Kathy Davis, among countless other feminist, gender and sexuality theorists, have dissected our contemporary views of the body by linking it with questions of the distribution of power, intersubjectivity, the (re)production of cultural codes, subjection, and abjection; thus, the “body” of bodily theory is voluptuous and ever-varying.

However, despite the many intersections afforded by these theoretical avenues, mine is affinity towards the disruption of violence against women and other minorities. I hold that the process of imagining community is largely contingent upon violence (symbolic and real) against the body and that violence, above all else, is both gendered and sexualized in ways that, despite their invisibility through normalization, is inherent to sexual (and other forms of) violence and its pathological components. This is the chronic condition of the lived body and its relationship to the symbolic.

Within the context of national identity, or rather, imagined communities, this critical project holds that *certain* bodies, particularly those at the center of national iconology are charged with meaning that reach far beyond the surface of the skin. The objectification of the female body in particular, in that the body serves as that which cements the bonds between men, seems, as I argue, to be a centralized component in the negotiation of masculinity and by extent, power over *certain* bodies that extends well beyond male-female intersubjectivity.

Intrinsically, national identity is deeply invested in the commodification of material objects that hold national significance: a passport, postage stamps, currency, works of art, monuments, architecture, the flag, and so on. The nation may be represented by more intangible “things” such as a national anthem, certain media productions, fables, rituals, legends, myths, and ceremonies. At times, the “tangible” and “intangible” aspects of national identities combine, leading certain objects to host something well beyond a nation’s history. National objects initiate and suspend (imagi)nation in ways that are sometimes directly inherent to the discourse of (domi)nation; it is difficult, if not impossible to divorce these two elements— ‘imagination’ and ‘domination’—from embodiment.

The U.S. flag, for example, is far more than cloth and colors. It is an institutionalized object which both contains and produces large amounts of emotional legitimacy: pride, honor, mourning, power, and so forth. Most U.S. citizens—even non-U.S. citizens—are taught, through institutionalized education, how “to read,” or rather, how to interpret it:<sup>3</sup> the stars represent states; the red, blood and thus sacrifice; the white, purity, and so on. The flag also has metafictional properties in that it hosts various stories (both fictional and non-fictional) that may come to mind: how it came into creation (Betsy Ross); how it was placed on the moon; the national anthem and the images it evokes (“bombs bursting in air”).

What one may not notice, at least not immediately, is the way in which bodies and flags are multi-facetedly inseparable. My ten-year-old self learned this very quickly after a homeroom teacher slapped me in the back of the head as I preferred to talk to friends rather than place my hand over my heart and recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag. The shame I was made to feel for having “disrespected” this object (and by default, the sacrificial citizen contained within it) is something that I would not forget. I quickly learned that my body—specifically the performance of my body—as well as my respectful silence, must “rally” behind the flag should I wish to gain the approval of my teacher and of my peers. And so, every day, I stood obediently, hand over

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<sup>3</sup> The socio-historical context in which the flag is located also holds significance: a flag being waved in support of a politician is not the same as a flag being burned during the protests against Vietnam, for example. Bizarrely, then, a flag is an object with its own narrative that holds different meanings depending on the context in which it is being displayed (contexts that may even play host to their own narrative constructs).

heart, staring at that “white purity and innocence,” that red blood of those “brave men” who “died for me,” and the blue authoritative powers of vigilance, perseverance and justice established by the “founding fathers.” In short, national identity invokes both bodily performance and an emotional identification with certain kinds of bodies inherent to national pride (in this case, “founding fathers,” “white purity,” and “brave men”). To resist that performance (whether it is one’s intention to do so or not) is invitation for both shame and social marginalization.

The flag is as highly wrapped up in symbolism of the body as the body is wrapped up in the symbolism of the flag. The flag embodies the sacrificial citizen and sacrificial citizen is quite literally, especially in the rituals and ceremonies of death, wrapped up in the flag. Most, after having served in the military, in their moment of death, are symbolically contained within this national object that is to represent their memory (memory as service to the nation) in that “they” are ritualistically handed over to their grieving widow by their “brothers in arms” now embodied by the flag folded ceremoniously thirteen times. Additionally, it is the flag that enshrouds their bodies as they are lowered to the ground; later, the flag waves aside the tombstone that marks their grave. Thus, when the body is no longer present, the American flag seemingly steps in to assume its place: the flag represents the physical body of the sacrificial soldier that serves as a symbolic exchange between family and nation.

The flag, as a material object forms part of banal nationalism (at sporting events, in classrooms, in governmental buildings, on t-shirts) becomes extremely charged with meaning as well as emotion in certain socio-political contexts. It is emblematic of social identity of a particular group of people; it announces shared—however abstract—values (“liberty,” “freedom,” the “pursuit of happiness”). It is a claim on identity, yet simultaneously something to be obeyed, worshiped, honored, and inspired by. It is an object that may both represent and

provoke individual sacrifice. When one desecrates, ignores, or insults the flag, they are, in essence, challenging or provoking certain meanings symbolically associated with the body—bodies contained, memorialized, and sacrificed. Thus, a flag is not merely an expression of nationhood; it is one of the many objects that produce an emotional tie to the nation and to those who are symbolically contained within it: the imagined community and by default, the many bodies and bodily performances both contained and (re)produced by symbolic layers.

These “emotional ties that bind” evoked by the flag can serve as means to understanding the relationship of object fetishism to “imagined communities.” As an object that forges the bonds between members of a given nation who do not know and will likely never meet one another, the “emotional legitimacy” it produces is inherent to Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities.” In posing the idea that the formation of nation, national identities, and even national sentiment (emotions “experienced” and shared in narrative) occur within a larger framework of societal circumstance, specifically, changing conceptualizations and certain fundamental elements brought forth by print capitalism, Anderson introduced the idea that the nation/national identity could be seen as a sort of socio-cultural artifact. To state the obvious: national identities are fabricated, invented, social constructs that have been imagined despite the fact that one’s national identity hosts a plethora of implications regarding one’s quality of life, one’s ability to move freely from one place to another, etc. This, and national identities are never stagnant: they are ever-flowing abstractions, constantly shifting in meaning and consequence yet ritualistically reified in our everyday lives. Like the flag, the nation is a fabrication wherein the concept of embodiment dangles about and hangs from multiple threads that produce it and are (re)produced by it. For one, the concept of nation is undoubtedly a primary basis for the mobilization of one collective group of peoples against another who are symbolically contained

within (or outside) its imagined borders. Although “community” is at the core of this primary socially constructed identity, violence too is legitimized through the concept of nation often under the cloak of the “greater good” and/or the guise of protectionism both of which borrow their meanings from, as I argue, a gendered arrangement of corporeality (e.g. protect and serve the motherland).

In short, the concept of nation plays host to other abstract notions inherent to gender such as (national) pride or (national) honor—so much so that those contained within its imaginary borders are willing to suffer, sacrifice, and even kill in response to both internal and external threats against it—be they real or perceived. Through these intangible terms such as “pride” and “honor” in correlation with both narrative and rhetoric the means by which imagi(nation) and domi(nation) may produce and uphold a horrific reality. The need to fully understand both the individual and social mechanisms at work within the abstraction that is national identity is not the only reason that it should interest academics; rather, it should be viewed as an ethical imperative to further comprehend how individual and collective identities are immersed in a “civic duty” for the “greater good,” while simultaneously exposing how those very same identities are employed to legitimize violence against others be it through war, exploitation of labor, state-sanctioned abuse, narratives of victimization, and so forth. One must look for the forces at work within our actions as individuals and collectivities, where and how these are consistently reconstituted through ritualistic behavior, iconology, our actions, reactions, and even inactions. Anderson’s theory may provide a starting point.

Ultimately, viewing the nation as well as nation-ness as “cultural artifacts of a particular kind” (7) permitted Anderson to pivot towards his fundamental inquiries: “why have they come into historical being, how have they changed, and why do they produce large amounts of

emotional legitimacy?” (9). Eventually Anderson will conclude that towards the end of the eighteenth century, there evolved a “spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces,” and that eventually these “forces” would evoke a certain legitimacy for thinking the nation. Once created, these “forces” would be “capable of being transplanted with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (10). Gender did not form part of Anderson’s discussion despite the fact that he wrote “in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender” (5). What gender (as well as sexuality) may lend to Anderson’s theory is something that will be discussed in the last section of this chapter and throughout this dissertation specifically in terms of how certain bodies are imagined through socio-cultural artifacts of a different kind: gender and sexuality.

The aim is to pivot towards a new understanding of how gender, sexuality, and nationalism walk hand-in-hand as central components of national identity while attempting to comprehensively dismantle the notion that queerness is somehow peripheral to national belonging. I wish to disrupt the notion that queerness is something marginal to, if not existing altogether “outside” of heteronormative constructs, gender relations, and familiar structures that are so often hoisted up as the models through which nation-ness or national identities are formulated. This is no quest to search for or “recover” the gay and lesbian voices of our histories, though in certain cases, it could be, as my last chapter will argue. Rather, in questioning the legitimacy of normality in certain socio-historical contexts, I will inform how the heteronormative lens through which most texts are read has ultimately destroyed any enriched understanding of how constructs of gender and sexuality function in unique and unpredictable

ways—textual components that have traditionally and continuously been dangerously ignored. Panic and queerness have been married to one another for quite some time. In the example of Dávila’s Bolívar, one can undeniably see that the representation of a national hero with feminine, trans, and by default, queer attributes is capable of evoking a strong reaction, even repulsion. But what is it about giving “a man” these attributes that is so “disturbing”? What exactly is being disturbed and how? This question alone could very easily inform the theoretical undertones that have produced these pages.

## 1.2 BOLÍVAR’S BOOBS AND OTHER “INDECENT” EXPOSURES



Figure 1.2. Curaçao Chronicles, “Bolívar of Bustillos Beiner versus iconography”

Naked and “in the purifying waters of his bath”: this is how Colombian writer and Nobel laureate, Gabriel García Márquez, decided to first imagine what he called the “demythified image of Bolívar,” in the opening line of his 1989, *El general en su laberinto*, or *The General in His Labyrinth*, as it is known in English. Lost, alone, and depressed, the novel provides a



fictionalized account of the last seven months of the liberator and leader of Gran Colombia's<sup>4</sup> life. García Márquez has fashioned him a mere mortal: wrapped up in the struggles of life and death, confusion and uncertainty, wearing the worries and weariness of his journey. Well after Márquez decidedly gives his bare-naked character clothing, the reader learns that perhaps the so-called purifying waters have less to do with some impending perfection of a man like no other, and more to do with the washing away of years of a widely-held notion that Bolívar somehow withstood the weaknesses that the rest of humanity must wrestle with. In the words of one of García Márquez's many reviewers, Larry Rohter of *The New York Times*, "Garcia Marquez does everything possible to strip Bolivar of the aura of ascetic saintliness he has acquired in the century and a half since his death and to present him in more realistic and human terms." Thus, the larger-than-life Bolívar is disrobed of his god-like gabbles to be exposed as a "foul-mouthed, flatulent and fornicating" father of nations. According to Rohter, García Márquez saw his novel as a sort of rebuttal to the institutionalized versions of Bolívar that have long populated the textbooks of Latin Americans and others across the world. Rohter, in describing García Márquez's Bolívar observes:

This Bolivar is also very much a man of the Caribbean, of mixed race and culture and proud of it. Mr. Garcia Marquez, himself a native of Colombia's Caribbean coast, said it offended him that "in the portraits of the youthful Bolivar, the heritage of his African

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<sup>4</sup> Gran Colombia was a short-lived republic (1819–30) that included parts of Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Simón Bolívar led revolutionary forces to overthrow Spanish rule and establishing a government at a congress in Angostura (now Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela).

blood is visible, but that disappears, in an evident display of racism, as he won glory," until 'you end up with the Roman profile you see on the coins.'

To all appearances, García Márquez's frustrations were not a mere concern that somehow Bolívar was unfairly represented as a mythical creature rather than a man, but that the national mythos of his heroic masculinity had erased far more than his human vulnerability; García Márquez's disgruntlement was the understanding that the image of Bolívar contracted a severe case of "white-washing."

Likewise, this was precisely what the many colors of Dávila's painting (displayed in fig 1.1) had exposed; some, like cultural theorist Nelly Richard, have argued that Bolívar's newly queer body, as the painter depicts it, was not the only "undesirable" attribute afforded to him. (120) As if toying with Bolívar's gender were a paltry detail, Dávila also portrayed the founding father of not one, but many nations as having had more indigenous features much in the way that Márquez's Bolivarian body bears the features of mulatto identity.<sup>5</sup>

"Bolívar's face(s)" alone (see fig 1.2), regardless of the rest of his body, has become an extensive battleground for cultural and political debate surrounding race, class, gender, and even homophobia. Venezuelan opposition leader and National Assembly head Henry Ramos Allup made international headlines as recently as January of 2016 after removing portraits of Bolívar from the walls of The Venezuela's National Assembly. The reason was: Ramos Allup

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<sup>5</sup> Bolívar is usually cited as having been the son of an aristocrat of direct Spanish descent and as García Márquez's frustration with Bolívar's many institutionalized make-overs unmasks, contemporary imaginings of Bolívar dismiss the possibility that he likely bore the physical characteristics of a mixed and diverse racial heritage.

voiced to the press his offense to a “new Bolívar” of sorts; this Bolívar, a digitized composite—CSI style—commissioned by the former leader of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, after he exhumed Bolívar’s supposed remains to perform scientific tests. This version (fig. 1.3) was often referred to by the media as a “*mulato*” Bolívar offended many, including Rarmos Allup (Clarín).



Figure 1.3. Hugo Chávez unveils a portrait Simon Bolívar, July 24, 2012. *Associated Press*

Whether or not one should perceive Chávez’s rendition of Bolívar as an attempt to achieve historical accuracy based on scientific advances, or a means to promote his own agenda, might be beside the point; however, one thing is clear: for some, like gender and sexuality, race too can have its “vulgar” connotations. Why should Bolívar’s racial heritage be a controversial subject in the first place and why would any claim that Bolívar was “less white” be taken as an offense? It would seem that, at the very least, those who express concern regarding (re)production of a national hero may play host to an insecurity of a particular kind; perhaps some would prefer that whiteness, or at least the fiction of whiteness, like heteronormativity, should remain undisturbed.

The “queer” version of Bolívar as an artistically politicized corporal terrain also challenges the status-quo of acceptability. When one examines the “fictions” of gender, of sexuality, and of race as they are “written” on the body, new and radical understandings of how

these social constructs are fused together on the “symbolic body” can be wondrously astonishing. To this point, the question becomes not how to best represent Bolívar, or to which body he truly belongs, but why these questions matter in the first place, and to whom.

Conversely, Nelly Richard, with regard to Dávila’s Bolívar, describes how Dávila’s means of depicting Bolívar may be perceived as a “criminal act,” specifically “the act of painting the Liberator “as if he were a deviant” (with the body of a woman)” (124). Oddly though, by lending Bolívar’s image to the realm of femininity and to the racial mixtures of indigenous features so inherently characteristic of the lands he once “liberated,” one might argue that Dávila’s depiction of Bolívar is a better reflection of the people that he has come to “embody,” which was precisely the problem.

The “indecent exposure” was not that Bolívar was showing his breasts as if to ask for plastic beads at a frat party, but rather that those breasts were precisely exposing the frat party writ large: the fraternal order, the patriarchy as a political-social system which has long held power in Chile, Venezuela, and most modern nations around the world. Was this the giant “fuck you” that Dávila might have had in mind? Richard argues: “The feminine retouching that degenerated Bolívar’s image points to the following hidden truth: the discourse of history is gendered: no one doubts, from the first school texts, that history is written in the masculine” (125). It is not difficult to uphold Richard’s truth: that the discourse of history, that history itself, is “written in the masculine.” But what does this mean precisely? The “masculine” cannot, and likely will never, be defined as a homogenous identity. On the surface, “the masculine” can loosely be defined as a list of qualities or appearances traditionally associated with the male sex. Therefore, this is a term readily understood by most, and/or taken for granted in that it is as “evident” or even “natural” as it is unquestioned. Nevertheless, the codes of masculinity depend

upon the socio-cultural context in which they are found. In the case of Dávila's painting (later circulated as postcards), one can argue that the upset directly relates to Bolívar's status as both a national and international icon. Traditionally, his gender codings are that of a heroic, fatherly, and as I will discuss, Christ-like masculinity which is evident via the name by which he is known: *el libertador* [the liberator]. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, masculinity, such as the one so often found in national figures like Bolívar, is not necessarily a constant, but one that is so fluid and so slippery at times that it becomes relatively impossible to define. And yet, the abstraction that is "masculinity" lends a plethora of symbolic implications to those who lay claim to the figure of Bolívar, his ardor, his ghost, and oddly, even his dead body.

Arguably then, the panic invoked by Dávila's representation is that the figure of Bolívar, or rather, Bolívar's body, is deeply bound to a long tradition of upholding the white, European-descendant and aristocrat as the founding father in a geographical territory that is largely non-white, non-aristocratic, and is deeply divided by racial, class, gender, and ethnic asymmetries. Lending indigenous characteristics to Bolívar's body arguably undermines a long-held racial hierarchy rooted in the initial encounters of two continents clashing against one another. One can argue that time and time again the unmarked national subject, following Rita Schmit's *The Nation and Its Other* (2005), "bore the stamp of white male ethnicity as the limit and condition of normalized national belonging, in relation to which, all forms of differences were interpreted" (6). This is certainly the Bolívar that García Márquez hopes to challenge, the Bolívar that Dávila has thrown into question, and oddly the Bolívar that Chávez seeks to deny by attempting to find the more "authentic" version of the national hero's racial attributes.

How, in effect, did the invention of particular national icons serve to render invisible a logic of neocolonialism and ritual destruction that laid at the heart of the "civilizing mission" in

which these new nations undeniably took part in, and arguably, still uphold? Again, because both the social category of white(ned) masculinity is harbored beneath the critical cloak of invisibility, to study the ebb and flow of genders in tandem with race, is to study what has largely gone unquestioned. However, as is the case with Dávila's Bolívar, when masculinity or racialized masculinity *is* questioned, challenged, and/or re-performed, the norms that it has come to represent, those individual and social attributes lent to its unquestioned adherence, are suddenly made visible by others' reactions: reactions of repulsion and uproar surrounding the performance of gender. Herein lies the "indecent exposure" of gender performativity. The questions "exposed" by Dávila's gendered representation of Bolívar and those who have reacted so strongly to it are numerous. If Bolívar's image is somehow "degenerated" by this depiction, how might one interpret the "decline"? Is it the introduction of the feminine on the surface of Bolívar's body that some find criminal? Is it the emasculation of Bolívar? Does giving his/her body feminine attributes somehow make it less masculine? Is it because one cannot easily determine to which sex this new body belongs? Is it because Bolívar is now transgender? Because Bolívar now has a queer body?

These questions allow one to further understand what is at stake for all those who lay claim to the body of Bolívar and why such claims are fundamental to larger, collective identities in the first place. Though his is an individual body, I will uncover how Bolívar's body goes far beyond the material essence of corporeal confines to become a blend of fictive imaginings and even a disassembling of sorts. As a national icon, his body, and by default his gender codings, become symbolically territorialized. The endowment of those who lay claim to his body is transferred onto entire nations and ethnicities as a symbol of their fictive competency as

members of the same social collectivity. As I will show, even presidents blatantly lay claim to some sort of metaphysical power that exudes from his bones.

Wherein race is concerned, if, according to Richard, the feminine retouching “degenerated” the image of Bolívar, what then, did Dávila’s racial revision of a national icon “indecently expose”? Richard observes:

The indigenous, the feminine, the popular exhibited traits of sub-identity so long censored by the academicism of universal art history in complicity with the interests of whitewashing ideology of “official Latin Americanism’s” traits of impurity that contaminated the official image of the hero, of the independence legend of Latin America, integrating “the subordination (the Indian, the woman) to the *criollo* centrality (oligarchy, masculine) of the national project. (124)

Dávila’s controversial reproduction of a national hero evidently transgressed an invisible boundary, or in Richard’s words, “created a tension by invoking the indigenous and colonization within the same scene of identity (the mestizo face), where blackness struggles against the cosmetics of whitening that was responsible for the official simulacrum; it cracked the mask to exhibit what it covered and hid” (124). Thus, when one speaks of Bolívar’s masculinity, they are ultimately, as Richard’s words suggest, talking about race. If a national hero happens to be a white(ned) national hero in the midst of a populace who is largely non-white, I must reiterate the question: how do the more “authentic” depictions of Bolívar’s masculinity, specifically his white(ned) masculinity, code and even “mask” the national identity of a Bolívar that has come to be seen as “the father” of entire nations, and perhaps more conversely, “the liberator” of the people? Would Dávila’s painting have hit “the mark,” or arguably “the unmarked” to borrow from deconstructionist theory, had he only feminized Bolívar without the addition of racial

components and/or in some fashion laid his queer origin to rest? Or vice-versa: had Dávila chosen an all-male Bolívar with mestizo features, would the painting uphold the same power? I am of the opinion that the answer is quite simply, no. Far too often, when it comes to national identification, race and gender work in tandem. This is not only true of the Venezuelan or Chilean national contexts but holds true in multiple national socio-political arenas. Thus, the crucial, critical task that remains is to examine precisely how and when gender, race, and even sexuality combine within national imagery to produce specific gender codings upon the sexed body.

The reaction to Dávila's painting, specifically the reaction to the queering of a prominent national icon, bears remarkable similarity to those surrounding Licia Fiol-Matta's 2001 publication, *Queer Mother for the Nation*, wherein Fiol-Matta launched a critical inquiry into the sexual identification of the life and legacy of Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957). Mistral, widely embraced as the symbolic mother of Chile, gained notoriety as the first Latin American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the words of George Yúdice:

Licia Fiol-Matta skillfully unpacks the complex strands of the persona constructed by and around Gabriela Mistral—surrogate mother of the Chilean nation, Schoolteacher of America, cosmopolitan defender of human rights, Nobel Laureate, auratic bard, melancholic, closet lesbian—a queer-normative complexity ranging across numerous private and public scales, from the remote valley of her birth to the United Nations.

Like Dávila's Bolívar, Fiol-Matta's project did not go unnoticed and was heavily criticized. In 2008, Chilean Journalist Patricio Lennard writes of this cultural moment "la pregunta sobre si Gabriela Mistral era o no lesbiana marca una de las controversias más escandalosas de la que se tenga memoria en la cultura chilena" [the question as to whether or not Gabriela Mistral was or



was not a lesbian marks one of the most scandalous controversies of Chilean culture in memory]. According to Lennard, when a Chilean director/screenwriter team announced plans to make a movie portraying the life of Mistral wherein her (female) American secretary, Doris Dana, was to be portrayed as her lover, the government arts agency in Chile refused to finance the project; the Mexican government also withdrew once-promised funding.

Similarly, the mayor of Mistral's region, according to the *New York Times*, "warned that he will do everything to prevent the filmmakers from shooting there." The paper quotes Mayor Lorenzo Torres: "We are not going to permit them to attack one of Chile's greatest cultural references" (Rohter). Volodia Teitelboim, the Chilean author of one of Mistral's biographies, also denounced the film describing it as an attempt to "enloda[r] la memoria de una gran mujer chilena y latinoamericana [besmirch the memory of a great Chilean and Latin American woman] (as qtd. by Rohter and Lennard). Teitelboim refused to mention any notion that Mistral may have been a lesbian despite the fact that after the release of letters between Mistral and Dana, there is little left to question: the two women were in love and even adopted a child together (Lennard).

"Enlodar," of course, is a powerful verb; Rohter translates it to "besmirch" but the word may be more accurately translated to a "muddying" of her memory; regardless, in either translation the word "memory" is the word that is central to this analysis. In this context, for a public figure to be queered or represented as "queer" is perceived as an "attack" to use Torres's words, on one of "Chile's greatest cultural references." It is not necessarily about the individual life of Mistral, but Chile's "memory" of her—a memory that is, according to certain critics, under attack. Whether it is regarding Bolívar's boobs or Mistral's lesbian lust, both of these figures, according to critics, are somehow violated and "indecently exposed," their memories and legacies "besmirched"—muddied, tainted, discolored, and ultimately dishonored by these

renditions of their gender and/or sexuality. They are, in essence, labeled as “perversions” by those who lay claim to more “authentic” versions of their characters.

Such claims on authenticity seem to blatantly announce: Mistral cannot be queer and also a mother just as Bolívar (and his representation) cannot be a hero and also a “transvestite.” The symbolic mothers and fathers of nations, these reactions tell us, cannot be queer—not yet. Their bodies, their personas, their symbolic characterizations, are too valuable to national identification. They are the faces of national currency; they are the monuments of city-centers, and they are crucial to the carefully constructed “memories” of national histories. Perhaps the “truths” surrounding their individual lives—whether it is an accurate depiction of their character or a misguided representation—no longer matter for theirs is a history now grounded in monumentalism. By “defacing” their public images, something much larger has seemingly been threatened. One begins to clearly receive the “official” message: queerness and national identity do not march hand-in-hand. Or do they?

I have referred to these specific depictions of national icons as an “indecent exposure” in the sense that much of the “queering” of these figures has seemingly disrupted either the moral or local standards of “acceptable” visibility. By challenging a characterization, or rather, a perception of a particular characterization, each one of these representations has uncovered certain claims already laid upon their bodies. By “uncovering” a portion or portions of their bodies, literally uncovered in the case of Dávila’s Bolívar whose breasts stamp his bare chest, or by exposing the possibility of their queerness, these artists have casted their reinterpretations against the generalized attitude of what is “decent,” while simultaneously exposing “normalized” views of “appropriate” visibility and even sexual behavior. They expose and challenge social norms and even laws regarding “what should remain covered up.” In short, these examples find

themselves up against yet another binarism directly related to both gender and sexuality: the false division of private/public.

In the words of prominent queer theorists Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant, “there is nothing more public than privacy” (547). Rather than employing queer theory as a means through which one can slowly carve out a public (and therefore institutional) space for the marginalized LGBTQI community, the aim of this dissertation is to slowly uncover, undress, and to trace the “naked bodies” that have long populated narratives that inform national identity formation, national imaginaries, and the institutional components that uphold them. One will begin to see how “private” desires and even “privates” themselves are fundamental to “public” figurings of gender and sexuality (through institutions, nationalisms, and even collective imaginaries) of what is and is not “acceptable.” As such, this is not an appeal for queer acceptance into national, heterosexist symbology; rather, it is an attempt to dismantle any notion that heterosexuality is the norm through which national identity and thus, national imaginaries are formulated in the first place—this, despite the fact that any notion of queerness that should settle itself on the symbolic bodies of national icons is readily rejected in the public sphere. The only “revisional task” at hand is to produce new ways of reading national narratives that are informed by theories of gender and sexuality in order to fully examine the “threat,” and outright institutionalized panic surrounding the disruption of so-called “normalcy” and how they have changed (and sometimes remained the same) throughout the past two centuries.

In accordance with Warner’s introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (1991), the aim of queer struggles ought not to be an ultimate goal for tolerance or equal status; therefore, one might think of this project as an endeavored means to dismantle “the logic” of the “sexual order” which is not only invisible to most, but widely institutionalized, or

systemic. In brief, one may certainly employ queer theory as a means of understanding both homophobia and heterosexism in their widespread contexts, institutions, and accounts. However, my aim, or rather the aim of the arduous crucial task that confronts both myself and my reader here, is to render the “invisible” unmarked subject of heterosexuality visible again—to expose its perversions, to scrutinize, examine, dissect, and display any and all assumptions that social institutions and their narratives are not queer “by nature” as the upmost foundational fiction that our own sexual colonizations have led us to believe. Thus, the next task is to understand precisely what queer theory enables us to lay bare. I will lay out a methodological approach to this strategy in the last section of this chapter.

In both of our examples—Bolívar and Mistral—I have been employing specific representations that somehow fashion these historical figures with a queer identity either for allegorical purposes or historical accuracy. In Mistral’s case, it was in order to possibly “uncover” and expose the straitjacket that was tightly bound to Mistral’s motherly, asexual body and by extension, uncover an “official” denial of her lesbianism. But what if one paid less attention to this specific subject of the positioning of queer identity (for example, who is and is not queer) and instead focused more on queer theory itself? Part of queer theory’s appeal, at least from my perspective, is that its debunking of stable sexes, genders, and sexualities develops out of a specific lesbian and gay reevaluation of the post-structuralist figuring of identity wherein identity consists of multiple configurations and unstable subject positionings. “Queer” is not always perceived. However, it can be used as an acceptable elaboration of, or shorthand for, “lesbian and gay” or the larger LGBTQI community. Many, including myself, welcome “queer” as another discursive frontier, another way of thinking the sexual. When one begins to examine, from queer theory’s perspective, that which is “uncovered” by these so-called “indecent

exposures,” they must begin to understand “imagining community” as Benedict Anderson has described it, specifically as it relates to socio-sexual and gender alliances produced in the fictive renderings of shared identity as it is localized on the territorialized bodies relevant to both gender and nation as performative identities.

To unpack the relationship between gender, sexuality, and national identity with specific reference to national embodiment, there are many examples to choose from but perhaps none more suitable than the “Address to the Angostura Congress” which took place in the midst of the Wars of Independence. The speech also marked the first day of the Congress’s installation only two years before what is now modern-day Venezuela would fully break away from Spain. Simón de Bolívar declared:

Séame permitido llamar la atención del Congreso sobre una materia que puede ser de una importancia vital. Tengamos presente que nuestro pueblo no es el europeo, ni el americano del Norte, que más bien es un compuesto de África y de América, que una emanación de la Europa; pues que hasta la España misma deja de ser europea por su sangre africana, por sus instituciones y por su carácter. Es imposible asignar con propiedad a qué familia humana pertenecemos. La mayor parte del indígena se ha aniquilado, el europeo se ha mezclado con el americano y con el africano, y éste se ha mezclado con el indio y con el europeo. Nacidos todos del seno de una misma madre, nuestros padres, diferentes en origen y en sangre, son extranjeros, y todos difieren visiblemente en la epidermis; esta semejanza trae un reato de la mayor trascendencia.

[Permit me to call the attention of Congress to a subject that may be of vital importance. Let us keep in mind that our people is not European, nor North American, that it is more a composite of Africa and American than an emancipation of Europe, because even Spain

itself is not quite European because of its African blood, its institutions, and its character. It is impossible to determine with complete precision to which human family we belong. The majority of the indigenous has been annihilated, the European has mixed with the American and the African, and the African has mixed with the Indian and the European. All born of the womb of the same mother, our fathers, different in origin and in blood, are foreigners, and all of them differ visibly in their epidermis; this dissimilarity carries an obligation of atonement of the greatest significance.] (Bolívar 364-66; Burke and Humphrey 9)

Bolívar was speaking, not surprisingly for his time, to an all-male congress in the city of Angostura, now renamed Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela. In this example, even in the midst of the Wars of Independence, Bolívar felt the need, or rather, “an obligation of atonement” to address the question of difference in relation to the formation of a new collective identity that would soon become recognizable as a nation. His speech, in relation to this collective, insists upon a new allegorical formation of what it means to be “a human family.” The nexus of this analogy is lodged upon the female body, in this case, “the womb of the same mother” which, one would assume, at least here, to be “the motherland.” This is precisely the place where much of the critical analyses ahead will linger: where land meets body and body meets land—it is the place of abstraction where subjectivity, objectivity, consumerism, and production can become indistinguishable.

One tool that feminism, by and large, has provided is a means by which one can “read” the body of the symbolic mother. Feminism’s insight into patriarchal logistics has taught us, for instance, how protectionism and patriarchy figure into constructs of femininity ascribed to both physical and national bodies, specifically in times of war e.g.: “We must protect and serve her”

and by default, the relationship that exists between male and female configurations in any given reference. For instance, in Bolívar's analogy, the mother is given over to a sort of transparency; she is a homogenous entity as opposed to the heterogeneous image of the father(s). Bolívar's speech is illustrative of Judith Butler's claim that "reason and mind are associated with masculinity and agency, while the body and nature are considered to be the mute facility of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject" (*Gender Trouble* 50).

This speech, this configuration of the symbolic that seemingly polarizes yet connects the masculine with the feminine, can indisputably be found in an abundance of examples in the Western world and perhaps beyond. Simply stated, it may be perceived as a classic binarism that incorporates two imagined genders. Within the analogy, the female body seems to be the "raw material" through which kinship, or in this case, national male-male bonding wishes to appropriate its new found identity. A feminist reading could and most likely would focus on female subjugation in relation to male subjectivity. The feminine in this political context is nothing more than a womb, a reproductive means, and then a banal mother to men: she is bound to the private sphere; as a non-citizen she is a marginal (yet oddly central) figure in the configuration of the larger, collective identity which is figured as male.

If one moves beyond the binarisms of gender and partly abandons a focus on the subjugation of women, they may find, through the critical lens of gender and queer theories, exposed is that which is arguably less visible to most readers in our contemporary times: male-male bonding through the objectification of the female body, or rather, femininity ascribed to a the "motherland." Todd Reeser observes, "In the same ways that analogies are made between race and gender, connections are often made between the nation and gender as human traits are ascribed to the nation to put forth a certain image of what it is or what it should be" (171). Reeser

asserts, “Modern citizenship might be taken as a kind of homosociality, particularly during periods in which women could not be citizens and could not vote,” as it was in this case. Secondly, “Groups of men—or one large group of men assumed to compose the nation—are banded together, in mutual love of their object of desire, the nation” (174). In this case, national unification is both stabilized and made possible through the feminine, or the singular commonality amidst these men “born of the same mother.” This, according to Reeser, is the classic homosocial triangle insofar as it incorporates “desire for the woman as well as desire among men, whereas this kind of national model suggests mutual, mediated desire for a woman-like nation as well as masculine homosocial desire that functions with the framework of the nation” (174).

But what might this desire tell us about masculinity and male-bonding? Other critics have argued that masculinity or rather, masculinities are automatically modeled through same-sex desire. Michael Kimmel, for one, argues that masculinity, in its own right, is a homosocial enactment precisely because, although masculinity may be perceived as being natural—something that biological men have because they have a penis—this is not always the case. Rather, one becomes a man, through rites of passage, through show, ritual, competition, etc., one enters into “manhood.” It would seem then, returning to Bolívar's speech, that if the feminine is the mute facility or the “motherland” then it is only the masculine which is left open-ended as that which brings forth an “obligation of atonement.” Obviously “atonement” seems to be connected to identity within this example, but what was the original error? Or rather, for whom is this atonement made?

This “error” (that which must be “atoned for”) is rather ambiguous and open-ended even if one is to follow the speech more in depth. Kimmel’s argument that “masculinity” can be



perceived as a form of homosocial desire as it pertains to a larger sense of manhood, might provide a clue. Following his argument, the enactment of masculinity may refer to an attempt of gain approval of other men. Kimmel writes of manhood: “We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance” (“Masculinity as Homophobia” 215). To be accepted into the manhood, then, is to be desired by other men: to perform acts in an attempt to gain male approval through what a given society deems to be masculine or rather, an ever-changing masculine ideal (214-16). Kimmel is speaking of individuals here, but what of, as Reeser has observed, the notion that gender may be inscribed on the nation. Following this line of argumentation, is ‘manhood’ also projected onto nationhood in the symbolic encounter with other nations? If this is the case, then it is quite ironic that the first Latin American novel, and the novel upon which Benedict Anderson employs to explain the processes at work in “imagining community”—*El periquillo sarniento*— is widely considered a *bildungsroman*: the literary genre that expresses the imagined movement between boyhood and manhood (which entails the search for an ideal male role-model within the novel). In order to find an ideal, the protagonist must sort through various “types” of men and as the title implies (The Mangy Parrot), replicate and eventually reject the male roles that simply do not fit. This is an interesting point should one consider Kimmel’s view of homophobia beyond sexuality, as a form of organizing principle of maleness.

Kimmel’s definition of homophobia centralizes men’s desire for other men as a predication for the condition of manhood. In certain ways, however, he positions homophobia beyond the realm of sexuality to that of gender and gender hierarchy:

Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more than the fear that we might be perceived as gay. "The word 'faggot' has nothing to do with homosexual experience or even with fears of homosexuals," writes David Leverenz. "It comes out of the depths of manhood: a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems sissy, untough, uncool" (1986, 455). Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. (233)

Following Kimmel's definition of homophobia as it pertains to masculinity, then, one could extend homophobia to a mythic threat to power, a threat of emasculation and, therefore, the threat of vulnerability and exposure, as well as a threat that a man may play host to an "illegitimate masculinity." The concept of illegitimate masculinity is ever-present in Lizardi's novel; moreover, it is both women and racialized others (the milk of an indigenous nanny, for example) who have the potential to taint one's essential core as a man. If this applies to individuals, can the "male-male bonds" that forge national identity also be perceived in the same light?

Further complicating this theoretical gesture that homophobia on a national-level is a fear of exposure for being weak, not measuring up, or emasculated on a global scale, how do we relate Kimmel's definition of homophobia to a project that does not blatantly concern itself with depictions of homosexuality as such—a historical temporality where the term "homosexuality" is not yet a discursive construct that is either understood or invented and therefore, has not yet made its appearance on a literary front? Is it possible for homophobia to exist before the so-called "birth of the homosexual"—or at least, loosely following Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, prediscursive categories of homophobia, and/or heterosexual panic whose residue

informs our own notions of homophobia today? For instance, if one is to examine “sexual perversion” as it is depicted or masculine “others,” can a correlation be drawn from the folds of representation where gender, sexuality, and other social constructs such as race or class intersect? Perversion of course plays host to multiple identities—it implies abnormality, deviancy, evil, lack of control, “bad women,” and “bad men” and it most certainly implies otherness. Yet one does not have to be homosexual to be a pervert; one does, however, in the embodiment of a pervert play host to abnormal sexuality and/or gender constructs.

These questions hold further significance when, following Kimmel, I ask: if “masculinity is a homosocial enactment” (Kimmel 33), what exactly does homosociality enact? How will allegorical representations, such as the heart of this Bolivarian speech, enact national belonging (and in some cases, “not belonging”). I argue that in many cases, difference and sameness must define itself through ever-shifting codes of masculinity, and just as femininity has been ascribed to the national body. so too will masculinity be ever-flowing through the various social molds made to sculpt a concept as abstract as an “imagined community” that must unite to live and to die together.

If, again following Kimmel’s insights into masculinity, one seeks at the intersections of “manhood” and the national belonging codes of masculinity that are historically contingent, yet bizarrely “eternal,” “a timeless essence,” something that every biological male has as a result of having a penis, what does one do with the paradox of both manhood and masculinity as that which is passed on, earned, “as a transcendent tangible property that each man must manifest in the world...the reward presented with great ceremony to a young novice by his elder for having successfully completed an arduous initiation ritual” (33). What does it mean when masculinity or manhood are perceived as “things” that one must obtain, that one must earn? How might these

things be “enacted” through symbolic representations of the female body if, following Butler’s claim that oftentimes the female body acts a sort of raw material “awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject” (*Gender Trouble* 50). What is being signified by the opposing masculine subject(s)? How does one interpret the fact that there are multiple men who form part of this analogy, “the imagined community”? If the “dissimilarities” between these men need to be “atoned” for to borrow from Bolívar, how will these differences be negotiated? In other words, if the process of negotiation involves both loss and appropriation, how does the formation of a seemingly homogenous identity, e.g. “we are one,” or “we must all come together” manage these differences specifically with regard to establishing a unitary identity? Are objectionable differences through the process of male-male bonding feminized and thus rejected by hegemonic masculinity? If not, are they gendered differently? Are there ways in which racial and/or ethnic differences also reflect gender and gendered differences? When in full view, can societal perceptions of male-male relationship before the so-called “birth” of the homosexual somehow revise the largely held belief that national identities are modeled and firmly stabilized through heteronormative relations? Of course, Bolívar’s speech did not reveal the answers to these questions directly, but other symbolic “marriages” of nation and gender, and by extension sexuality, race, class, etc., in Latin America arguably do.

I will disassemble multiple analogies, similar to Bolívar’s, wherein a male authorial voice embarks on a creation of (re)defining, sometimes reconciling, sometimes out casting individual identities as they relate to the formation of a collective community, most often, vis-à-vis the female body as a depository of male (or rather, masculine) identities. Why gender is seemingly so important to national identity formation is another question that I will be forced to address. In Bolívar’s case, it’s easy to say that he recognizes the need to establish a unified “brotherhood” in

the face of the Wars of Independence as the seeds of modern nationalisms are being firmly planted, institutions reimagined, and in some cases, established for the first time. His first thrusts towards independence are to have others (at this point, the politicians and war strategists seated in Congress) recognize the necessity of the symbolic: to redefine ‘human family’ while attempting to establish an external representation of that collective in the face of larger, global configurations of community.

If, within a domestic context, the homeland is feminized (the motherland), how do nations present themselves to foreign nations as impenetrable yet protected? Is the nation a “protected” mother? Does she assume the hard, stronger, symbolically “impenetrable,” male body? If a nation is gendered as masculine and one is presented with a “fatherland” or *la patria* (a word that in its own right, mixes gender configurations) what can be said about the fact that communal bonds between men are established through an object of desire which is configured as male? What happens when the male body (as opposed to the motherland) becomes the depository for fraternal bonding?

To begin to sort through this question of the male body as a central object of desire for a collective community one needn’t look far: look to Jesus, or Bolívar, or Bolívar as Jesus as the following example will depict him. Here I present a different Bolívar: not the Bolívar whose speech took place in 1818, or the transgendered Bolívar in Dávila’s painting, but a Bolívar who would also become timeless, too, through his constant “appearances” in literature, theatre, poetry, newspapers, television, and movies, specifically in Venezuela but also in other national contexts as well.

Although there are scores of examples from which to choose, I wish to examine a snippet of “Canto a Bolívar” (1950) written by the well-known Chilean poet and politician,

Pablo Neruda. As a canonized poem, it is well-known and passed through a variety of institutional establishment; thus, it allows an understanding of how expressions of national identity and desire for the male body are inherently connected to a modern-day context both within and beyond Chile. That and the poem will be resurrected by the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, whose own appropriation of Bolívar will be discussed in depth in the pages that follow.

Again, I have chosen Bolívar as a primary example based on the sole principle that his body, in particular, becomes a site of the contestation of national identity in various examples. Neruda's poem is no exception as it is brimming with desire and idolization with specific focus placed on the body. As a nationalist poem, this same desire is shared with the reader, perhaps loosely another way in which homosociality may be enacted here. Within the poem, seemingly every piece of Bolívar's body—his eyes, his hands, his ears, his heart, his fingers, his forehead, “his throbbing voice,”—are strewn about and adorned with as many flowery words. What else might be expected of a poet who spills forth his love and adoration of his beloved? Here is a small segment:

Libertador, un mundo de paz nació en tus brazos.

La paz, el pan, el trigo de tu sangre nacieron,  
de nuestra joven sangre venida de tu sangre  
saldrán paz, pan y trigo para el mundo que haremos.

[Liberator, a world of peace was born in thine arms.

Peace, bread, the wheat of thy blood were born,  
from our young blood, come from thy blood,  
will come peace, bread and wheat for the world that we

shall make] (lines 52-56)

After reading the poem in its entirety or even this small segment, it is hard to say if Neruda is writing to an imagined Christ or an imagined Bolívar; there is no doubt, however, that the uniting image of the collective whole is no longer “the womb of the same mother” in Bolívar's own analogy, rather, it is Bolívar himself. Likewise, whereas Bolívar's fathers were “different in origin and in blood,” in Neruda's depiction Bolívar's blood is the blood of the people, the nation, and of the land. In fact, Bolívar is everywhere. He is father and mother. Bolívar is god: “PADRE nuestro que estás en la tierra, en el agua, en el aire / de toda nuestra extensa latitud silenciosa, / todo lleva tu nombre, padre, en nuestra morada” [Our FATHER who art in the earth, in the water, in the air / of all our great and silent breadth, / all bears thy name, father, in our land] (lines 1-4). It would seem that the “womb”—the homogenous mother mentioned in Bolívar's own speech—has been cast aside. Bolívar himself, or at least the symbolic imagining of Bolívar, is now the land, body, mind, and spirit of the nation.

The erasure of the feminine within Neruda's poem as it pertains to national identification is certainly not limited to this example. It is, however, pertinent to the study of national identification. Having placed Bolívar on a godly pedestal is likely not the sole action of one poet; rather, Neruda's poem is both a reflection and reification of the processes at work both within and beyond the language that contains it. The poem might be thought of as both a reflection as well as projection that further amplifies how one might think of his or her national identity. It serves as a national memory, an official history, and professes the values of a perceived national unit. Following the structure of the poem, it is a projection of a national self that is at once an individual as well as a collective whole. Note that the plural ‘nuestro [our]’ of Neruda's poem is born from the blood of Bolívar: “from our young blood, come from thy blood,” thus marking the

past, but is also projecting the ideal that is Bolívar, onto the future: from thy blood / will come peace, bread and wheat for the world that we / shall make.” The body of Bolívar becomes the transmission of identity itself.

It is no wonder, then, that the perceived (or contrived) body of Bolívar becomes a highly contested “space.” The odd “nature” of national identification and myth-making processes is that it is seemingly bound to the materiality of the body whose meaning transcends it. Bolívar’s body might be thought of as a constellation of sorts that, while reflecting an imagined origin, casts that identity to the future; it is the means by which a nation (re)produces its cultural heritage as well as its future ideals. For this reason, amongst others, why an artistic representation that challenges these sorts of constructs is capable of causing upset on both national and international levels becomes clearer.

One need only return to the prior example of the outrage produced by Dávila’s painting to understand how the artist’s appropriation of Bolívar’s body hosts a multitude of “problems” for the larger national and international collective. Rather than speculate on “the problem” let us examine the “reasoning” behind the Venezuelan governmental outcry that had very little tolerance for what others might perceive to be the more inclusive version of the national, and therefore collective identity reflected vis-a-vis the body of Bolívar. The following passage is the official message given by the Embassy of Venezuela in Chile:

The Embassy of Venezuela, confronted with a defamation campaign against the most sacred values of our nationhood, as shown by the display of El Libertador Simón Bolívar in publications that we consider undignified and contemptuous of the immortal genius of America’s independence, protests and deplores these displays. ... The reproduction of a postcard offensive to the Father of the Nation ... has originated our protest and those of



other Bolivarian countries, since it affronts the national dignity of the Venezuelan people and its democratic institutions, which feel deep sorrow at seeing how the figure of The Liberator is denigrated ... There are values that are indestructible and feelings that are deeply entrenched ... While protesting and deploring this biased publication, we are deeply grateful to the many Chilean citizens who have shown us their support ... at a moment in which our Fatherland has been affronted in the innermost portion of its being ... ITS NATIONAL HONOR ... Santiago de Chile, 10 de agosto de 1994. (Ojeda as qtd by Duran-Cogan 103)<sup>6</sup>

‘Defamation,’ ‘offend,’ ‘deplore,’ ‘affront,’ and ‘denigrate’—every single one of these words host the same claim to the one thing that bolsters itself in all caps: national honor. There is no logic at play here, no mention of why or how Dávila’s painting manages to do dishonor to an entire nation. Instead, we have only hurt feelings, “deep” hurt feelings: deep sorrow, deep gratitude for others that protest the same, deeply entrenched “values” and “feelings.”

One can obviously speculate what is so offensive to those offended, but the fact that these offenses are not directly referenced is also deeply significant. What is left undeclared, unspoken, and what exactly is the offense? Venezuela’s desire for Bolívar, indeed for what Bolívar’s body represents, is so deeply entrenched that it is unspeakable. This “illegitimate” body of Bolívar hosts a socio-semantic challenge that rests, invisible to most, in the depths of Bolívar’s luscious cleavage. Having incorporated women, the indigenous, queer bodies, —all of those who do not “fit the bill” as to who should be on top in terms of the hierarchy of gender/race/sexuality destabilizes the symbology of Bolívar’s male anatomy. Having inserted “others” into the

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis as it is quoted by Duran-Cogan. Original source could not be located.

semantic field of national fraternity on the most basic of pages—the male body—has automatically problematized masculinist ideologies of nationhood and nation-ness in a way that is so embedded in our cultures, so deeply felt, that it cannot even be explained by those who take offense to it.

And yet, as my next example will show, one would think that in terms of doing “dishonor” to a dead man’s body, a person would have to do something a little more extreme, like necromancy, for instance. Perhaps digging into the depths of earth for the sole purpose of employing Bolívar’s bones as a means of legitimizing one’s political agenda might be more appropriate when it comes to dishonoring the dead? Though, sometimes political performances, as the example that follows argues, are far stranger than fiction.

### **1.3 BEHOLD THE (RES)ERECTION OF MEN**

While the words of Neruda’s poem discussed earlier are significant in their own right, the specific lines previously cited were also those resurrected by the late Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela, after he exhumed Bolívar’s body in 2010 “to perform scientific tests.” The former president declared his reasoning for digging up a dead man; he wanted to determine whether or not Bolívar had been poisoned by his enemies in a murderous conspiracy at the hands of Colombian oligarchs. Notably, the exhumation took place precisely when Chávez was facing political opposition from the Colombian government whom he claimed was trying to assassinate him (Hallvorsen). Despite scientific findings one year later that Bolívar had not been murdered, Chávez was unwilling to accept the answers he so ardently sought. In an interview with state-

controlled television Chávez insisted: "They killed Simón Bolívar. They murdered him and, even though I don't have proof, the circumstances in which he died point to that" (as qtd. by Phillips).

Wherein Neruda's "poring over" of Bolívar's body was poetic, the proximity that Chávez takes to Bolívar's body is bit more literal and undoubtedly performative. Chávez might have spared his audience his own poetic ode to *El Libertador* but upon this literal approximation to the dead bones of Bolívar, according to Hallvorsen, he tweeted: "Viva Bolívar! ... It's not a skeleton. It's the Great Bolívar, who has returned." Of course, "Bolívar's return" in that it is orchestrated by Chávez seems more akin to a priest beckoning the body of Christ amidst his parishioners than it does a president's scientific quest for historical accuracy. Nevertheless, scientific discourse is the means by which Chávez is able to legitimize the unearthing of Bolívar's body. Where science and religion combine to provide the president with discursive authority in this situation is another question in its own right. However, I would like to emphasize that it is ultimately patriotism—through the rituals of the military and thus national ritual—that provide yet another level of how Bolívar's body, quite literally, forms part of a national performance.

To watch Chávez's address to the nation that aired on national television and included the exhumation itself is to watch layers upon layers upon layers of propaganda all of which are centralized through the body of Bolívar. Like Neruda's poetic images that pored over the body of Bolívar, Chávez too has Bolívar's body pulled apart and examined piece by piece, aired on national television, and clearly converting the exhumation into a political performance. Bolívar's body is being consumed; his skeleton is a spectacle. Men in biohazard suits, presumably forensic scientists, march in one-by-one, forming part of a military procession, carefully and ritualistically folding the Venezuelan flag that is draped over Bolívar's skeletal remains.

A single scene such as this one can only further insist upon a theoretical urgency to advance our understandings of the relationship between gender, sexuality, and nation among other social constructs. Take, for instance, the spatial relationships that exist between Chávez's body and the painting of Bolívar that hangs above Chávez's televised speech on the exhumation (fig 1.3); it appears so strategically placed that Bolívar's hand seemingly rests on the President's shoulder in seemingly full support of Chávez's political agenda and the fact that he has just resurrected him from the dead.



Figure 1.4. President Hugo Chávez in front of a portrait of Simon Bolívar. Photograph: EPA

Of course, Bolívar is not there, or maybe he is (Chávez was known for leaving an empty chair for Bolívar's spirit at cabinet meetings, much like the “Unknown Soldier” of the United States for whom many leave an empty plate of food). Nevertheless, Bolívar (rather, Bolívar's spirit) doesn't have a physical body or a physical voice but one mustn't worry; Chávez is eager to lend his own body as a material conduit for Bolívar's voice. Assuming the first-person Chávez says (on Bolívar's behalf): “I live inside of us, I live in our struggle of today.” Chávez presumably switches back to himself only to proclaim: “men like Bolívar have transcended both time and space. They don't have space. They have escaped time.” Chávez recites multiple lines of

Neruda's "Canto a Bolívar," and later professes: "My God, my God, I confess we have cried, we have sworn. This glorious skeleton must be Bolívar because you can feel his ardor" (Chávez as qtd by Padget).

Chávez's obsession, whether politically strategic or not, cannot be divorced from the notion that he wishes to appropriate Bolívar's body to his own. Figure 1.4 below, though separate from the ceremonious resurrection of Bolívar, is yet another instance where the bodies of these two national leaders are visibly indistinguishable (Guerrero). Note that the painting of Bolívar behind the Chávez is all but blocked out. Chávez's own body has been transposed over the silhouette of Bolívar; both his hands rest where Bolívar's hands rest; the glowing aura of glory that surrounds the great mind of Bolívar is now the godly hue that envelops the "great" ideas of Chávez.



Figure 1.5. Chávez and Bolivian President Evo Morales. *Hemispheric Institute* Photograph.

Javier Guerrero

And if the performative merging of Chávez and Bolívar's physical bodies is not enough to convince my reader of this mishmash of masculinity, perhaps an extremely phallic object directly associated with Bolívar's body and masculine prowess might be the ultimate persuasive tool. Thus, figure 1.4 above is not merely a visual representation of one body transposed over another, it is a depiction of a national spectacle wherein one man (Hugo Chávez) exchanges a replica of Bolívar's sword to another (Evo Morales) as a symbolic gesture of their political alliance (and thus, the male-male bond as it extends to the nation that they "embody" as presidential heads of state). Chávez had Bolívar's sword delivered to him, made several replicas, then ceremoniously awarded them to a multitude of political allies.

What is symbolized in these ceremonious "sword rewards"? The most obvious answer is that the sword is a very phallic extension of the most prized attributes of power: protection, authority, strength and courage, all of which Chávez replicates (literally). The sword in all of its penetrating power is an extension of masculinity, yes, but it is also probably one of the most widely used rhetorical devices for displaying hegemonic masculinity. The image above is a Lacanian's dream wherein the phallus (directly associated with Bolívar's masculinity) is symbolically "awarded" as a means of cementing the bonds between men through masculinity of Chávez who "replicates" it.

What if, for the sake of "erecting" an example and as a means of "indecently exposing" the gender(ed) constructs being performed here, one took, as Dávila's paining arguably does, "national embodiment" quite literally. What if, instead of Bolívar's sword, Chávez had replicated Bolívar's penis, molded it into a dildo, and then ceremoniously awarded said dildo to his various male political allies? What if, instead of a sword, it was an object associated with "an extension" of femininity: a white pearl of purity (to symbolize political "integrity")? Of course, these

examples sound absurd in that they are unfitting (the pearl) or unacceptable (the dildo) both of which are marked as unfit for a political exchange between men.

One may not see the absurdity in the exchange of the sword (nor what is symbolically erected by it) because it is a normative convention. The sword, of course, is an extension of honor, but that honor, with the exception of figures like Joan of Arc, is largely reserved for men: it is chivalry, it is knighthood, but it is also, through historic narrative, a means to distinguish one man from another. A sword symbolizes the ability to penetrate, a battle of proximity, a good-old-fashioned duel, a code of honor, and a common model through which hegemonic masculinity may be enacted. In short, the sword is symbolic of male-male rivalry either for reasons of honor, opposing political agendas or contradictory motives. *Sir, I challenge you to a duel.* It is the object of awe and vigor that floats upon the stage of hyper-masculinity and the cult of violence that is honor in battle; it is the means by which men distinguish themselves from other men, from which they produce a hierarchy of masculine power and penetrative force.

Of course, the relationship between Chávez and his re-appropriation of the (imagined) masculinity of Bolívar via the sword is not an isolated incident on the great stage of politics. Presidents around the world have long cashed in on this narrative convention as a rhetorical device for legitimizing their acts. One of Chávez's biggest political rivals, George Bush, the cowboy clown (or "the devil" as Chávez regularly referred to him), largely projected himself a protector of women and children in order to legitimize an extensive war in Iraq. Figure 1.5 below depicts U.S. President George W. Bush holding the sword awarded to him by King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa in the capital of Bahrain, January 12, 2008.



Figure 1.6. President George W. Bush and the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa at the Sakhir Palace in Manama, Bahrain. January 12, 2008 License. Getty Images.

Walking arm and arm, with their giant dildo-swords resting on their shoulders, a phallic tie tucked beneath a jacket, Bush and the King are likely not discussing how best to protect women and children, but are likely plotting war strategy in the Middle East.

In a world largely still “owned,” operated and maintained by a relatively small group of privileged men, the need to render masculinities visible—how they operate, through whom, and for what purposes—is a question of exposing the “indeencies” of masculinity not as that which is inherently “bad,” but whose proponents can be quite dangerous should they remain invisible. The study of male-male bonding with regard to national identity is, in essence, a study of privilege—invisible and largely unquestioned privilege. This is not to say that men’s bonds with other men, men’s desire for other men, is somehow dangerous or wrong or that masculinity is inherently bad. Male bonding, men’s love for other men, and many qualities typically associated with masculinity can be beautiful just as aspects of femininity (playing the role of an inability to perform “masculine tasks”) can be both absurd and appalling.

That said, there are certain ways of performing masculinity that, if left unchecked, serve to marginalize, violate, and exploit “other” bodies. The means by which masculinity performs



itself through the objectified female body, for example, can have very real consequences in the lived experiences of women. Rape isn't about sex. Rape is, on some levels, a process of dehumanization. Homophobia isn't necessarily about sexuality; it is often an enactment of masculinity. Misogyny isn't necessarily about hatred of women; it's about men's preference for men over women. And racism isn't necessarily about race; it's the fear of losing a long-held privilege and believing the false narrative that one is automatically entitled to societal privilege. Many, if not all of the predications of these various forms of abuse are based on the narrative constructs written on the body that have produced those privileges in the first place. Racism, homophobia, and misogyny not only embody that narrative; their expressions accept it as truth in ways that are both conscious and subconscious. At its foundations, this dissertation is a literary study: it is a study of narratives produced and sustained throughout the centuries and in various contexts that are written on the body as text. To truly understand these narratives' foundational components in our modern lives, perhaps it is best to understand how they operate within the larger frameworks of national identities as imagined communities, through the foundation fictions which (re)produced them, while viewing them through the lens of what the nation largely deems to be its abjected other: queerness.

#### **1.4 QUEERING THE TERRITORIES OF NATIONALISM: A CRITICAL MODEL**

At the most basic level, Anderson's theory of "imagined community" argues that certain "ideological constellations" would adhere to a fluidity or continuum in the processes of "imagining" one's self in relationship to another in the essential gesture that would constitute a national "bond" or "fraternal" relationship, linking one stranger with another. These processes of

imagining simultaneously situated an individual within an identity larger than the self while initiating the possibility for individual sacrifice (e.g. dying for one's country).

The process of imagining community also required representations of “fraternal bonding,” which at times he referred to as a “a deep, horizontal comradeship.” He writes: “...regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (16). Using the independence movements of Latin America as a primary model he effectively argued how print culture, most notably in the form of the newspaper and the novel were the basis from which new communities would imagine themselves via various representations such as those discussed above. This is precisely how the idea of nation emerges despite the fact that members of a nation may not ever know or even meet each other, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” as each individual may relate to the character, institution, street, monument, and event that is shared with other members of their community (6-7). Anderson employed what is arguably the first Latin American (Mexican) novel, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento* [*The Mangy Parrot*] (1816) to illustrate how this “nationalist novel” (his words) advocated “imagining community” by way of the novel's main protagonist, his navigation of the sociological landscape of colonial Mexico, and the many institutions, ills, issues, and events found there. In this way, Anderson argued, Lizardi was able to fuse the “world outside” with the “world inside the novel” by presenting the various institutions and experiences referring to it as a “*picaresque tour d'horison*” (18). The authors employment of plurality and possession “our

young man,” Anderson argued, permitted the reader a means by which he/she could identify and connect with the novel’s protagonist.

Although he emphasized fraternal bonding as the foundational component of “imagined communities” he never incorporated gender into his model, despite the fact that he did concern himself with other ethnic, racial, religious, and class identities. If Anderson would have provided an adequate analysis of gender as a social construct, he might have conceptualized how it might very well be the “discreet historical force” *par excellence* capable of forging the “emotional legitimacy” and the so-called “spontaneous distillation of a complex ‘crossing’ of forces” necessary for thinking the nation.

*El periquillo sarniento*, although presented to its readers as one man’s reflection of his life as he passes this knowledge onto his sons, could ultimately function as a metaphorical growth of Mexico, or, “the path to a mature nation” that is capable of governing itself during a time of transition. The narrator assumes the didactic voice of an older Pedro (the main protagonist) who reflects on his life to his sons while on his deathbed. In this sense, one could see the concept of youth as a social category—one that can be subjected to historical processes, particularly the process of education as it is associated with the question of maturity and the production of “good citizens.” However, it is not simply youth / maturity that presents itself in the novel; it the narrative journey from boyhood to manhood that provides the narrative structure. Through his encounters with differentiating male role-models, Lizardi seems to gradually present his reader (and Pedro’s sons) with an ideal male model. Thus, one might say that Pedro’s quest is one that is in search of ideal male role-models as women are almost entirely excluded from the novel and many of the social ills that the character rejects is attributed to them. In other words, this is text a that largely concerns itself with masculinity and its varying

forms that are either rejected or embraced by the narrator. Robert McKee Irwin's has also argued that the novel is primarily concerned with homosocial bonding and even homoeroticism. (Irwin 18).

In short, a better understanding of how gender performance and national identity convene is necessary not only to understanding the novel's role in the creation of Mexican nationalism, but a means to illuminating the gendering of "imagining community" writ large. Largely influenced by Joanne P. Sharp's essay, "Gendering Nationhood: A Feminist Engagement with National identity," I wish to extend upon her notion that gender, like nationality, is "hidden so that it becomes an unquestioned facet of everyday life" (98), and that, like gender, nationality assumes a "natural" presence in our everyday lives so much so that "national identity shares the same post-structural genealogy as Judith Butler's description of the social construction of gendered identity" (98). Sharp argues the ritualistic components of national identity as well as the nation's creation do not occur from "an originary moment or culturally distinct essence but through the repetition of symbols that come to represent the nation's origin and uniqueness" (98). Whereas Butler states that gender is not constituted by "a founding act but rather a regulated act of repetition" (*Gender Trouble* 145), Sharp is able to extend this line of argumentation to that of national identity: "[l]ike national identity, gendered identity takes on its apparently 'natural' presence through the repeated performance of gender norms. In the performance of identity in everyday life, the two identifications converge" and later, "[t]he symbols of nationalism are not gender neutral but in enforcing a national norm, they implicitly or explicitly construct a set of gendered norms (98). In short, gender and national identities are intrinsically linked and national identities, like Butler's famous notion of "gender performance," are reified to borrow from Butler, through "regulated acts of repetition." If nationalism isn't an

ideology, but rather, a form of cultural expression inherently connected to the idea of kinship rather than a specific political doctrine, what are the forces that “naturalize” nationalism?

Despite the array of theoretical upheaval surrounding Anderson’s arguments (he has largely been criticized for his lack of configuring racial discursivities into his argument), his work remains, as Thomas Holt observes, as “a necessary point of departure even for work that pushes its implication in entirely different directions” (vi). The various feminist and gender scholars who have revisited Anderson’s thesis in its Latin American context, among them Mary Louise Pratt, have theorized that Anderson’s “horizontal comradeship” is in explicit reference to male-male bonding in that women, as subjects, were extremely limited when bound to the private, domestic sphere. They were not sovereign subjects but dependent on male citizenry vis-à-vis the patriarchy as a result of the gender asymmetries found within it, although the earliest seeds of feminism both reflect and resist this domestication. Pratt holds that women (unable to be citizens themselves) assumed the role of “the producers of citizens” in that they were “obsessively defined by their reproductive capacity” (51). Thus, they “were neither imagined as nor invited to imagine themselves” to form a part of the horizontal bonds that make up a given nation. In essence, women, with very few exceptions,<sup>7</sup> were limited to their own bodies, bodies

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<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that there were no women writers. Pratt writes, “In the nineteenth century, despite pressures toward domesticity, women retained their foothold in lettered culture (though they were constantly obliged to defend it). Hence, though lacking political rights, they remained able to assert themselves *legitimately* in national print networks, engage with national forms of self-understanding, maintain their own political and discursive agenda, and express demands on the system that denied them full status as citizens. To a great extent, this entitlement

that were and yet were certainly not their own. In the realm of the symbolic, their bodies are seemingly hijacked leading Pratt to conclude: “Their bodies are sites for many forms of intervention, penetration, and appropriation at the hands of the horizontal brotherhood” and that “[g]ender hierarchy exists as a deep cleavage in the horizontal fraternity, one that cannot easily be imagined away” (51-52). She continues, seeing that women are largely limited to their reproductive capacity, in terms of imagining community, “it is through women that the horizontal brothers reproduce themselves” (52). Thus, Pratt’s notion of “horizontal brotherhood” resituates the “deep, horizontal comradeship” emphasized by Anderson as that which was heavily reliant on the symbolic female body as a site of appropriation for imagining community.

Similarly, one of the biggest challengers to Anderson’s emphasis on fraternal bonding, Claudio Lomnitz’s “Nationalism as a Practical System: Benedict Anderson’s Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America” (2000) insisted that it was not comaraderie but “bonds of dependence” between full and part citizens (men and women or was anchored in class privilege, which the women of letters shared with their male counterparts. One might suggest four elements then, that in part came to define the conflicted space of women's writing and women's citizenship: access to print culture (class privilege); denial of access to public power (gender oppression); access to domesticity (gender privilege); and confinement to domesticity (gender oppression)” (49).

children; creoles and indigenous peoples; property-owners and their laborers, etc.) that would best describe the bonding practices central to imagining nation. Lomnitz effectively argues that although nationalism certainly invokes fraternity, the basis of these bonds was built upon hierarchical relations of paternalism and clientism (353). This is important to consider when discussing gender, particularly when gender, through discursivities of whiteness, is racialized. Whether they are referred to as “bonds of dependence,” with an emphasis on fraternity, or in Pratt’s words, a sort of “horizontal brotherhood” both of these critics are implying the same thing: Anderson’s so-called “fraternal bonds” were highly exclusionary and therefore asymmetrical.

Pratt’s analysis implies gender asymmetry, whereas Lomintz extends this to gender, race, and class. Pratt, in that she insists on calling it “brotherhood,” and Anderson, in that he dubs it “fraternal bonding,” tellingly divorce male-male bonding from the realms of erotic relations while privileging it as the foundational pillars of national identity formation. Their conception of nationhood then, favors a distinct form of homosociality (loosely defined as same-sex bonds): one that is devoid of sexual connotations while simultaneously reliant on the reproductive capacity of the female body (both symbolic and literal) as a means through which nation-ness is reproduced. I would like to emphasize the latter observation because it is precisely an engagement with queer, feminist, and gender theories that can easily derail this unsupported notion that heteronormativity informs the basis of national identity formation.

One must consider, for example, that often times the “female” presence in nineteenth-century literature, whether she is aligned in a position of objectivity or subjectivity is nothing more than a male imaginary. Her body then, is, and should be read as, a text, a sort of metafiction, an object through which male desire is articulated. She becomes a trope, an element,

a dominant theme, an inaptly examined discourse in canonical literature. Her sex becomes an “instrument of cultural signification”: a process that Butler has referred to as the “misogynist dialectic” (*Gender Trouble*, 50). Sex is conceived as “matter” leading to a hierarchical distinction between culture / nature wherein “culture freely “imposes” meaning on nature (the feminine), and hence, renders it into an “Other” to be appropriated to its own limitless uses” (ibid.). Thus materiality and meaning, particularly within this binary is illustrative of a model of dominance. As a result, women’s agency, as a collective, was largely excluded for ideological and other reasons. Her absence, though rarely articulated by the male authorial voice, is estranged as male dominance exceeds its bizarre need to deny voice in privileging himself to construct that voice, that image, perhaps to his own end. In other words, in our examination of male-male relationships, men’s depiction and use of the female body often becomes the conduit through which male-male desire is expressed providing a direct link between the objectification of the female body and men’s desire for other men.

Both Partha Chatterjee and Homi Bhabha, among others, have situated questions of national identity alongside subaltern studies, specifically inserting the supposition that alterity is a predication to the formation of national subjectivity (both within and without the “limited” borders of a given community). That is, the national subject situates his or her identity both in and against O/others. In doing so, national subjectivity does not exist as a homogenizing political community. Rather, it must differentiate itself in order to produce that subjectivity. One of the ways that this might be possible is through gendered identities.

When one begins to uncover the female body as object, or in Butler’s words “an instrument of cultural signification,” the so-called “raw material” of (masculinist) culture within the context of national mythos so prevalent in nineteenth-century literature, we inevitably find



ourselves up against racialized notions of gender as well. The model of dominance (men's power of the female body and so forth) is further articulated through sexual discourse. While this occurs with masculinity too, for illustrative purposes, one might think of the many examples in which racialized women are responsible for the fall of entire civilizations through their sexual actions. In Mexico, it is the indigenous Malinche (lover / concubine / prostitute / translator / traitor / mother / whore) who is responsible, according to national mythos, for the fall of Mexico's indigenous civilization when she (loves / fucks / is raped by) Cortés. In Brazil, it is Alencar's *Iracema* (her name is an anagram for 'America') who betrays her community as a result of her love for a European explorer, and thus is responsible of the fall of one civilization in exchange for another (which is literally founded atop her dead body). Both of these national myths will be taken up in chapters two and three respectively.

Throughout the national narrative of the nineteenth century, women's bodies are fought over, exchanged, idolized, and/or become central to male-male rivalry, etc.; whatever their relationship to male figure of authority or racialized others, women's bodies have consistently been "laid down," to soak up the words of the authors who employ them as rhetorical device to articulate idyllic (and non-idyllic) forms of masculinity (culture) in relation to the female body. In many cases, the female body assumes a central role as a sort of stand-in for the synthesis of the "old world" and the "new world" (through misogynous sexual exchanges with men, she gives birth to the "new citizen," for example). At other times, the female body is "territorialized" and thus fought over by two polarized masculine identities (this is the case throughout my literary corpus with few exceptions); in every case, the figure of women remains largely unchanged as somewhat helpless, irrational, weak, malleable, victimized love-objects or as individuals who "get in the way." Sometimes they are prostitutes. On many occasions, the only female

protagonists in a given text are killed off by the end, yet oddly remain centralized objects of shifting national identification, most often coinciding with, as I argue, shifting masculine identities within a national framework.

These observations, when read in conjuncture are compelling for several reasons. For one, can Anderson's "horizontal comradeship" be newly conceptualized as homosocial bonds required to "imagine" the nation? Given that race has been largely ignored by the fundamental texts that serve to establish and later dissect the concept of the "homosocial" (texts such as Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* or Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic of Women," both of which will be examined in the next section), what can "triangular formation of desires" (inherent to Sedgwick's definition of homosociality)<sup>8</sup> tell us about the intersections of gender and race, specifically as it pertains to both nation and nation-ness? Moreover, how does male rivalry serve to establish a hierarchy of masculinity as they are essentially defined through the female body and how do they become inseparable from hierarchies of race?

Though this merely skims the surface of Anderson's conceptualization of national belonging, nation-ness, and national identity formation, for introductory purposes, it is necessary

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<sup>8</sup> For those unfamiliar with homosociality, it may be helpful to loosely define homosocial relations as same-sex desire which does not explicitly imply any form of homoeroticism but cannot be divorced from it either. It is often modeled on love triangles through which male-male desire employs the female body as a conduit to disrupt same-sex desire. A quick example might be the ways in which two men join forces (or even property) through heterosexual marriage (one man "gives" his daughter to another to forge a political alliance). The marriage is more about the male-male union than it is male-female desire.

to articulate what many feminists such as Zillah Eisenstein are quick to point out: “[Anderson] does not recognize that nationalism is an instance of phallocratic construction, with brotherhood, rather than sisterhood, at its core. Nor does he recognize racism as part of the historical articulation of the nation” (42).

Eisenstein, like Pratt and Lomnitz, refers to it as “brotherhood,” but again, this stems from an unquestioned heteronormative assumption that it is the nuclear family that serves as the foundational bedrock to any allegory, metaphor, or other metonymic portrayal of the social bonds that make up national identity. This is precisely why one needs a larger understanding of the methodologies that make up the heart of queer theory such as Eve Sedgwick’s theories regarding “universalizing” the ways in which gender and sexuality, specifically the fictive divide between hetero- and homosexuality, have informed Western civilizations as a whole.

In, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick famously asserts that Lesbian and Gay Studies is a subject that may have focused too much on a homosexual minority. In turn, she makes a compelling argument for the “centrality of these nominally marginal yet conceptually intractable set of definitional issues to the important knowledges and understandings of twentieth-century Western culture as a whole” (*Epistemology* 1-2). In short, she alludes to the notion that the essentialist / constructionist debate over gender and sexuality has been conceived for the sole benefit of queer peoples, or “minoritizing” as she terms it (briefly summarized by the essentialist/constructionist debate over whether or not one is “born gay” or “becomes gay”). Sedgwick does not take up that debate, she dismantles it.

Sedgwick took issue with the notion that various forms of scholarship were engaged in a progressive history of sexual of sorts. In essence, she challenged what scholars already thought they knew about (or at least assumed) with regard to the categorization of homosexuality: that it

was somehow produced via a historically continuous stratification of discourse, eventually leading to Foucault's "Great Paradigm Shift" and what we have all come to know as "the homosexual." Via Sedgwick's meticulous surgery on our conceptualization of the hetero/homo dyad, she provided a radical model from which queer studies was launched. In her own words, her aim was "to denaturalize the present, rather than the past—in effect, to render less destructively presumable 'homosexuality as we know it today'" (48).

Sedgwick names our contemporary understandings of homosexuality as that which is "destructively presumable." This is important. Her interrogation of hetero/homosexuality exposes them, in many regards, as identity categories that are illegible and contradictory; as such, her interrogation of these terms introduce her reader to a whole new set of problems with regard to sexuality. This is her biggest gesture towards the establishment of the queer critique. Seldom in 1990 did gender and sexuality studies take up what Sedgwick would call "universalizing," that "virtually any aspect of modern Western culture, must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (40). If any one sentence could describe the overall theoretical trajectory of my project it is the latter, in that this dissertation inhabits the disconfiguration of the hetero/homo while revealing same-sex desire as that which has been fundamental to various national imaginaries.

If one follows the trajectory of Latin American literary studies interested in questions of same-sex desire they may find that, as Sedgwick has warned, it has fallen into a "minoritizing" view of sexuality by emphasizing the "evidence" of Foucault's "modern homosexual." Rare then, is a critique of the unmarked category of heterosexuality and how same-sex desire (and even rejection of that desire) lends itself to the discursive critique of what Sedgwick refers to as

the “unrationalized coexistence of different models” of homosexual difference within sexuality today (47).

Sedgwick’s contribution might be best understood in the comical words of queer theorist, Jonathan Katz: “In the twentieth century, creatures called heterosexuals emerged from the dark shadows of the nineteenth-century medical world to become common types acknowledged in the bright light of the modern day.” In other words, “the heterosexual” was not born on the public front until the twentieth century. Nevertheless, both ‘hetero’ and ‘homo’sexuality are slippery terms—relatively new linguistic inventions that attempt to reflect what? Behavior? Desire? Our genetic differences? Our unspoken lifelong love of our closest companions? Our unsatisfactory one-night stand with the same-sex on a drunken July night? The passing sexual impulses a man feels for another man as he lay in bed beside his wife? A woman’s want to be longingly held by her female best friend, rather than a man in her deepest time of need? My point being: who gets to define same-sex desire and to what end?

So how does one begin to examine same-sex desire beyond the confines of the definitional term of “homosexuality”? Traditionally, the term “homosociality” was a means of describing the bonds that existed between two members of the same sex. Though same-sex bonding with regard to women hosts its own importance, it is the same-sex bonding practices between men that have enriched explanations as to which social mechanisms are required to maintain hegemonic masculinity (Hammarén and Johansson 2). For both feminist and gender studies, it further enables a complex understanding of how men, within and through their bonds with other men, contribute to gender order under the larger umbrella of the patriarchy through fraternal organizations, institutions, and politics—all of which have historically consisted of men promoting the interests of other men. In short, according to Nils Hammarén and Thomas

Johansson, it is a rather simplistic descriptive term that is “used to show how men bond, build closed teams, and defend their privileges and positions” (1).

The two critics recognize Sedgwick for what they call a “refined and dynamic view on homosociality” precisely because it is Sedgwick who emphasizes desire, potentially erotic desire (though not necessarily so), within the abstract continuum that exists between homosocial and homosexual, a continuum that may be disrupted by homophobia (1-2). Sedgwick argues that our notions of same-sex desire should be “plural, varied, and contradictorily historical understandings whose residual—indeed, whose renewed—force seems most palpable today” (48). Perhaps to truly understand that residuality, one might make a full turn towards the literary artifacts that depict historical understandings of sexuality, but more specifically, how those sexualities relate to model citizenry, manhood, and national belonging (or not belonging). Thus, while employing Anderson’s model of national identity formation which recognizes the importance of literature and other texts within that process, one may use both queer and gender theories to further understand how the social constructs of gender and sexuality not only inform, but, following Sedgwick, are fundamental to our historical understanding of those processes.

Finding ourselves in the heart of queer theory means that much of the theoretical labor ahead presents an inquiry of the “unmarked” category of heterosexuality. Before embarking on this journey, one must a) divorce themselves from any notion that heterosexuality is a given as it is the norm and b) through a deconstructive mode, illustrate through literary analysis that when heterosexuality is not assumed it can produce new understandings, even new meanings of how “non-normative” genders and/or sexualities have not been marginal to the definition of hetero- or gender normativity but a key component to unmasking the desires that are precisely rejected by it. To understand how this might function, one must work closely with Sedgwick’s postulations

surrounding her theory of 'homosocial desire' and thus, must closely examine its full implications as well as its limitations.

The theoretical gem at the center of Sedgwick's theory is that it enables a radical link to understanding how sexuality and gender converge. Sedgwick defines homosocial as "social bonds between persons of the same sex," wherein desire acts as the "affective or social force, the 'glue' that holds these bonds together (1-2). Moreover, there is a "continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1). She models these desire on "erotic triangles," or a threefold structure in which two rivals are present (not exclusively male but a rivalry that occurs between two members of the same sex). This is precisely the reason that she tends to focus on male-male homosociality. Following her observations that there is a continuous relationship between homosociality and homosexuality, Sedgwick argues that the diacritical opposition between "homosocial" and the "homosexual," as it pertains to women rather than men, is a strong contrast to male bonding and male rivalry. The social, economic, familial, erotic, and political realms of "women loving women" and "women promoting the interests of women" are not the same due to the subordination of women and the continuation of patriarchal systems. Male-male homosociality in turn, hosts two major components: "male bonding" or intimacy and/or desire between men as well as "homosexual panic," oftentimes presenting itself as a form of "male-male rivalry" (Sedgwick 2-3).

There is a certain formula that accompanies her analysis, again in the form of erotic triangles. For example, amidst male-male rivalry, the rivals often battle for the possession, affection, or love of a "beloved" third. In many cases, women serve as the object of exchange for cementing the bonds between the men who "possess" them. In others, women stand for that which disrupts the interrelations of the two men. The oscillation in the role of women can also

define the triangle. In short, homosociality, because of homophobia, cannot cross over the thin line that separates homosocial desire from homosexual desire and thus, must be redirected, often employing the female body as the conduit through which that desire is expressed. Think about, for example, a frat boy who brags about his recent sexual exploits with another frat boy. The desire here, though it is cast through the “exploit” or female body, might be perceived as a process of bonding (and thus desire) that occurs between men via the objectification of women (*bros over hoes*).

Furthermore, the triangle is never symmetrical, but “a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning” (27). In certain scenarios, it is “homosexual panic,” loosely defined as the fear that men’s (and in some cases, women’s) attention to other men/women of the same sex, risks the possibility of falling into homosexual desire. Thus, heterosexuality must be emphasized whereby a fear and hatred of homosexual as well as misogynistic language is developed or further emphasized (“*bros over hoes, ya fag*”) (Sedgwick 2).

With these distinct trajectories in mind, one may begin to understand that in our employment of Sedgwick, there are many paths to follow. The first is a means by which one can further develop an understanding of masculinities and their (re)production. This trajectory would lead us towards the study of how men, through their relationships and even symbolic depictions of other men, employ that relationship and social bonds to maintain patriarchal power and privilege which, in many scenarios also extends to racial privilege as well. This leads to an understanding of the importance of hegemonic masculinities, but also plummets us into a discussion of “manhood”—what are the rituals, rights, and definitions that enable men to accept other men as men, and what that means precisely. Secondly, because of the continuum that



Sedgwick emphasizes between “the homosocial” and “the homosexual,” one may explore the underlying continuum of desires and relationships from the perspective offered up by queer theory.

Finally, because homosocial bonding / rivalry between men often employs the female body as a conduit of desire, I am of the opinion that this is precisely the location where queer theories and feminist theories begin to articulate something that is immensely powerful: that misogyny is somehow formulated through same-sex desire. At the locus of male-male bonding, oftentimes we find the objectification of the female body falls under the guise of protectionism: the view of women as (sexual) property, and/or violence against women is pathological, symbolic, and in deep relation to how genders are imagined in the first place. Moreover, when certain men “claim” the body of women and/or “protect” it from the Others, one should have no doubt that race, specifically the racial hierarchies produced through male-male rivalry are tremendously informed by these same configurations.

This point will be made abundantly clear in the next chapter, wherein a text that appears to be symbolically configured on heterosexual desire, José de Alencar’s *Iracema*, kills off its only female protagonist after she has served a reproductive purpose and the possession of her body has symbolically transferred. This transference passes forth her father’s patriarchal standing to a “New Man,” whereby the nation is founded atop her dead body. The means by which a racialized hierarchy is established through homosocial triangulations is extremely informative of the deep interconnectedness of “(re)producing masculinities” and the (re)performance of racist discourse.

Examples like these add yet another layer to my employment of Sedgwick: what happens when entire nations are ascribed with a gender / sex? Most are familiar with the ways the

discourses surrounding nationalism frequently take up gendered positions—as in a “fatherland” or “motherland.” Our most basic understandings of nationalist discourse almost always reveal themselves in terms of “familial relationships” based on heteronormative associations with reproductively in which men and women assume their “natural” roles. Again, if we divorce ourselves from any notion that heterosexuality is a natural, foundational component to the arrangement of gendered subjectivities, the inherent contradictions of heteronormativity begin to reveal themselves as such.

Sedgwick’s notion of the homosocial is precisely the theory that allows us to expand upon Anderson’s notions of “fraternal bonds” that are necessary to “imagine” the nation. Of course, citizenship, in most socio-historical contexts is largely exclusive. People of color, women, “deviants,” though they form part of nations, are oftentimes not included in the process of “imagining community.” Nevertheless, they are present in the fictive renderings of social belonging but instead occupy a space of symbolic fantasy of the national narrative, almost always penned by white men and/or the cultural elite on the nineteenth-century Latin American front. This is where I encounter my first predicament; Sedgwick never incorporated race into her line of argumentation which leads me to ask the question: if these erotic triangles involve a racial other, as my textual examples do, what happens to these configurations? More specifically, if the female body acts as a depository for forging active male citizenship and therefore enabling masculine agency in its development of a particular kind of discursiveness that both regulates and legitimizes a politics of identity (one that was undoubtedly bound up in class divisions, racial hierarchies and gender asymmetry), how do these love triangles exhibit these negotiations of identity?

Though homosociality is loosely defined as same-sex bonding, it is specifically Eve Sedgwick's conceptualization of male homosocial desire that enables one to extend feminist analysis, through an important deconstructive mode, not only to the realm of sexuality studies, but also the intersections between hegemonic constructions of masculinity and the misogynist constructions of femininity. In fact, the very concept of homosociality might be described as the phallus par excellence for those interested in the study of masculinities because it is a tool from which one can explain a) the objectification and subordination of women, b) homophobia, and c) cultural and political hegemony directly associated with both the patriarchy and racial supremacy.

If one turns to the fundamental texts that Sedgwick employs to formulate her theory, such as Gayle Rubin's 1975 "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," considering, as Sedgwick describes Rubin's work, it reveals how "patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men" (*Between Men*, 26), from this idea we are able to forge new understanding of gendered social bonds and what they may imply, at least on the literary front, for "imagining" nation during a time when women were not able to participate in the political process.

Lenore T. Lyons, in her work on Singaporean citizenry, observes that even when the "imagery of the chaste mother/daughter is invoked, nationalist movements are often built around a masculinized memory of emasculation at the hands of colonial powers. This tension reveals the inherent contradiction between the depiction of the nation as female and the male homosociality of nationalisms" (1). She further argues that in many cases, the imagery of colonialism "rests on a metaphor of rape in which nations occupy positions as rogue/warrior states and

passive/feminized states, it is actual material women's bodies that are often violated in the cause of nationalism. Nations, along with their citizen-subjects, are not only gendered but also sexualized" (1-2). I will add that not only are they sexualized, they are also racialized; it is rare to speak of colonial contexts without having to hash out the intricacies of racial hierarchies within a given socio-political context.

Certain theorists, such as Robyn Wiegman and Todd Reeser, among others, have recognized Sedgwick's fundamental importance in determining and understanding the structuring of gender and sexuality specifically as it pertains to race and other spheres of the cultural and political front. As this project centers our attention on the "subject" of "manhood" and its relationship to the idea of nation, one will begin to find representations of an idealized masculinity, often times the patriarch, that is also employed within the rubric of white supremacy. Thus, through close analysis one may be able to further understand how masculinity, racism, xenophobia, sexual control, and even homophobia work in conjunction; or, begin to understand how, from the standpoint of white patriarchal configurations of power, the social category of "masculinity" performs and idealizes its quest for domination—that while engaged with the symbolic presentation of identity, it reproduces itself almost always in the context of its "others."

A key question that arises: how does one render the "invisible man" or the unmarked subject visible as it pertains to both the unmarked category of gender and race? Wiegman argues that the focus on the male bond "has deepened feminist critical understanding of the way that patriarchal investments are reproduced not only in the management of erotic and intimate life but in the spheres of popular culture and national politics" (43). She argues that the constructions of masculinity, in their "complex dependence on discourses of sexual difference (sometimes with,

sometimes without the figure of woman),” can be rendered visible through these sorts of analysis, thus making “credible the analysis of the constitutional performativity of a variety of masculinities, from dominant heterosexual formation to more subversive gay, black, or antisexist articulations” (43).

By extension, the past conceptualization of both masculinity and heteronormative assumptions can be revised through these sorts of analysis. For one, what one might now recognize as prescriptive norms pertaining to masculinity will enable us, as Wiegman states, to unleash “masculinity from its assumed normativity and reading its function and structure as the product of a contested and contradictory field of power” (43). While the focus on the male bond and by default, masculinity, provides a deeper understanding of gender configurations, the analytical power of ‘homosociality’ does something that, for the purpose of this project is the most powerful: it asks, “is the construction of nation, national identity, nationalism, or nationhood, somehow queer?” And by “queer” I do not mean, *not* heterosexual but rather, a means of welcoming “queer” as another discursive frontier—another way of thinking the sexual without placing focus on what has contemporarily been defined as being homosexual or being heterosexual for that matter.

Foucault, in his naming of “the birth of the homosexual” argued that modern discourse pertaining to sexuality in particular played host to the multiplication of different kinds of sexual “perversions”—what one could and could not do, specifically surrounding those who fell outside the category of marriage: children, the mentally ill, sodomites, etc. Thus, the policing of sexuality, now seen as violations of the law and of the “natural world,” were seen as “weak,” “sick,” and / or “demented.” One’s sexuality became linked with one’s soul, and so on; thus, one’s sexual acts became constitutive of one’s identity. Through what Foucault deemed “The

Perverse Implantation” he insisted that the nineteenth century became the “age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of ‘perversions’” (37). How these discursive shifts play out in varying Latin American socio-political contexts throughout the nineteenth century with regard to gender, sexuality, among other social constructs that inform national identity is precisely the critical lens my reader must wear. And because concepts of masculinity, et. all, are ever-changing, fluid, and are therefore historically contingent, —meaning, it has a history in its own right that varies from one socio-political context to another—then homosociality is the key critical component that allows feminism, gender studies, and queer theory to produce the most momentous ménage à trois for understanding national identity formation writ large.

Rather than simply establishing or reiterating male dominance, I am of the opinion that male-male bonding and rivalry enable us to understand how masculinities perform the fantasy of nationalism and vice-versa. More importantly, they enable us to establish why certain forms of gender expression and/or sexual identities (such as the examples mentioned above) may be threatening to the fictive imaginings of national identification. This will be explored more through a variety of textual examples.

Secondly, the ideas articulated in Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* provide the critical foundation as to why and how we should begin to rethink the homo/hetero binary and the importance of understanding what those ideas may reveal about the role of desire at work within national identification; both desire among potential citizens, but also desire for the nation. Only then can one understand how homosexuality / heterosexuality and the sexual and gender codings surrounding national heroes, mothers of nations, protectors and servers, might illuminate why studies of national identity and queer theory form such a necessarily powerful bond.

“Epistemology” certainly implies a theoretical approach to knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope. The cultural examples of “panic” surrounding both gender and sexuality in the “renditions” of the fatherly/motherly icons of nationalism that I have provided thus far are contemporary representations of historical figures. Both arguably incite controversy because they find themselves up against a certain comparative binary: gay/straight, male/female, and white/non-white. Although the cultural contexts in which we find these two examples are relatively new within the scope of time, the comparative binaries that problematize their receptions, are certainly not.

Some may find it puzzling to begin a project that is mainly concerned with nineteenth-century texts with two contemporary examples. However, they are crucial to truly understanding the “workings” of said “panic.” I will and I must examine how these sorts of reactions are consistently (re)produced within the larger scope of modern histories. Several of the nineteenth-century textual examples in the following chapters are, in their own right, artistic reproductions of pre-modern figures of colonial times. Certain authors within our literary corpus openly admit to attempts to both produce and/or recreate national myths. Thus, they too resurrect the figures of history long after the fact. Several of these narratives “revisit” colonial contexts, retelling and reconfiguring those histories to reflect yet another (mis)representation of major events such as the discovery of the “New World”, the precise moment when nations are founded, or when a “new race” is produced, etc. Many of these are cultural productions in which indigenous characters, male and female, worship white men, or black women are symbolically whitened before they can be worthy of love. Black men are depicted as animals or at the very least, as degenerate humans. Male foreigners are effeminate perverts and sodomites who threaten women. Indigenous women will betray all for their love of white men. White women in general, though

subordinate to white men, are idealized, virginal, child-like figures who merely serve as an extension of white masculinity's domination and sexual control of its feminine other. In short, a primary glance at these configurations immediately evoke an understanding that race and ethnic identity are stereotypically configured to hoist up a notion of whiteness as the most desired/desirable body; this much almost seems obvious. It is safe to say, then, that the contemporary reactions to the (re)production of identity—such as is the case in both Mistral and Bolívar—may be in direct correlation with the perseverance of the same identities that thought to (re)produce history in a way that hoisted up only certain “types” of identity: white, male elitism and whitened female idolization.



## 2.0 WHY DOES THE MOTHER OF A NATION HAVE TO DIE?

If there is one single question that drives my literary analysis of José de Alencar's *Iracema* it is simply: why does the “mother of a nation” have to die? When the final allegorical gesture of founding a nation is forged upon the grave of the only female protagonist present in a text, one has to ask, who survives her and why? *Iracema*, a novel published by the Brazilian politician and former Minister of Justice, José de Alencar, in 1865, and largely in correlation with the romantic, national Indianist novel of Brazil, is a supposed “love story” based on both myth and history. The narrative tells of the birth of the first mestizo (Moacir) through the union of the indigenous with the European via the protagonists of *Iracema* (the indigenous woman) and Martim (a Portuguese colonist), or so, this is how the novel is typically interpreted.

Set in the sixteenth century in what is now the state of Ceará, the novel was written almost fifty years after Brazil's independence from Portugal. Like many authors of his time, Alencar is, as Naomi Lindstrom observes, “an author with an agenda,” and thus capable of creating “allegories of the genesis of the Brazilian people” within his many Indianist narratives (xi). In rewriting the first encounters between the indigenous people of Brazil and the early Portuguese settlers, Alencar was able to transform these stories into “mythic narratives of a past shared by all Brazilians” (xii). The implications of these national allegories lead critics like Doris Sommer in her canonical *Foundational Fictions* to conclude that it was love, not heroic

resistance, that would ultimately drive these national allegories into the heart of history and, by default, onto the laps of many a high school student. Sommer writes:

there was nothing especially Brazilian about the fight between good Indian allies of good whites against bad Indians helping bad whites; that battle between civilization and barbarism, we may call it, was the common history of the Americas ... Brazilian society is special, not because of heroic resistance but because of romantic surrender. It was founded, he [Alencar] insisted, when whites and Indians fell into each other's arms and made mestizo babies. (150)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to argue against Sommer's observations. Alencar himself wrote in abundance about his own work: how he developed the stories, where the oral traditions he drew upon developed, why he chose to include a female character in such a way, why he was interested in the topic, how it related to "national literature," etc. Alencar's project becomes clear, precisely because he defines his mission, in depth, for his readers a thousand times; then he rewrites it a hundred more. One quickly becomes aware, then, that Alencar has purposely written the novel with the further establishment of a "national literature" in mind.

Clifford Landers's English translation of *Iracema* includes an open letter that Alencar addresses to his close friend and, as Naomi Lindstrom informs, is also included in the first Portuguese edition to *Iracema* (xi). Addressing the topic of national literature, specifically the previously written works of Gonçalves Dias, to whom he refers as "o poeta nacional por excelência" [our national poet par excellence] (Alencar 81; Landers 134),<sup>9</sup> he writes of the poet: "os selvagens de seu poema falam uma linguagem clássica ... eles exprimem idéias próprias do

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<sup>9</sup> All English translations of *Iracema* are attributed to the following text: Alencar, José de. *Iracema*. Trans. Clifford E. Landers. NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

homem civilizado, e que não é verossímil tivessem no estado da natureza” [the savages in his poem speak a classical language ... they express ideas characteristic of civilized man that lack verisimilitude in the state of nature]. Alencar continues:

Sem dúvida que o poeta brasileiro tem de traduzir em sua língua as idéias, embora rudes e grosseiras, dos índios; mas nessa tradução está a grande dificuldade; é preciso que a língua civilizada se molde quanto possa à singeleza primitiva da língua bárbara; e não represente as imagens e pensamentos indígenas senão por termos e frases que ao leitor pareçam naturais na boca do selvagem. (81)

Beyond doubt, the Brazilian poet must translate into his language the Indians’ ideas, though they be crude and coarse; but it is in that tradition that the great difficulty lies: it is necessary for the civilized language to mold itself as much as it can to the primitive simplicity of the barbaric tongue and not represent indigenous images and thoughts except by terms and phrases that strike the reader as natural in the mouths of savages. (134)

Based on his insistence on the development of a national language, one can conclude that Alencar understands his role as a Brazilian wordsmith to be exactly that: Brazilian. He understands, however paradoxically, that the “classical language” of a European disposition simply does not fit a “Brazilian” reality. Nevertheless, according to Alencar, the Brazilian poet must translate into *his* language the Indians’ ideas. Thus, the Brazilian poet does not speak an O/other language; the Brazilian poet speaks Portuguese. Even the Brazilian poet’s “Indian” speaks Portuguese however poorly and always in the third person. Alencar continues, “O conhecimento da língua indígena é o melhor critério para a nacionalidade da literatura. Ele nos dá não só o verdadeiro estilo, como as imagens poéticas do selvagem, os modos de seu

pensamento, as tendências de seu espírito, e até as menores particularidades de sua vida” [knowledge of the indigenous language is the best criterion for the nationalization of literature. It provides us with not only the true style but also the savage’s poetic images, his ways of thought, the inclination of his spirit, and even the smallest details of his life] (81; 134).

One may suppose that Alencar’s revitalization of the Portuguese language as well as his “molding” of “civilized language” can serve as a mirror to understand the broader implications of his role within Brazilian Romanticism, and Brazilian national literature as a whole. His is merely a modification of language rather than a radicalization of it. It is precisely a new mold, a recasting of words and images that incorporates the local, but, nevertheless, still insists on being the dominant language through which all other languages and ideas needed to be translated and even interpreted. “Tupi or not Tupi” was never the question for Alencar,<sup>10</sup> and, certainly, Alencar was no exception among many of his contemporaries.

Like Alencar’s molding of indigenous words to the dominant language, it is through desire, between men as well as women, that the indigenous, as the textual analysis below will show, is slowly incorporated into whiteness. As Geoffrey Mitchell observes, the main indigenous characters in Alencar’s *O Guarani* and *Iracema* must “renounce their respective indigenous

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<sup>10</sup> This is an iconic line of the Brazilian poet, Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto antropófagia* [Cannibalist Manifesto] (1928). The “Manifesto” poses the idea that Brazil’s history is one of “cannibalizing” other cultures while playing on a primitivist notion of cannibalism as the means by which Brazil can assert itself against post-colonial (European) domination. It alludes to the Tupi (an indigenous ethnic group) and the famous Shakespearian line in a single gesture.

cultures to become acceptable partners for the European colonizer/conqueror.” That, and the *mestiço* son of Martim and Iracema, despite his bi-culturalism, must be educated in Portugal far beyond the reach of his indigenous roots. (12) Therefore, regardless of the “foreign” models (both European and native) that Alencar “incorporates” into his narrative, it remains (not surprisingly) to symbolically serve a project of whitening that would emerge in full force in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Notably, there are no black characters in Alencar’s visions of the Brazilian citizen. This comes not unexpectedly; Alencar, a conservative federal representative, was a fervent anti-abolitionist spokesperson.

Through a close reading of *Iracema*, one discovers that masculinities, as they operate within this text, can be seen in the same light: the masculine ideal presented by Alencar may borrow from both European and Indigenous contexts, but, in the end, it is the white man who stands above all O/others, while the non-white body, like the indigenous words Alencar translates to Portuguese, is absorbed into a bizarre sub-category of white hegemonic masculinity. And yet, what does the construction of racial hierarchies have to do with the subordination (in this case, complete elimination) of women? Where do gender, race, and sexuality meet within this narrative, and how might these intersections provide an answer to my original question: why does the mother of a nation (Iracema) have to die?

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<sup>11</sup> This national policy would later be referred to as *branqueamento* in Portuguese; Brazil’s first republic, specifically in the aftermath of Abolition enforced public measures to increase European immigration for the purpose of “diluting” and/or “dissolving” non-white populations. See Telles, Edward (2006). *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press. p. 324.

Some of the above-mentioned questions, specifically as they pertain to race, mirror those asked in perhaps what is the most recognizable reading of *Iracema*, Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991), which is, in its own right, a foundational theoretical text for anyone interested in taking up the question of gender and sexuality in Latin American literary studies. Not surprisingly, her reading of *Iracema*, in view of her analysis of gender and sexuality, does not diverge from her main theoretical point that allegories of heterosexual romance forge the bonds needed for national identification through myth-making depictions of men and women falling into each others' arms.

In many ways, Sommer's thesis acts as a sort of launching pad for my own analysis; though, our readings diverge in very fundamental ways. Sommer was attempting to incorporate gender and sexuality into her interpretations of national romances well over two decades ago. Thus, many of Sommer's arguments aren't the ideal tools for understanding underlying representations of gender and sexuality precisely because the study of both genders and sexualities have radically changed since the early 90s. Her reading of Alencar's *Iracema* is a primary example of her over-ambition to seek out heterosexual unions as those that drive the plot forward. In essence, by focusing on the male-female relationship between Iracema (the indigenous woman) and Martim (the European explorer), Sommer manages to avoid the entire second half of the novel wherein Iracema becomes a flat character, like a fly buzzing in the background of the narrative whose pages might as well display a "No girls allowed" sign. And yet, Sommer argues, "how surprisingly well Alencar's romances fit a general Latin American paradigm; it will also suggest how subtle these apparently simple stories really are" (145). In essence, Sommer has merely squeezed one component of the narrative into a neat and tidy box that undoubtedly does not take into consideration other sorts of "erotic unions" in this text. In

fact, Sommer makes no mention of Poti's name in her analysis. Poti, of course, is the "indigenous brother" of Martim who follows him about throughout the narrative and seemingly replaces Iracema in the second half of the text. It is Poti who is referred to as both "brother" and "heart" of Martim, and while Iracema does figure into the relationship between the two men, despite this, she is subsequently "killed off" the page. How this is carried forth by the narrative is best explained by situating Iracema, the character, within a new conceptual axis of triangular desire via Sedgwick's model.

I emphasize Sommer's reading as it illustrates my primary concern that the formation of the nation is not performed via the heterosexual union of male and female protagonists. Rather, Iracema's character, particularly in the second half of the novel serves a biological purpose and nothing more. Her body is needed for its reproductive function much like the land that her body and her name come to represent (Iracema means "honey-lips" in the Guarani language but is also an anagram for America). Thus, the female body symbolically establishes a terrain that is based on her sexuality (virginity), which is given over to Martim. As a result, the female body is reduced to its reproductive function (motherhood) and thus provides the raw material for producing new citizens—in this case, a male citizen—Moacir, whose name means "Son of Pain."

All things considered, the nation is founded on the dead body of a woman. Iracema is consumed, quite literally here, beneath the category of these new "modern men" that openly exclude the emancipation of women. The text ends with two men (Martim and Poti) and the metonymic "first Brazilian baby" who stand atop her buried body. Though the title of the novel bears her name, this book is hardly about Iracema as a protagonist. Conversely, it is not a text *about* her but one that is centered *around her*, as she eventually becomes a peripheral character. As a text that enacts her expulsion from the narrative, it performs the impossibility of

heterosexual love as that which will be the guiding force in the formation of an alternative society. Rather, the allegory of the nation is founded after her death wherein her memory is forgotten by everyone with the exception of Martim, the white explorer.

While the heterosexual, romantic union in *Iracema* certainly lends itself to national allegory, there is undoubtedly a much larger framework that the taking up of heterosexual unions in this text fails to articulate: the reduction of this text to another heterosexual “love-story” is far too hollow of an interpretation as it barely skims the surface. Rather, as Iracema is the only person able to produce the “magical juice” of the *Jurema* tree—a tree that comes to symbolically represent the masculine prowess of her indigenous tribe—I argue that Iracema merely serves as a conduit through which masculinity is transferable.

This is precisely the point that Doris Sommer largely misses not only in her reading of *Iracema*, but also through another text that is taken up in the second part of this chapter, *O Guarani* (1857): another of Alencar’s novels that precedes *Iracema* but functions in similar ways. Beyond Sommer’s lack of articulation as to how male-male desire functions within these texts, she seemingly disregards the mimetic relationship between individualized masculinities and collective unions in the form of patriarchal societies as well. In *Iracema*, for example, it is only through the displacement of male indigenous political and religious authorities of Iracema’s people that Martim is able to obtain his social status. At first, homosociality establishes a bond between Martim and the Tabajara, more specifically between Martim and the *pajé* (the Tabajara’s spiritual leader and Iracema’s father) wherein women act as objects of exchange who cement male relationships. Women (as sexual property) act as the primary “gift” between the *pajé* and Martim in order to evoke solidarity. Iracema, as a daughter to the *pajé* (and arguably an extension of his masculinity) has a higher cultural value, and as such, is not up for “grabs” like



the objectified women who have no names and serve as the *pajé's* property. Unlike the sexualized concubines, Iracema's gender codings (as an extension of her father's masculinity) host a higher value: she is a mediator between the men of her tribe (headed by the spiritual authority of her father) and the tribe's all-powerful male god, Tupã. She is the guardian of a sacred secret: how to make the juice of *Jurema* tree (the mystery of dreams) that her father drinks in order to communicate with Tupã. In short, Iracema's body contains (but is not an agent of) power: power among men and their male god, a god that is eventually displaced and replaced by a Christian god by the novel's end.

Thus, Martim's consumption of the "sacred juice" of the *Jurema* tree (a concoction with psychoactive properties) marks the beginning of the symbolic loss of power for the entire tribe when Iracema defiantly makes it for him (and arguably rapes him in his sleep). As I argue at length, through the symbolic and literal loss of Iracema, because she is the only member of the tribe who is able to produce the "sacred juice" of the *Jurema* tree, the tribe as a collective whole is symbolically castrated: in short, their collective "man juice" now belongs to the individual white protagonist. I also argue that Iracema is merely a sexual object in relationship to the tribal configuration of power that becomes lost. *She* has no power (she cannot speak to Tupã); she is merely a mediator of power, and that power is mediated through her sexuality that holds extreme symbolic importance to the Tabajara community as a whole (producing the juice needed for the *pajé* to speak to Tupã). Therefore, this is not so much a narrative about heterosexual unions as it is the displacement (and eventual replacement) of male authority that is mediated through Iracema's reproductive function but has very little to do with desire between male and female configurations.

In turn, the possession of Iracema's body marks the transference of power as it is gained by Martim and lost by the entire Tabajara nation when he drinks the juice that symbolizes their masculine prowess. Symbolically, the tripped-out Martim in drinking the powerful juice (only reserved for men) consumes the symbolic and patriarchal power of an entire indigenous tribe. It is not Iracema's sexual status (virgin/non-virgin) that is "obtained" by Martim, but the power of to be closer to god (to be the divine hero that he becomes). Martim, in "winning the girl" wins as a man, but once the phallus that is contained within her body falls into his hands she is no longer needed or desired for that matter. Tellingly, the once phallic *Jurema* trees of the Tabajara nation are repeatedly described as having been reduced to "old stumps." At the novel's end, a new phallus stands erect (a tree is planted atop Iracema's dead body to mark her grave) and becomes symbolic of the cross. Iracema's body is consumed beneath this new social order, but other than her reproductive function, she was never quite part of it in the first place.

A similar symbolic attribute is given over to the characterization of Cecília (the white, angelic daughter of the Fidalgo of whom the indigenous protagonist, Peri is enamored) in *O Guarani*: she too serves as a mediator to several homosocial configurations including male-male rivalries, and most interesting, a particular bond that is established between Peri (the indigenous hero) and Cecília's father (who Peri constantly refers to not by her name but as "Dom Antônio's daughter"). Conversely, Sommer briefly mentions—almost as a side note—how, for instance, *Iracema* "inverts *O Guarani*'s color assignment of hero and heroine, and so resumes the patter of chronicles that record endless meetings between white conquerors and easy Indians conquests" (144). She fails to mention how this "inversion" of race affects the gender configurations of both novels. Her observation of "endless meetings between white conquerors and easy Indian conquests" is as equally brushed over in exchange for, and this is extremely important, her focus

on the heterosexual union between Martim and Iracema and other male-female pairings. Thus, the heterosexual union serves as a blinder of sorts in that race and gender operate well beyond the confines of the gendered binary of male / female yet certainly inform a hierarchy of masculinities. This is precisely where my analysis and Sommer's analysis differ greatly. I hold that theorists such as Eve Sedgwick and Gayle Rubin provide essential tools for asking how gender and sexuality exist on a continuum and operate through one another in what Rubin deems to be the sex/gender system, wherein women are exchanged *between men*. Of course, Sedgwick, through her employment of Rubin, is able to articulate how sexuality operates on a continuum through this exchange as well.

In this light, I do not ignore the heterosexual union that Sommer points out; rather, my analytical tools enable me to break down the binaries that seemingly limit her reading. Sommer, however, does refer to certain "crossings" of both gender and race; she also recognizes the rhetorical female body as the so-called "blank page" or unmarked / non-historical symbolic configuration "to bear man's inscription" (56-57). The means through which she speaks of gender codings is by informing her readers that "gender codings relax" or that novel *x* "relaxes an implied binary system of gender coding" and that there is a "strategic availability of signs, for example the signs "male" and "female" (121). Again, working with the male / female binary of the sexed body she speaks of a female character's gendered position by informing us that "[G]ender codings relax on the other side as well" (121).

Despite her recognition of the slippage between masculine and feminine, she understands these as "crossings" from one to the "other side": between "masculine" and "feminine" or "male" and "female" to invoke her own terms rather than evoking a gender continuum and/or hierarchical display of gender. A different gender-informed reading might ask: is Martim

feminized because Iracema rapes him in that he is the non-active participant in a sexual exchange? Would this be a case, following Sommer, where gender codings “relax”? Or does his whiteness as an unmarked component of his masculinity further masculinize him in that his whiteness is too “irresistible”; does Iracema have to seduce him because he is “too good” to seduce her (going against her father’s will)? After all, a divine hero is destined for power and thus, of course Iracema “naturally” falls into his lap. Thus, where gender codings seemingly “relax” they are paradoxically producing the reverse effect. Martim’s passivity (perhaps what Sommer would read as a gender-crossing) in this case is informative of his perceived dominance “to control” his own body—to remain “civilized” in contrast to her O/other “savage” admirers whose passion for her initiate an entire war.

Where Sommer’s argument excels is in her recognition of the female body as an empty signifier and her insistence that “nationalist romance valorizes virility as a self-evidently male attribute while it tries to distinguish between good and bad men” (23). With this observation in mind, it is somewhat confusing that Sommer has not taken up Sedgwick or Rubin in that she speaks of a “rhetorical female body” that serves as a “blank page,” while recognizing that masculinity is transgressive yet always resolved through virility. Originally, I thought that if Sommer had been familiar with Sedgwick, it would have enabled her to formulate a theory of triangulation in direct relation to the female body and male-male relationships. Surprisingly, Sommer does cite Sedgwick, in passing, when discussing the works of James Fenimore Cooper. She employs Sedgwick to describe two male characters that are “bound together through their equal respect, rather than erotic love, for nature. Their very chaste version of homosocial desire takes the form of a *ménage à trois* where nobody really violates anybody else. Nobody makes children either” (81). My protest to this passage: can one speak of a Sedgwick’s model that is *not*

somehow connected to erotic love (Sedgwick chooses to employ the word “desire” as opposed to “love”)? Isn’t the notion that desire cannot be so easily categorized the premise of Sedgwick’s model? In fact, upon the very first definition of the term ‘homosocial’ of *Between Men* she writes: “To draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of “desire,” of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society is radically disrupted” (1).

Coincidentally, Sommer speaks in depth of René Girard’s triangular models of mimetic desire but disappointingly concludes that:

The nineteenth-century national novels insist on simplifying the triangle; they straighten and flatten it out into a dyad where no mediation is necessary or even possible for lovers who know they’re right for each other. Tensions inevitably exist and drive the story on are external to the couple: the counter-productive social constraints that underline the naturalness and the inevitability of the lover’s transgressive desire. Triangulation is produced, then, in a strangely fecund rather than frustrating way, since the lovers must imagine their ideal relationship through an alternative society. Once they project that ideal as an image looks like a wedding portrait, their union—rather than the rival who comes between Girard’s lovers in order to join them—becomes the mediating principle that urges the narrative forward like a promise. (17-18)

There are several problematic assumptions made here. Triangulation, by definition, has to take into account a three-fold structure. Sommer only focuses on the male-female relationship as it (not) affected within this triangulation, thus “straighten[ing]” it out into a “dyad” or two-fold structure. She therefore manages to exclude how specific subjectivities are produced through this same configuration. Certainly male-male rivalries *are* simplified, no doubt, but how and why

they are simplified is an extremely important question that she fails to ask here. Moreover, these tensions are rarely “external to the couple,” as she insists and it is precisely Sedgwick’s definition of homosociality (in tandem with Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women”) that renders these tensions visible. In other words, because certain men “possess,” “marry,” “win,” the beloved, “other” men lack, lose, and even threaten *in excess* the symbolic configurations represented by both femininity and masculinity. For this reason, I wouldn’t argue that heterosexual unions aren’t relevant but their presence often, if not always, serves to negotiate a hierarchy of masculinities that, in turn, informs the homosocial bonds (rather than heterosexual bonds) at the basis of the “imagined community.”

The “simplification” of which Sommer speaks is certainly pertinent to our flat female characters (many, who, in one way or another, seem to be stagnant cut-outs of the same symbolic configurations), but does not explain the complexities of her male counterparts whose identities are arguably fused through one another, and explicitly through their relation to her body(ies). As Sedgwick argues, “in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power” (25). Thus, whereas Sommer maintains that it was the heterosexual bonds that forged new national identities, I depart from her analysis. Women were used to cement bonds between distinctive social categories of race, class, etc. but in the end, it was the relationships between men that came to matter most. With and sometimes without women, the major means of allegorizing the national is based on a fraternity of men wherein women are subsumed beneath them.

Finally, in several cases, an alterative society must be formed not because the couple couldn’t survive in the old world, but in certain cases like that of *O Guarani*, the rivals destroy it

(they burn down the small fortress that arguably represents the old world). In *Iracema* one society falls due to the loss of its princess Iracema which leads to their defeat through battle (they lose the power of the “sacred juice” that rests in her hands which transfer that power onto the white explorer). In every one of these cases, the fall of both individual and collective men allow for the emergence of alternative societies. They are not always *envisioned* by the heterosexual couple as Sommer implies, rather they are a consequence of both male-male rivalry and fraternal bonds that cross racial boundaries. In *O Guarani* for example, the “promise” of which Sommer speaks is not made between the heterosexual couple, rather the promise is made between Peri and Dom Antônio to carry forth in the new world. These observations, among others, allow me to ask who or what is actually “engaged” in the process of imagining alternative societies.

In order to destabilize any assumed reproductive heteronormativity and its relationship to the nationalizing project in the hands of Alencar I must first question not that which produces and defines the split between masculine/feminine, but that which defines the masculine in relationship to itself. Examining the masculine “other” as it is presented in Alencar’s text will enable a comprehensive schematization as to how hegemonic masculinity defines itself in relationship to both the feminine, as well as its masculine “other.” In this way, the idea of (re)producing masculinity needn’t rely so much on its feminine counterpart but rather on a process of “imagining” in order to give birth to the whitewashed hegemonic definition of masculinity. In turn, its heterosexual relationship with the feminine is important, however, perhaps only in relationship to the subordination of a particular masculine identities which occur *between men*, and therefore *on a sliding continuum of the gendered notion of “men.”* In this way, Alencar’s novel serves to articulate a particular hegemonic masculinity as it manages to

negotiate conflicting or contradictory positioning of national/tribal identities as they are associated with the performance of masculinity. I also suggest how this emerging identity (via the protagonist, Martim) expropriates a hierarchal structure of both gender and ethnic identities which ultimately disrupts the binary distinction between feminine/masculine by going beyond the binary and into the realm of “natural difference” inherent within the Eurocentric.

To conceptualize how these differences play out in the realm of the symbolic, I look at one of the most repetitive symbols employed by Alencar: the tree/trunk/branch and/or wood. Whereas Iracema’s body is directly linked to land, fertility, etc., trees become the archetypal symbol between the physical and spiritual worlds, ritual and ceremony, a place holder of memory (a tree is planted to mark Iracema’s grave and to found the nation), and thus, are a distinctly sacred aspect of nature. During the first chapters, the tree in its natural context is associated with protection, strength, virility, etc. The symbolic representation of the tree has its obvious implications of being generative by nature, however there is a plethora of textual evidence that reveals the metaphorical relationship between the “tree/trunk/branch” and masculinity. Its visibly phallic attributes are of great importance to my analysis as the tree has the potential of bearing fruit, and thus is reproductive by nature. Thus, if the tree is, in fact, a symbol of masculinity, its symbolic representation leans more towards the production of “secret juice” rather than fruit should one examine its relationship to reproductivity. On the other hand, it can be reduced to nothing more than an old stump—again, an image that will appear on several occasions in Alencar’s narrative.

To reemphasize, Iracema’s cultural value and perhaps the locus of “her power” in the first chapters is the fact that she holds “o segredo da jurema e o mistério do sonho” [the secret of the jurema and the mysteries of dreams] (9; 8). In that the tree is metonymic of masculinity, her



power resides in her marginal ability to produce from the tree, “the secret of the jurema”—its juice. Again, this is why, when Martim inquires about Iracema when offered a sex slave, he is told, “Iracema não pode ser tua serva” [Iracema cannot be your servant]—her sex is not for sale. In this way, the feminine, in that it is the betrayer of “the secret” is cast as that which is responsible for the fall of an entire civilization. Moreover, the fact that she seduces Martim places the violation of the indigenous in the hands of the feminine, ironically raping Martim while he is under the influence of the drug.

In a foreshadowing gesture on the part of Alencar, he introduces his reader to the figure of the *pajé* who sees Iracema and Martim walking in the distance shortly after the two have met. He writes, “O pajé lobrigou os dois vultos que avançavam; cuidou ver a sombra de uma árvore solitária que vinha alongando-se pelo vale fora” [The *pajé* discerned in the distance the two approaching shapes; he thought he saw the shadow of a solitary tree that spread along the valley] (7; 6). After the two men exchange greetings, Martim announces, “Só eu de tantos fiquei, porque estava entre os pitiguaras de Acaraú, na cabana do bravo Poti, irmão de Jacaúna, que plantou comigo a árvore da amizade. Há três sóis partimos para a caça; e perdido dos meus, vim aos campos dos tabajaras” [I was among the Pitiguaras of Acaracu (bitter enemies of the Tabajaras), in the hut of brave Poti, brother of Jacaúna, who planted with me the tree of friendship. Three suns ago we left for the hunt, and strayed from my own, I came to the land of the Tabajaras] (8; 8). Thus, the reader immediately becomes aware that the metaphorical implications of the tree are of great importance to the indigenous community as it serves as the primary embodiment of friendship, communion, and/or unity.

In direct correlation with the lovers’ first revealing of desire, Iracema states, “A flor da mata é formosa quando tem rama que a abrigue, e tronco onde se enlace. Iracema não vive

n'alma de um guerreiro: nunca sentiu a frescura de seu sorriso" [The flower of the woods is beautiful when it has a limb to shelter it, a trunk around which to entwine. Iracema does not live in the soul of a warrior: she never felt the freshness of his smile] (13; 16). After their first kiss, and upon being discovered by Iracema's brother, Iracema holds onto the trunk of a tree to prevent her fall. (24; 28) The flower, not surprisingly, symbolizes the feminine, whereas the tree is an obvious stand-in for masculinity. Taking this into account, the vision of the solitary shadow of the tree in the distance seen by the *pajé* is not the joining of man-woman, it is woman consumed in the shadow of man. The shadow is a reflection of "a measuring up" of masculinity as it plays out in the narrative. In short (pun intended), the men presented in the narrative are almost always associated with trees/trunks/and/or branches when Alencar wishes to evoke either stability or instability within his particular descriptions of them as we will see further on.

After Iracema gives birth and dies, she is buried beneath the coconut tree that eventually consumes her body: "O camucim recebeu o corpo de Iracema, embebido de resinas odoríferas; e foi enterrado ao pé do coqueiro, à borda do rio" [The camucim that received Iracema's body, seeped in fragrant resins, was buried beneath the coconut tree at the edge of the river] (71; 110). As Martim is the founder of the nation and the only person who has the memory of Iracema, the next passage is quite revealing: "Martim quebrou um ramo de murta, a folha da tristeza, e deitou-o no jazigo de sua esposa" [Martim broke off a myrtle branch, the leaf of sorrow, and placed it on his wife's grave] (71; 110). This is also the exact place where Ceará will eventually be founded. This might persuade the reader to conclude that the tree is primarily genealogical in function. The tree also marks loss: the forgotten memory of Iracema, or the regenerative future that literally consumes her body. Never once is the tree the embodiment of femininity, and in that

regard, the tree feeds upon her dead body as a means of sustaining itself much like masculinity relies upon the female body's reproductive function and nothing more.

Furthermore, it is only through her chastity that Iracema is able to guard the "secret," and thus, Alencar inserts a particularly Christian notion or an "Eve-like" spin on Iracema's relationship to the spiritual world of the Tabajara and her relationship to the power of the *jurema* tree. Equally noteworthy is that eventually "the wood" will ultimately evoke the symbol of the cross at the end of the narrative; thus demonstrating the conversion of indigenous symbolization to that of the Christian tradition vis-à-vis Martim's eventual defloration of Tupã's virgin. In short, the tree symbolic function to the indigenous is life in its natural state, whereas, when "the wood" has transitioned to the world of the white man, it is replaced with something that employs wood as a raw material but is, in fact, man-made and thus a marker of civilization.

There are the symbols of the "sacred wood" that serve as markers of masculinity, but there are also performances that reiterate its relationship to masculinity. To understand this relationship, I employ what might be thought of as a "mapping out" of masculinities revealed in chapter XVI. When in the "sacred wood," the men of the Tabajara participate in a ritual of dreams while excluding all women and children, including Iracema, because "Não permitia o rito que ela assistisse ao sono dos guerreiros e ouvisse falar os sonhos" [the ritual did not permit her to attend the warriors' sleep and hear the speaking of their dreams] (36; 54). After she has "já acendeu os fogos da alegria" [already lit the fires of joy], Iracema departs. Thereafter, three distinct models of masculinity are revealed through the men's dreams—the warrior, the hunter, and the one who is "fugoso em amores" [fiery in loves] (37; 53). Paradoxically, then, much of the male bonding that takes place here is in nominal relation to women. The revealing of their dreams to the *pajé* would safely assume a heterosexual discourse wherein women, particularly

through the dreams of he who is “fiery in loves” are rendered as mere objects. It is extremely interesting to note that the *pajé* is “reborn” in these men’s desires via his paternal access to their innermost secrets: “O velho renasce na prole numerosa, e como o seco tronco, donde rebenta nova e robusta sebe, cobre-se ainda de flores” [The old man was reborn in his numerous offspring, and like the dry trunk from which burst forth a hardy new hedge, still covered himself in flowers] (37; 53-54). Thus, reproduction takes on a mysterious new function via the exchange of dreams within this patriarchal framework. The exclusion of the feminine then, or the means by which she acts as cultural intermediary between the heavens and men’s dreams/desires (even unconsciously) is central to my employment of Sedgwick’s model of the homosocial bond, particularly in the sense that women as objects are needed in order to enable male bonding. Hence, “Ela tem aqui a voz de Tupã, que chama seu povo” [She [Iracema] holds the voice of Tupã, who calls his people] (16; 20), and will eventually act as the primary (in)exchangeable object as it directly relates to her sexual power embedded in virginity.

Sedgwick places emphasis on Lacan’s articulation of the phallus as it relates to the public sphere. She writes:

by distinguishing (however incompletely) the phallus, the locus of power, from the actual anatomical penis, Lacan’s account creates a space in which anatomic sex and cultural gender may be distinguished from one another and in which the different paths of men’s relations to male power might be explored (e.g. in terms of class). In addition, it suggests ways of talking about the relation between the individual male and the cultural institutions of masculine domination that fall usefully under the rubric of representation. (*Between Men* 24)

Lacan's theories allow both Sedgwick's and Alencar's reader to examine the sexual continuums implicated within the heterosexual union as they relate to patriarchal structures of power. In the case of *Iracema*, one can see that the "powerful juice" of the *jurema* tree, though it does not essentially belong to her, is mediated through her body, and thus the locus of power (the phallus) is posited within her sexual status as the tribal virgin. Furthermore, once this power is obtained by Martim through sexual intercourse, the fall of the indigenous patriarchal order, as well as the conversion of the "sacred wood" of Tupã into Jesus's cross puts the phallus into the hands of the European colonist.

Returning to Alencar's most foreshadowing moments of the Tabajara nation's collapse, in chapter VI the "sacred wood" is geographically symbolic as this "ábito agreste, reservado aos mistérios do rito bárbaro" [sylvan sanctuary reserved for the mysteries of the barbaric rite] (13; 16), which is also the exact location where Iracema will begin her seduction of Martim with a kiss when they are alone together. Though symbolic, Alencar's description of the land is highly erotic. He writes:

Martim sorriu do ingênuo desejo da filha do pajé.

— Vem! disse a virgem.

Atravessaram o bosque e desceram ao vale. Onde morria a falda da colina o arvoredado era basto: densa abóbada de folhagem verde-negra cobria o ábito agreste, reservado aos mistérios do rito bárbaro. Era de jurema o bosque sagrado. Em torno corriam os troncos rugosos da árvore de Tupã; dos galhos pendiam ocultos pela rama escura os vasos do sacrifício; lastravam o chão as cinzas de extinto fogo, que servira à festa da última lua.

Antes de penetrar o recôndito sítio, a virgem que conduzia o guerreiro pela mão hesitou, inclinando o ouvido sutil aos suspiros da brisa. Todos os ligeiros rumores da mata tinham uma voz para a selvagem filha do sertão. Nada havia porém de suspeito no intenso respiro da floresta.

[Martim smiled at the guileless desire of the pajé's daughter.

“Come!” said the maiden.

They crossed the woods and went down into the valley. Where the side of the mountain ended, the grove of trees was thick: a dense vault of dark-green foliage covered the sylvan sanctuary reserved for the mysteries of the barbaric rite. These were the sacred *jurema* woods. Around them stood the gnarled tree trunk of Tupã's tree; from its limbs, hidden among the dark branches, hung the sacrificial urns. The ground was covered with the ashes of an extinguished fire, which had served the feast of the latest moon.

Before penetrating the secret site, the maiden, who was leading the warrior by the hand, hesitated inclining her keen ear to the sighing of the wind]. (13; 16-17)

As Iracema's body is intertwined with nature throughout the narrative and as the trees are essentially phallic, the reader is able to conclude that this particular description is evocative of the sexual union that will eventually occur in chapter XV. Furthermore, the secret site is being “penetrated” by the two lovers as the trunk of Tupã's tree is “gnarled,” and we see the “as cinzas de extinto fogo” [ashes of the extinguished fire], all of which foreshadow the eventual fall of the Tabajara people. Hence it is persistently linked to not only the sexual union of these two protagonists, but also the “penetrated” and “sacred wood” of the Tabajara men.

In other words, through his “possession” of Iracema, Martim is able to penetrate this sacred space of the Tabajara men. The scene marking that penetration through metaphor also

reveals the diminishing sexual prowess of the indigenous men; moreover, this (sacred) male space is able to be penetrated by the white warrior and alludes to a demasculinization of sorts (via the diminished trees and extinguished fires). Paradoxically even though Iracema is excluded from the Tabajara's masculine ritual, she prepares the "gotas de verde e estranho licor vazadas da igaçaba, que ela tirara do seio da terra" "strange green liquor from the vase that she had taken from the bosom of the earth" and commands Martim: "Bebe" [Drink!] (14; 16). Thus, she includes herself as a mediator between the god of Tupã and the European by producing the Tabajara's secret for him. The error of the Tabajara people, then, according to Alencar, is when the feminine, excluded from the rights and rituals of men, transgresses the boundaries of the gender binarism by taking command of the power that should naturally reside in the hands of men.

What follows, tellingly, is "Martim's trip" after having consumed the symbolic powers of the Tabajara men. His psychedelic odyssey carries him into a dream that returns him to "à terra natal, abraça sua velha mãe, revê mais lindo e terno o anjo puro dos amores infantis" [the land of his birth, embracing his aged mother, seeing again more lovely and tender the pure angles of his childhood loves]. Martim returns to Portugal, and thus, his "motherland." The dream is not so much about his mother as it is another embracing of an "aged mother" and all that "old" motherland embodies for him: his boyhood, his encounters with purity, and sense of comfort—his love for his homeland. The dream leads him to ask: "Mas por que, mal de volta ao berço da pátria, o jovem guerreiro de novo abandona o teto paterno e demanda o sertão? ... Busca na selva a filha do pajé" [But why, as soon as he had returned to the cradle of his homeland, did the young warrior again leave the shelter of his country, and go in search of the interior? ... He sought in the woods the *pajé's* daughter] (17). In this instance, the two kiss for the first time.

Martim abandons the image of the motherland, indeed, reconciles his abandonment of his beloved country, in search of another “embodiment” of the motherland, his dear Iracema. Thus, his desire is not for Iracema, per se, but to found her, to conquer her, to employ her body as a means of making a new home, one that is guided by his nostalgia for home. Martim’s dream invokes a place of limbo between home and future but is first and foremost based on a return to his European roots.

There are two fundamental ways that I wish to employ Sedgwick’s model to further understand the relationship between desire and embodiment as it is symbolically configured in this narrative. The first, I’ve already alluded to: by situating Iracema as the object of exchange between the male indigenous collective and the individualized Martim who embodies “the European,” one can begin to understand the collective loss of power which leads to the downfall of the Tabajara nation. The second, is pertinent to the novel’s threesome—Poti, Martim and Iracema—and enables us to understand Poti’s subordinate masculinity which is demonstrated by the novel’s end. I’ve discussed the means by which women (as sexual property) are employed to cement the bonds between the *pajé* and Martim. This form of homosociality is more in line with the model initiated by Gayle Rubin’s “The Exchange in Women.” I have also discussed Iracema’s higher cultural value (through her reproductive capabilities that are tied to her father’s spiritual position). However, the rivalry that develops when Iracema falls into the hands of Martim is not between Martim and the *pajé* but between Martim and chief of the Tabajara, Irapuã.

Chapter VII is emblematic of this rivalry as Irapuã runs into Martim and Iracema shortly after their first kiss in the “sacred wood.” Irapuã becomes enraged when he learns of Iracema’s desire for Martim so much so that Iracema concludes that he must have been disturbed by the



evil spirit, Anhangá (19). Like Iracema, whose femininity assumes a higher value in accordance to her relationship to her father, Irapuã assumes an elevated status in masculinity as chieftain or as he is often referred as the “primeiro guerreiro tabajara” [first among the Tabajara warriors] (15; 20). Thus, rivalry that occurs here exists between the European and a “top” official of the Tabajara nation. With his blazing eyes fixed at Iracema, Irapuã exclaims: “O coração aqui no peito de Irapuã ficou tigre. Pulou de raiva. Veio farejando a presa. O estrangeiro está no bosque, e Iracema o acompanhava. Quero beber-lhe o sangue todo: quando o sangue do guerreiro branco correr nas veias do chefe tabajara, talvez o ame a filha de Araquém” [The heart here in Irapuã’s chest became enraged. It leapt in wrath. It came pursuing the scent of its prey. The foreigner is in the woods, and Iracema was with him. I would drink all his blood; when the white warrior’s blood runs in the Tabajara chieftain’s veins, perhaps then Araquém’s daughter will love him] (15; 20). These lines are significant because they illustrate how Irapuã’s desire for Iracema is directly tied to his disdain for Martim. The value that he places on Martim’s elevated status (as the beloved), in turn, is directly tied to “white warrior blood,” or in other words, white masculinity. “Warrior” and masculinity are metonymic and here I might note that Martim’s name is evocative of and derived from Mars (the god of war). Secondly, Irapuã is being influenced by “bad spirits” and treats the white man as his prey both of which inform his status of masculinity as evil and savage. “White warrior blood,” however, is that which he believes would “elevate” his status in relation to Iracema’s desire which certainly indirectly implies that O/other “kinds of blood” are devalued by comparison and that this is somehow “naturally apparent” to Irapuã. This hierarchy of masculinity between the indigenous and white masculinities will repeat itself with clarity at the novel’s end where whiteness is symbolically appropriated via Poti who converts to Christianity. After Iracema rejects Irapuã’s confessions of love, the chieftain exclaims, “A raiva

de Irapuã só ouve agora o grito da vingança. O estrangeiro vai morrer” [Irapuã’s wrath now hears only the cry of revenge. The foreigner will die] (16; 20). Irapuã is thus not consumed by desire of the heterosexual love-object but with rivalry against the white man. Martim, to no surprise, eventually kills him.

By positing the Indigenous and the European, particularly in their performance of war, (remember that “the warrior” is one of three types of masculinity presented in the dreams of the *pajé*—the other two being the hunter and the man who is “fiery in love”— we see the dominant “winner” of Iracema as he who takes possession of the once (in)exchangeable object. Moreover, it is not necessarily Iracema’s power that is lost and thus gained by Martim as feminist theorists such as Ria Lemaire should suggest, as we will examine further on; rather, Iracema is merely a sexual object in relationship to the tribal configuration of power that ultimately collapses as her value is taken over by Martim. Again, she has no power; she is merely a mediator of power (the person who makes the juice). Therefore, it is not Iracema’s loss of power that is gained by Martim, but the Tabajara loss of power, that is gained by Martim as her body serves as a container and extension of the tribal masculinity that is literally consumed by Martim both spiritually, and in this case, through the performance of war with his rival.

By conceptualizing this communal loss of power, there are several ways in which it could be viewed. For starters, when viewing the loss of Iracema one can see that it disrupts several configurations, the first being the triad composed of the Tabajara Men / Iracema / Tupã. When Iracema is “lost” as mediator or conduit between the men and their much-desired male god, the Tabajara men are no longer able to “speak to him.” This marks their spiritual fall as a collectivity. With regard to individual men, the *pajé*, as he relies on his daughter to produce the sacred juice of the tree trunk, can no longer serve as the tribal father, as he now is unable to

access “the voice of Tupã”—or the voice of his people. Thus, his power in relationship to the tribal men is diminished as well. Moreover, his loss, is Martim’s (or rather, Christianity’s, as it is “embodied” in Martim) gain. The collapse of one religion marks the rise of another. In other words, the power shifts that occur between individual men and entire collectivities is symbolically tied to Iracema in that she is either a container or conduit of between a male-male exchange of power.

Sedgwick writes “the status of women, and the whole question of arrangements between gender, is deeply and inescapably inscribed in the structure of relationships that seem to exclude women—even in male homosocial/homosexual relationships” (25). While this is particularly useful in examining the loss of indigenous power as a collective whole in terms of the gendered continuum on which these masculinities rest, I must reemphasize that, despite the fact that Iracema produces the *jurema* juice, she is excluded from the ceremonial ritual that brings the men closer to their Gods (ie., gives them power). Again, Iracema merely contains the ability to reproduce (not children here, but the juice of the *jurema* tree) which is largely informative of her value as a woman with elevated status as her father, at least for the moment, is the only one who has access to that which she is contained by her body.

It is also notable that Iracema seemingly has no mother, nor is her mother ever mentioned throughout the novel. Potí also lacks a mother, though an extensive history of both his brother and father are present. Martim, then, and as his son, are the only two that are given mothers, though Moacir will never know his mother. On the other hand, Martim only invokes his mother once when reflecting upon the motherland. This leads me to conclude that perhaps the indigenous cannot have a mother because the indigenous is already associated with nature. The indigenous nation, at least for Alencar, doesn’t have an origin because it is the origin.

Beyond this bizarre matricidal gesture on Alencar's part, it is of analytical interest to note that indigenous women are only sex objects or the reproductive raw material of whiteness and/or a new race. That is to say, there is a direct correlation with the feminine that is racialized as indigenous and white masculinity as it is embodied by Martim. Once the sex object / mother figure that is embodied by Iracema is "won" by Martim within the triangular formation, or rather, the feminine axis is removed, the entire indigenous patriarchal structure collapses since it is only through her body that their power, as men, is transacted. Again, their loss, in turn, is Martim's gain, as it will establish him as the divine-like individual who holds the power to establish a new civilization thus replacing an "old world order" that is mediated through Iracema's body. This "world order" is synonymous with masculine hierarchy. The "new world order" seemingly has no room for women. She is buried beneath it whilst the "new world order" (the European, the *mestiço*, and the converted Indian) emerge as a new masculine hierarchy. As I mention in the first part of this chapter, Alencar (by means of his own proclamations) is actively trying to represent "Brazilian origins." In this light, this "new identity" isn't quite as *new* in any sort of radical way as the indigenous is consumed into whiteness.

In turn, the chaos and collapse of the old world male order is primarily represented in the reactions of Irapuã and the *pajé* after Irapuã has attempted to kill Martim. The *pajé* claims that Tupã is offended: "quem ofender o estrangeiro ouvirá rugir o trovão" [whoever offends the foreigner will hear the thunder's roar] (15; 33), to which Irapuã replies: "O estrangeiro foi quem ofendeu a Tupã, roubando a sua virgem, que guarda os sonhos da jurema" [It was the foreigner who offended Tupã by stealing his maiden, who keeps the dreams of the jurema]. Martim's interjection asserts his own authority within the realm of the tribal leaders: "Irapuã é vil e indigno de ser chefe de guerreiros valentes" [Irapuã is unworthy of being the chieftain of valiant

warriors]! The *pajé* seems to take this assertion to heart as he threatens the chieftain with the wrath of Tupã and thus, opens up the bowels of the earth to assert his power over the chief. Irapuã foreshadows the eventual fall of the Tabajara when he exclaims: “A raiva de Irapuã não pode mais ouvir-te, velho pajé! Caia ela sobre ti, se ousas subtrair o estrangeiro à vingança dos tabajaras” [The wrath of Tupã no longer hears you old pajé! Let it fall upon you, if you dare save the foreigner from the vengeance of the Tabajara] (23; 33)!

Furthermore, these particular performances of war allow Martim to establish his virtuous and noble figure as a warrior, as he makes every attempt to avoid such a conflict but always triumphs when confronted with them. When the narrative transitions into “adventure story” mode, the hyperbolic performances of war reveal that Irapuã is eventually killed by Martim. Within these “performances of war,” Iracema is credited for saving Martim twice (she takes up arms and even threatens to kill her own brother so as not to stain Martim’s hands with his blood). While this may portray Martim as an inactive participant of war and even reverse gender roles inherent to protectionism (perhaps what Sommer would refer to as a “gender crossing”), Alencar makes Martim’s disapproval of this clear: “A proteção, de que o cercava a ele guerreiro a virgem tabajara, o desgostava” [The protection given him, a warrior, by the Tabajara maiden displeased him] (23; 33), and later, while taking refuge from the warriors of the Tabajara nation who “Rugem vingança contra o estrangeiro audaz que, afrontando suas armas, ofende o deus de seus pais, e o chefe da guerra, o primeiro varão tabajara” [roared vengeance against the blood of the foreigner who by defying their weapons offended the god of their fathers, and the chieftain of war, the first among Tabajara men] (30; 44). Martim would previously assert: “Um guerreiro só deve proteção a Deus e a suas armas. Não carece que o defendam os velhos e as mulheres” [A warrior asks protection only of God and his weapons. He has no need for old men and women to

defend him” (27; 38). Martim’s “defense” is certainly a defense of masculinity as it is coded on the body which is threatened by the fact that he has been protected by his “others” (who, of course, are naturally in his service). Secondly, this serves to recast both the feminine and the indigenous as “betrayers” of the people, therefore shifting the violence of the conquest to the inadequacy of the “opposite sex” (i.e. women can’t be trusted) and/or internal conflict amidst the indigenous peoples.

Thus, one can begin to conceptualize how Iracema’s desire for Martim causes the collapse of social order within the Tabajara nation, lending to the idea the centralization of the heterosexual coupling as national allegory; however, the narrative (and national allegory) moves far beyond the heterosexual union to become a series of negotiations between Martim’s relationship to the various collective or tribal identities that he encounters as a result of that desire. The complexities of masculine desire, intrigue, and rivalry “take over” the narrative whereas the heterosexual love story, after this point in the text, begins to fizzle.

The so-called “take over” of male-male desire as I conceptualize it allows me to view various feminist readings of *Iracema* from a slightly different angle. For example, Ria Lemaire’s feminist analysis of *Iracema* in her article. “Re-Reading *Iracema*: The Problem of the Representation of Women in the Construction of a National Brazilian,” places emphasis on Iracema’s loss of power throughout the text. However, my understanding of homosociality’s operative extensions on the objectification of the female body allows me to reposition Lemaire’s argument within in my own, specifically with regard to the major triad of the text—Poti, Iracema and Martim—which Lemaire analyzes extensively from a feminist standpoint.

This three-fold configuration of narrative’s main characters is a major textual element that Doris Sommer fails to mention altogether despite the fact that their threefold union marks

the entire second half of the text. Poti, if my reader would recall, is not even mentioned in Sommer's analysis but is the only character, beyond Martim, who occupies the entire narration of events. Moreover, Martim abandons Iracema entirely, and the second half of the narrative, in many regards, focuses on the relationship that exists between the two men. The more intense the bond between the two, the more Iracema eventually weakens and dies (she dies when the two go off to do "what men do"—fight a war).


Ria Lemaire has emphasized Iracema's loss of power through her analysis of what she sees as a power-struggle occurring between two principal characters (Martim and Iracema). Lemaire manages to explore that which goes beyond the realm of the love-story to reveal itself as a novel about sexual politics. However, as hers is a feminist / post-colonialist approach, she is mostly concerned with the distribution of power as they work to position both the indigenous and the feminine as subordinate to the masculine-European. She mainly attributes the exchange of power to a sort of reversal in terms of public authority. Iracema, once possessing power at the beginning of the text, Lemaire argues, eventually loses all power by the end of the novel. Thus, according to Lemaire, it is through Martim's appropriation of Iracema's power that he ultimately gains absolute authority. She writes:

When Martim's return to Ceará is described in Chapter 33, we discover that the reversal is complete: Martim has absolute public power now, his companion and friend Poti has become a virtual servant; all the other Indians submit to Martim. The equality between the two males no longer exists; there is a hierarchical order between them. Martim is now the master of space at every turn; it belongs to him, thanks to the help of so many white, European males and American Indians, who are not his brothers/friends but his servants.

(66)

Lemaire, although she is able to observe Poti's loss of power, offers little theoretical analysis<sup>12</sup> pertaining to gender as to why this occurs in Alencar's text. On the other hand, she embarks on an extensive articulation of Iracema's loss of power through her employment of theoretical tools of a conventional feminist reading. Her predicament, then, may be explained by her lack of articulation regarding this notion of gendered power mainly because she is working within the binary of masculine/feminine and thus can only attribute Poti's loss of power to the question of race within a Eurocentric disposition. Her employment of this binary is best exemplified through the use of the chart that she provides for her readers on page 68:

Table 1. Iracema's loss of power according to chapter

Chapter	Iracema	Martim
1-15	-space belongs to her -public power  -takes initiatives	--no space of his own --powerless --is hurt/saved/seduced
16-23	-lose her space	--back in the space of his friends

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<sup>12</sup> Lemaire eventually compares Iracema to Virgil: "*Iracema* clearly evokes in many ways the epic tradition of Virgil. This story of the Indian woman Iracema and her white lover Martim is situated by Alencar in the seventeenth century: it is an episode in the colonization of Ceará" (61). Interestingly both Sedgwick and another theorist, Robyn Wiegman, analyze the homosocial desire within this epic tradition. Lemaire also mentions James Fenimore Cooper who has been analyzed in light of the homosocial by several theorists. It is a critical commonplace that Alencar may have been "highly influenced" by Cooper's text.



	-loses public power -shared power	--creating his space
24	-shared initiative -shared power with two males -giving a name	--shared power with two Indians --getting an name --shared space
25-32	-powerless -muted -dead	--shared power with one male/friend/brother
33	-dead	-public power -space belong to him -inequality

Again, Lemaire cannot explain Poti's loss of power and attributes it to race, but this would not explain why other Europeans are also presented as "barbaric" within the text unless she were to assume that "barbaric and indigenous" were working within the same Eurocentric framework. This is not to say that Poti's and the other indigenous characters' ultimate subordination to Martim cannot be attributed to the Eurocentric. Indeed, this is practically obvious, but since Poti and other indigenous figures are given an elevated cultural authority in comparison with the European barbaric (these "other" Europeans are almost entirely invisible within the narrative as they are mere enemies that are fought against) this assumption is complicated. Also, the indigenous men are not effeminate, nor do they reside in a matriarchal society, therefore their loss of power (again, Lemaire attributes loss to the feminine) cannot be explained in this light. How then, might we arrive to a gendered notion of power within this

particular masculine “fall” from power as well? Is there a sliding continuum of gender beyond the hero/anti-hero, or the good/bad woman—that which doesn’t exist between the male-female relationship but between the men? Poti, for example, manages to avoid effeminacy while being subordinated to Martim’s authoritative position, how does the hierarchical order between Martim and Poti become determined from a gendered standpoint?

There is a particular spatial relationship allocated to these characterizations that in and of themselves embody racial archetypes from a Eurocentric disposition. Martim is often portrayed as the thinking rational, philosophical, and spiritually isolated one as he is constantly going off on his own to ponder the sea in a melancholic depression that is never really defined by Alencar. All that is revealed is that his love for Iracema is slowly declining. However, it is this space by the sea that defines him within an epistemological function seemingly innate within the self which simultaneously distances itself from the indigenous other, thus marking the absence and spatial distance of these particular racialized bodies. In the absence of Poti and Iracema (Iracema who doesn’t quite understand as much as Poti), the importance of spatial difference for a “solitary thinker” reinvokes a mythos of white masculinity as the isolated and solitary thinker/philosopher: the rational.

Thus, by exposing this visual relationship that temporarily moves beyond the sexual and into the epidermal we can see a series of performative gestures which will eventually constitute the “active” exchanges between the two men that allows the masculine to be defined vis-à-vis the absence of the feminine which also happens to present within a spatial (particularly geographical) allegory: the two men will eventually leave Iracema behind to engage in war. It is via these pensive and isolated moments that Martim will decisively conclude that a new nation must be founded upon the collapse of another. Even though Iracema is not the “founding-

mother” of the new nation, given the need for her biological capabilities to give birth, she is key to this formation. One should also take into account that Iracema is now a fallen woman who is also responsible for the fall of her particular tribe while she simultaneously assumes the position of “sacrificial mother” of a new race. Metaphorically, this occurs in the second half of the narrative upon the loss of Iracema’s virginity. It is relevant to note that consummation between Martim and Iracema occurs in the hut of her father. Also, though Martim desires Iracema, he does not wish to go against the hospitality of the Tabajara, and thus pleads for her to return to her own hut. Shortly afterwards, Martim orders her to prepare the drink of the Tupã, at which point the two make love, though Martim is not aware of this as he is under the power of *jurema* which allows him to remain virtuous and an emblematic Christian. From here on, Iracema will never wish to leave the side of Martim even as he eventually flees the land of the Tabajara to be reunited with his “brother,” Potí, to seek shelter with his tribe, the Pitiguara, who are also the bitter enemies of the Tabajara. The movement of Martim from one tribe to another (not simply Iracema’s movement), is precisely where his masculine prowess begins to assume its might. This movement also marks where the relationship between men is of utmost importance (as opposed to the male-female relationship which will be abandoned).

For example, upon the initial reunion of Martim and Poti, Iracema is denied access to the men’s language. Poti exclaims, “Senhor de Iracema, cerra seus ouvidos, para que ela não ouça” [Master of Iracema, cover her ears so she does not hear] (31; 46). Later, he whispers into Martim’s ear, “Manda à filha do pajé que volte à cabana de seu pai. Ela demora a marcha dos guerreiros” [Tell the pajé’s daughter to return to her father’s hut. She slows the warriors’ progress] (36; 55). Poti obviously wishes to exclude Iracema from the picture. This is even more evident in the scene where the two intend to return to Poti’s village: “Poti olhou a mata e parou.

Martim compreendeu e disse a Iracema: Teu hóspede já não pisa os campos dos tabajaras. É o instante de separar-te dele” [Poti looked at the woods and stopped. Martim understood and told Iracema: Your guest no longer walks the land of the Tabajara. It is time that you leave him] (37; 56). Directly afterwards, Iracema reveals that she has seduced Martim and has also betrayed the secret of the jurema. From then on she will be known as the “wife of Martim” rather than her own name, marking in the text the moment that she is “possessed” by white masculinity.

Taking into account the metaphorical representation of the tree as that which is fundamentally masculine, Poti’s reaction to the news of the new couple is remarkably supportive of my assumption that Poti’s desire for Martim is disrupted by Iracema’s presence. Alencar writes, “Poti de pé como um tronco decepado esperou que seu irmão quisesse partir” [Poti stood, silent and motionless as a severed tree trunk, waiting until his brother would depart]. It is soon after revealed that “esperava o momento de morrer defendendo o amigo” [he awaited the moment of dying in the defense of his friend” (39; 57). With the introduction of Iracema as she who disrupts a certain masculine continuum in the exchange of fraternity, Poti loses a certain power in direct relation to Martim which can be largely noted via his “severed trunk.” Thus, Poti is recentered in his positioning to Martim, as the “third-wheel.” From here on, the novel will repeatedly mention the three-fold relationship of the three main characters: Iracema, wife and heart of Martim, and Poti, brother and strength of Martim. However, as the ending reveals, Iracema’s power in the triangular equation will eventually be eliminated once her reproductive function is fulfilled; she slowly dies as the men form their primary bond of so-called “brotherhood” through war. Thus, the “new world” does not emerge from a couple but a triangular formation wherein the feminine is eliminated all together.

I would like to return to Anderson's argument, particularly the chapter "Patriotism and Racism," in which he asks not only how the nation is imagined, but how it might also be "modeled, adapted, and transformed." He points out how nation-ness can ultimately transcend racial tensions (even in the case of colonized peoples) because it can manage to "inspire love" even "self-sacrificing love" (141). Taking this into account, it would be interesting to ask ourselves how Alencar planted "this love" within his protagonists. How is Poti's love for Martim different from Iracema's love for Martim? It is Poti who is the one willing to make the sacrifice, not Iracema (again, he's willing to die for him).

If Martim, Poti, and Iracema are to be examined in terms of their triangulation, I must emphasize that no desire exists whatsoever between Poti and Iracema; in fact, Poti despises her. Thus, the object of desire is not Iracema that binds the two together, it is Martim. Iracema's existence between the men disrupts male-male desire to a certain extent; however, Iracema is eventually abandoned whereas Poti is embraced by Martim. Lemaire manages to avoid a major contradiction that yields its existence within the most evident patriarchal "relationship" presented to the reader by means of Poti and Martim. Masculinity is not defiantly conferred within male-female configuration but rather Poti's masculinity (and other indigenous masculinities as well) becomes disempowered once his authoritative role is deferred vis-à-vis his interaction with the European, racially privileged and thus empowered "masculine." Following this observation, I would like to examine two points here. First, with the elimination of the feminine, is the nation formed upon a/n (im)mutual maleness? Secondly, how does the Iracema/Martim/Poti triad negotiate both race and masculinity?

Sedgwick's model no longer seems to fit as Iracema is no longer the hinge of such a triangle; rather, she is placed on the bottom. Such a formula might situate Martim at the top of

the triangular formation whereas both Poti and Iracema occupy the base of the triangle. On the other hand, Sedgwick's model never brings race into her methodology. In turn, this would require us to relocate our notions of masculinity and identification while placing emphasis on notions of both race and ethnicity. In order to do so, we must reject this idea that hegemonic masculinity is exclusively constructed in relationship to its power over the feminine but rather these subject positions must be extended in order to incorporate a certain racialized identity in conjuncture with whiteness as it eventually finds itself in the subordinate position of the social hierarchy. This is not to say that the feminine and the racialized other can be situated in the same subordinate position in relationship to the white male; rather, these two positions are quite distinct, though parasitically related. In other words, the hegemonic masculine relies on the feminine in order to subordinate the masculine other though this is not done through the feminization of the masculine "other"; rather, it is through an imagined "desire" to achieve power—a.k.a. whiteness, that which is closer to the divine—the phallus in religious terms. The aesthetic dilemma of masculine desire is derived through the woman though as it draws upon her back it is sharpened with the mouth of the masculine "other." Moreover, the means by which masculinities are being negotiated also informs Iracema's loss of power. This is precisely where my reading differs from Lemaire's in her assumption that the loss of power occurs within the male/female binarism.

Lemaire observes, "As to the distribution of power between the sexes, the dialectical movement is striking: the more Iracema loses, the more Martim gains" (63). I would further this observation by noting that the more Iracema loses, particularly in correlation with Martim's desire for her, the closer the two males become. However, one can see this occurring much earlier as well. In the beginning Martim reveals that he and Poti have planted the tree of

friendship, and shortly upon returning to his village Poti takes Martim directly to the tree where he was born. “Jatobá, que viste nascer meu irmão Poti, o estrangeiro te abraça” [Martim embraced the fraternal tree: Jatobá that saw my brother’s birth, the foreigner embraces thee] (43; 64). “O raio te decepe, árvore do guerreiro Poti, quando seu irmão o abandonar” [May lighting fell thee, tree of the warrior Poti, when his brother abandons him] pronounces Jatobá—Iracema is excluded from the sacred bond. The chapter ends, “e levando a esposa do lado do coração e o amigo do lado da força, voltou ao rancho dos pitiguaras” [taking his wife at the side of his heart and his friend at the side of his strength, he returned to the huts of the Pitiguaras] (44; 65). The three remain practically inseparable in the following chapters to such an extent that Poti exclaims: “Empty and sad is the heart of your brother away from you” (67).

The scene shortly after Iracema announces her pregnancy is fundamental to the argument that male-male desire is a central component of the text specifically in terms of reproduction. That, and the following scene, is a clear instance when male-female desire (the heterosexual union) take a back seat to desire as it exists between men. Martim’s only reply to her following the announcement of her pregnancy is: “Filho, dizes tu” [Child, you say]? The scene is directly handed over to Poti who, while giving a long speech, exclaims, “o guerreiro sem a esposa é como a árvore sem folhas nem flores; nunca ela verá o fruto. O guerreiro sem amigo é como a árvore solitária no meio do campo que o vento embalança: o fruto dela nunca amadura” [The warrior without a wife is like a tree without leaves or flowers: never will it see fruit. The warrior without a friend is like the solitary tree that the wind lashes in the middle of the plains; its fruit never ripens] (53; 79). What is so utterly remarkable about this scene is the fact that Martim immediately responds by touching his chest to Poti’s chest: “O coração do esposo e do amigo falou por tua boca” [The heart of husband and friend have spoken through your mouth]

proclaiming that the child was born in the blood of Poti's race. Martim ends the dialogue by proclaiming: "O guerreiro branco não quer mais outra pátria, senão a pátria de seu filho e de seu coração" [The white warrior desires no other homeland but that of his son and of his heart]. Here it almost appears as if Iracema and Martim have not produced the first mestizo child, but that the child will be born through the union of Poti and Martim. As the novel repeatedly announces, Martim and Poti share the same "heart." Therefore the "heart" to which he refers in this instance can be openly interpreted as being the heart of Poti.

In her generalization of the Romantic Vision of "good husbands for a new nation," Rebecca Biron observes, "Winning America's heart and body requires that the ideal heart and body be produced at the same time that they are pursued. Thus, women's productivity and reproductively are subsumed under a rubric of men who give birth to the new" (1). This requires us to examine the "nature" of what is being (re)produced here, and further still, where it is being produced. The obvious conclusion would be that the child, more specifically, the first mestizo male child, will be the successor or heir of the fraternal bond shared between these two distinct fathers. On the other hand, one can see the sharing of the heart in this particular passage and Poti's position within it as a direct link to a prescriptive hegemonic ideology by means of his conversion to Christianity mainly due to his desire for Martim and to symbolize their "oneness." "Poti foi o primeiro que ajoelhou aos pés do sagrado lenho; não sofria ele que nada mais o separasse de seu irmão branco; por isso quis tivessem ambos um só deus, como tinham um só coração" [Poti was the first to kneel at the foot of the sacred wood: he would allow nothing to separate him from his white brother. Both must have a single god, as they shared a single heart] (72; 112).



The “sacred wood” is no longer that of jurema tree; rather its final gesture evokes the commencement of a shift toward Christianity. With the mother/wife having passed away and a new protagonist introduced, all that remains is the threefold relationship of the father, the son, and the brother/servant—clearly this has its religious connotations with Christianity but at the same time we could observe that this is the foundational structure of the first generation of a new patriarchal order that is based on another trinity of sorts.

In turn, once the female body performs its reproductive function, it is eliminated. This reveals Alencar’s ideal formation of sexual distribution, in terms of the public space of the newly founded nation. However, Poti’s position within this new sort of triangular equation of power (the trinity) is reduced to an earthly limitation as Martim is God-like (he is referred to as lord) and Moacir (whose name means “child of suffering”) is Jesus-like. Again, his divine position, and thus elevated masculinity, has occurred through his possession of the female body which acted as a container of that which would bring him closer to God. Once the male authoritative figures are displaced through rivalry, and the performance of masculinity through war, Martim is able to fully achieve this status. How he comes to “embody” this new position of power is relevant, certainly, but what is perhaps more relevant is the notion that the founding of a new civilization also marks a return to absolute white power (he’s now a lord). This leaves one body, and one body only, as the quintessential body to be both respected and desired in this new era: the white male of European origin. This is significant because it contradicts any notion that the feminine body, despite the fact the novel is named after the main female protagonist, is the most desirable body in the text.

In short, the formation of the nation is not performed via the heterosexual union of these two protagonists; rather, Iracema’s character, particularly in the second half of the novel serves a

biological purpose and nothing more. Her body is needed for its reproductive function, much like the land that her body and her name come to represent. She is a virgin, then she is a mother, then she is a dead mother. She's is ultimately forgotten, denied a memory, and the only protagonist left to hold a memory of her, is the European colonizer. Thus, Martim is not only given the power to shape the future, but he is the only protagonist who holds the key to the past. If Alencar should be given the credit of having formulated the "Brazilian" identity, we must proceed with caution.

## **2.1 NATIONALISM, COLONIALITY AND THE "HISTORICAL" NARRATIVE**

Towards the beginning of my introductory chapter, I discussed coloniality, embodiment, and the subjection of identity within the so-called "contact zone." In (re)writing national "histories," authors like Alencar who openly concerned themselves with the creation of a national literature repeatedly returned and thus rewrote the first colonial encounters between what has been conceived to be two "distinct" identities: the Indigenous and the European. Such representations not only repeated "colonial logic," it reiterated it, enacting Homi Bhabha's assertion that the colonial gaze is reliant upon a discursive regime of racism as "something that must be anxiously repeated" (18).

This repetition reiterates the 'fixity' as the "sign of cultural/historical/racial difference." In short, "Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (19). The problem inherent to narratives like *Iracema* is that their status as canonical texts has positioned them as an institutionalized narrative. That and the mythos created by many of these narratives have become fixtures of national imaginary writ

large. The number of modern-day monuments, places, films, plays, and even actual people who have been named after the novel's characters, specifically in the case of *Iracema*, is astonishing. In other words, nation-ness as a series of signs that are discursively informed by gender and race is inherently participatory in the anxiously repetitious logic of racism, and as my analysis has hopefully revealed, misogyny. Thus, in certain regards the "historical narrative" or "national mythos" in that they have become fixtures of nation-ness, persistently repeat the logic of coloniality by means of their monumentalist, canonical status, and endless performance contributing to what is both "knowable" and "visible" from the position of the colonizer. How this is forged into modern-day questions of national agency, imagery, and performance as it relates to representation might very well inform the relationships that are forged between oppression, marginalization, and nationalism.

According to Lee Skinner, just as the very ideas of "nation" were beginning to articulate themselves as such, nineteenth-century Latin American authors turned to historiography as well as historical narratives with the task of forging relationships between citizenship, national identity and the individual. These historical narratives served as "useful vehicles for their statements about the process by which (semi)arbitrary geographical boundaries could come to signify nations with distinct identities" (71). While some authors recognized and invited the post-Independence period as a new historical era decisively independent from Spain (in Brazil's case, Portugal) and thus, rejected the Spanish or Portuguese colonial past; others upheld that same colonial past as that which could serve as a basis for justifying their ideas about national identity. These authors, in turn, employed historical narratives about the Conquest, according to Skinner, "in order to justify their ideas about national identities, to comment upon contemporary political and social situations, and to elucidate the historical roots of current problems" (71). Thus, it was

the historical narrative that would provide the driving force through which these authors were able to render the past in order to make the present more comprehensible to themselves and to their readers, through which they would paint the tales of “exemplary citizens” of the new nations in which they stood (71-72).

The genre of the historical narrative, however, presented for its author a dilemma of origins just as we saw in Bolívar’s speech presented in the previous chapter. Some wished to reject colonial history while others recognized it as that which had made independence in the Americas possible. In other words, if one’s role was to represent “history” within the context of nation building, how should that history be represented amidst a recent violent collision between “old” and “new” so that it would prove useful to the nation’s future. Skinner refers to this as the “authorial anxiety” that was expressed countless times in the form of prologues, epilogues, and debates surrounding the crisis of the “production of historical narrative itself” and how it might relate to historicizing projects (72). Certainly Alencar’s lengthy prefaces and prologues, and even prologues to prefaces, speak to this phenomenon. Authorship and “authority” stood on shaky footing and such lengthy defenses of historical methodology employed in the “depiction” of national mythos attested to this uncertainty. Soon, authors felt the need to impart historical “documentation” in order to justify their narratives. This is something that Alencar participated in extensively. Skinner observes:

Historical novelists repeatedly attempted to claim an authority based on their putative status as historians, even—or especially—when they wrote historical fictions instead of “traditional” historical texts. The very process by which they asserted their historicizing authority, however, serves to highlight the ambiguous nature of their historical novels and calls into question the status of the historical novel in Latin America. (72)

Ria Terezinha Schmidt observes in her essay “The Nation and Its Other” that the “homogenizing foundational thrust” commenced with the erasure of cultural and linguistic manifestations that “did not fit the project that intellectuals and men of letters took upon themselves to promote and impose through the writing of power and the power of writing” (6). Moreover, the development of national identities in Latin America not only had to contend with intranational differences, but with Latin America’s own historical conditions of coloniality, precisely in that it was made up of several colonial territories in addition to the internal boundaries of class-belonging that were already defined in terms of racial hierarchies and gender asymmetries.

Nationalism, as both representation and reality, operated within and through the confines imposed by colonialism, often functioning at the service of a *criollo* patriarchal elite within its hegemonic institutions and representations “by a set of inclusionary and exclusionary interpellations whereby individuals were to be constituted as national subjects” (6). Schmidt adds that it is precisely the gap between discursive construct and the realities of political structure and social organization that “regulated the identity politics of the national body and which were deeply bound up with the exercise of power on producing racial hierarchies, class divisions and gender asymmetries.” Such preliminary structures of national identity were not only insistent on inclusionary and exclusionary practices, as Schmidt observes, “[I]n reality, the unmarked national subject of nationalism bore the stamp of white male ethnicity as the limit and condition of normalized national belonging, in relation to which, all forms of differences were interpreted” (6).

Therefore, not only is it appropriate to ask: why does the mother of a nation have to die, but, what other sorts of identities “had to” meet their symbolic deaths via the quills of Brazilian

Romanticists like Alencar? No doubt, there is a certain aspect of cannibalization inherent to Alencar's work—one that, in its exaltation of whiteness, absorbs the indigenous into its own body, precisely consuming it as a sort of exotic delicacy but not a staple form of alimentation. Thus, this “Brazilian body” as it is made public via literature is not radically transformed by any means, but insists on altering an old world recipe with the simple addition of local spices. As Roberto Schwarz observes in “A Brazilian Breakthrough”:

Brazilian independence was a conservative process that did not bring about a restructuring of society. The colonial heritage of land ownership, slavery, traffic in human beings, extended family and generalized clienteles went almost untouched. Brazil's insertion in the modern world proceeded by way of a social confirmation of the colonial Ancien Régime, not its supersession. This made for a disconcerting kind of progress, in which pre-modern inequalities were simply replicated in newer and newer contexts, rather than being eradicated. (2)

A similar claim can be made in regards to Alencar's narratives, specifically concerning the symbolic configurations of white male hegemony as it appears within his works. Overall, Martim's characterization marks a “return to innocence” serving as yet another means of distancing the European from the real violence that occurred during colonial times (and well after). In turn, any appreciation of the indigenous operates within the framework of the Indianist tradition of an international Romanticism as many critics are quick to point out. Because these identities are coded through difference, and these groups, in one way or another, attempt to “win” the female protagonist, homosociality and male rivalry are abundant within their depictions. The following subsection, though brief, is an attempt to understand how homosociality works in another one of Alencar's novels, *O Guarani* (1857), as yet another

exemplar as to how white, Euporean masculinity operates through the objectification of the female body in direct correlation with its projection of indigenous masculinity as that which wishes to obtain white, hegemonic masculinity by means of the same body.

## 2.2 O GUARANI

Alencar's *O Guarani* (1857), highly immersed in the Indianist tradition of Brazilian Romanticism, also features an indigenous protagonist (this time configured as male) who will abandon his people for his love of a white woman, and the acceptance of her patriarch, the maiden's white father. Thus "whiteness" is undoubtedly something to be desired, both literally and figuratively, as it was in *Iracema*. *O Guarani* is quite similar to *Iracema* in many regards, however, this time the gender and racial configurations of homosociality are significantly altered when compared to *Iracema*. *O Guarani's* still posits the sought after "prize possession"—a woman—as that which signifies an extension of her father's masculinity. However, now both the father and the exchangeable female body are configured as white. The noble warrior, in turn, is indigenous and male.

Like *Iracema*, the novel's title invokes its sole indigenous protagonist, Peri, a male native of the Guaranies, who falls in love with the Fidalgo's daughter, Cecília. Cecília's characterization is entirely emblematic of the Marianist literary tradition as she is white, virtuous, virginal, and is often compared to the divine. What she comes to embody is as clear to Peri as it is to the reader: Cecília is the embodiment of the Virgin on Earth. As Peri reveals (note that Peri also speaks in third-person), "Peri não quis que a senhora ficasse triste, e voltasse ao céu" [Peri didn't want the woman to get sad and return to the sky] (78). Earlier Alencar hints at the notion that Peri might

think that Cecília is the Virgin incarnate when Peri says, “A senhora desceu do céu, porque a lua sua mãe deixou; Peri, filho do sol, acompanhará a senhora na terra” [The woman has descended from the sky, because the moon, her mother, has permitted it. Peri, son of the sun, will accompany the woman to the earth] (77). And so, Cecília becomes a sort of idol for Peri whose love is revealed to be “um culto” [a cult] (78), “seu culto” [a cult] (41), “Para ele essa menina, esse anjo louro, de olhos azuis, representava a divindade na terra; admirá-la, fazê-la sorrir, vê-la feliz, era o seu culto” [For him, that girl, that blue-eyed blonde angel, represented the divine on earth; to admire her, to make her smile, to see her happy was his cult]. Peri, in turn, like Iracema, is not associated with the divine, but with nature and the land.

As can be expected of the Indianist tradition, Peri possesses an/other kind of knowledge. Sommer recognizes this when she writes of the scene in which Peri is recovering a string of pearls (an allusion to femininity in its own right). Sommer writes of Peri's “feline, almost female, agility” and “different kind of knowledge because he knows how to approach—and survive in—that unknown and dangerous female nature (142). Despite the fact that for Alencar, as for his Romantic contemporaries, it is difficult to separate the indigenous body from both nature, and by extension, femininity, I don't believe that Peri's characterization is emblematic of a projection of effeminacy, quite the opposite. In many ways, Peri is an exemplar of a “pure man” but, as I will argue, even as such is not man enough, at least not yet.

Cecília's body, in that it is a particular kind of body, acts as a trope or a sort of meta-fictional text that arrives to the reader already dressed in a gendered discourse or ideology that allows Alencar's reader to see her “essential nakedness.” Her body is clearly one that brings various myths and typologies to the page with no need for an introduction by the authorial voice.



As daughter of a white male elite (and patriarch of the mini-civilization in the jungle) Dom Antônio's morality as father and patriarch are reflected vis-à-vis his daughter's sexual morality as it is he who is ultimately her protector. Even the structure of this mini-society, particularly the structure of the house, is built to protect Cecília (78). If Cecília is the virgin incarnate on land, or a divine angel, then Dom Antônio is most certainly God.

Dom Antônio is, after all, introduced to the reader wearing all black and white. His long white hair falls over his shoulders; his long white beard is “como a espuma da cascata” [like the foam of a waterfall] (47). Though he is aging, he still has a very active life and is described as having a certain vigor of that of a younger man (47-48). His first narrative actions are in bestowing judgment upon his son who is later revealed to have accidentally killed an indigenous woman while hunting. Dom Antônio not only refers to him as a murderer of women but says of him: “não sabeis fazer uso da espada que trazeis à cinta” [you do not know how to use the sword that you carry on your belt] (25)— the sword being an obvious symbolic gesture that informs the reader of his masculinity (or lack thereof). Diego's is a constant attempt to be accepted by his father (and by extension, earn his manhood); the father tells his benefactor that he shall learn how to fight “como fidalgo e cristão em prol da religião, conquistando ao gentio esta terra que um dia voltará ao domínio de Portugal livre” [like a nobleman and like a Christian valiant in his religion, conquering the savages of this land that one day would return to a free Portugal's reign]. Diego, however, has already failed and if anyone is effeminate in this narrative, it is him. The reason that Peri emerges as protagonist in the novel acts as a sort of stand-in for the son's insufficient masculinity. After all, Diego has killed an innocent woman which has placed Cecília, the divine angel, in jeopardy. Peri saves Cecília and her sister from two Aimoré natives who seek to avenge the beautiful Indian maiden's death. Likewise, Peri comes to protect Cecília and

her sister Isabel from the evil Italian, Lorendano, who plots to kill Dom Antônio, kidnap his daughters, and go in search of a buried treasure. Thus, Peri is invited onto the property when it is clear that he has “pure intentions” (through love) of protecting Dom Antônio’s property (women included).

However, like his daughter who is symbolic of the virgin incarnate, Dom Antônio’s heroic rule will be fulfilled not by violence, but by divine judgment, for he is indeed a holy father, the creator of this civilization, the judge and leader of all men who fall under his rule. Not only is he a solid example of the divine Portuguese hero, he is the embodiment of white male elitism, the patriarchal rule, the respected authority figure who rules his family and his people. In many regards, he is the older version of *Iracema*’s Martim, and yet, unlike Martim, Dom Antônio will die by the novel’s end.

The territorial paradigm presented in this narrative is not the destruction of the indigenous civilization as it was in *Iracema* (it is not its exaltation either) but the destruction of the mini-society governed by Dom Antônio that marks a return to nature. How this functions through masculinity, however, is not the destruction of the “civilized” upon the death of the father, but an implantation of civilization within nature that occurs through the transference of masculinity from one hero to another. Conversely, as it was the case in *Iracema*, masculine desire will operate through the objectified female body in such a way that it will merely serve as a means through which both homosocial desire as well as male rivalry will establish a particular hierarchy of masculinity. This time, however, the patriarchal order that circulates around the body of Cecília transfers masculinity to the arguably male other via the cult of whiteness. In *Iracema*, the possession of her body (and by default the male mojo juice) marked the emergence

of Martim's divine masculine status. In *O Guarani*, it is not only masculinity, but whiteness and civilization that are transferred through the objectified (now white) female body.

A major difference between *Iracema* and *O Guarani* is that Cecília's femininity is contrasted and informed by a racialized phenotype of a female Other. This woman assumes a secondary role to Cecília, a.k.a. the "the blonde angel." Her name is Isabel, and in theory, it is Isabel who embodies the hybrid subjectivity of the encounters between colonizers and the colonized as she is the product of an affair between her father (Dom Antônio) and her indigenous mother. The novel reveals that Isabel's relationship to the nuclear family of father, son, mother, and daughter is estranged as she is only recognized as a cousin. Interestingly, it is she who denounces her own identity. By contrasting the two daughters (Cecília, and Isabel), Alencar constantly provides us with the racial contrast of white and "not quite," reaffirming this via the dialogue given to Isabel when she states: "E eu daria a minha vida para ter a tua alvura, Cecília" (23). [I would give my life to have your white complexion, Cecília]. And later, after revealing her love for Álvaro (the white gentlemen first enamored with Cecília) she will exclaim: "Tenho vivido da compaixão alheia; não me queixo, mas sofro. Filha de duas raças inimigas devia amar a ambas; entretanto minha mãe desgraçada fez-me odiar a uma, o desdém com que me tratam fez-me desprezar a outra" (25). [I have always lived a life of distant compassion; I don't complain, but I suffer. As the daughter of two races, I should love both; nevertheless, my disgraced mother has caused my hatred of one of them, and the contempt with which they treat me has made me despise the other]. Not only is she marginal to the nuclear family, she is also marginal to the narrative and is killed off, along with Álvaro, at the novel's end.

As a product of miscegenation, Isabel is acculturated to white values. However, it is made evident to the reader that Isabel finds herself in a subordinate position to her white sister

and in recognizing herself as such, develops a hatred towards the indigenous people, including Peri and her mother. It is only at her moment of death, that her mother plays a role in the narrative, for it is the poison that she has given her daughter that will ultimately send her to her grave.

Thus, again, the indigenous mother is cast as she who is responsible for killing off her own indigenous people. Interestingly, all female indigenous protagonists in Alencar's *Iracema* and *O Guarani* die. Iracema dies. The indigenous wife/seductress who saves Peri from the clutches of her Aimaré brothers dies. The war that occurs between the two indigenous nations is caused by the death of young and beautiful indigenous woman (a clear reference to male-male rivalry over the female body). All die. The only female indigenous characters that remain are flat characters who fill up the scenery like nature; they gather food, attend to their men, etc. In *O Guarani*, there is only one female indigenous protagonist that survives: Peri's mother.

Just as Iracema's memory was forgotten by all but Martim, Peri's mother is seemingly forgotten entirely, even by Peri. Like Iracema, Peri relinquishes his entire tribe, his home, his origins, and eventually his religion, to be "a slave" to the Virgin who treats him as such. He unveils this when revealing a dream to the Portuguese family: "De noite Peri teve um sonho; a senhora apareceu; estava triste e falou assim: 'Peri, guerreiro livre, tu és meu escravo; tu me seguirás por toda a parte, como a estrela grande acompanha o dia'" [At night, Peri had a dream; the woman appeared to him, she was sad and she spoke to him like this: Peri, free warrior, you are my slave, you will follow me everywhere, like the big star accompanies the day]" (77). Later, when his mother tries to convince him to return to his tribe, he replies: "Mãe, não ofende a senhora; Peri morreria, e na última hora não se lembraria de ti" [Mother, do not offend the woman; Peri would die and in his last moments, will not remember you" (87).

In exchange for relinquishing his origins, Peri will receive a new life as a servant to both Cecília and her father. If one is cautious in his or her reading, one will find that in reference to his servitude to Cecília, Peri is placed in a peculiar relationship to the Dom Antônio. For instance, the chapter that tells of his heroic endeavors to stop a rock from crashing down on the young maiden and later his admiration for her, does not center on his desires for Cecília, but rather his new found bond to her father. Dom Antônio initiates the first exchange between the men stating, Dom Antônio initiates the first exchange between the men stating, “quando dois homens se encontram e ficam amigos, o que está na casa do outro recebe a hospitalidade” [when two men encounter one another and they become friends, the one who is in the others house is he that receives hospitality] (79). In turn, Peri responds: “É o costume que os velhos transmitiram aos moços da tribo, e os pais aos filhos...Peri te obedece” [It is the custom that the elders have passed on to the youth of their tribe, and the fathers to the sons ... Peri obeys you] (78). In essence, Dom Antônio is teaching Peri how to be civilized. Peri looks to the lessons of his own culture to reiterate one thing: young men respect old men and thus, Peri must obey. Here the exchange of of masculinity is quite visible. Dom Antônio presents that which will replace his primitive weapons: two guns. The two drink to one another wherein Dom Antônio gives his protégé yet another lesson on “civility”:

-- há um costume entre os brancos, de um homem beber por aquele que é amigo. O vinho é o licor que dá a força, a coragem, a alegria. Beber por um amigo é uma maneira de dizer que o amigo é e será forte, corajoso e feliz. Eu bebo pelo filho de Ararê.

-- E Peri bebe por ti, porque és pai da senhora; bebe por ti, porque salvaste sua mãe; bebe por ti, porque és guerreiro.

A cada palavra o índio tocou a taça e bebeu um trago de vinho, sem fazer o menor gesto de desgosto; ele beberia veneno à saúde do pai de Cecília. (79)

[--there is a custom among whites; one where a man drinks for he who is his friend.

Wine is the liquor that provides strength, valor, and happiness. To drink to a friend is a manner of saying that the friend is and will be strong, valiant, and happy. I drink to the son of Araré

--And Peri drink for you, because you are the father of the lady; I drink to you, because you have saved his mother; I drink to you, because you are a warrior.

At every sentence, the indian took the cup and drank a swig of wine without gesturing in the least, to it's unfamiliarity; he would have drunk poison in exchange for the health of Cecília's father]

This passage is evocative as to how the flow of masculinity is operating through Cecília's body. Peri is willing to follow Dom Antônio's commands blindly despite the fact that he is unfamiliar with "the white man's drink." Despite the fact that it could be poison, he consumes it based on his desire to please Dom Antônio, beyond this, his desire for Dom Antônio is one that so strong that he is willing to sacrifice his own life (this theme will repeat itself on several occasions).

If my reader would recall, in *Iracema*, Martim and Poti share the same "heart". Dom Antônio, in contrast, does not give his "heart" to Peri. Rather, he gives him his daughter and his name: "Se tu fosses cristão, Peri" (232) [If you were only a Christian, Peri] he remarks. After Peri agrees, he performs the baptism: "Sê cristão! Dou-te o meu nome" (233) [Be a Christian! I give you my name].

Once again, the novel, nearly at its end, wraps up in a similar fashion to *Iracema* wherein the indigenous "brother" is baptized by the Portuguese explorer/*fidalg*o. Moreover, Peri's

thoughts after the destruction of the mini-civilization reveal that his desires are no longer just about saving Cecília:

Não era o sentimento da pátria, sempre tão poderoso no coração do homem; não era o desejo de ver sua cabana reclinada à beira do rio e abraçar sua mãe e seus irmãos, que dominava sua alma nesse momento e lhe dava esse ardor. Era sim a idéia de que ia salvar sua senhora e cumprir o juramento que tinha feito ao velho fidalgo; era o sentimento de orgulho que se apoderava dele, pensando que bastava a sua coragem e a sua força para vencer todos os obstáculos, e realizar a missão de que se havia encarregado (236)

[It was not his feelings for his country, always so powerful in the heart of this man; it was not the desire to see his hut on the bank of the river or to hug his mother and his brothers that commanded his soul and filled him with ardor. It was the idea that he was going to save his lady and fulfill the promise he had made the old fidalgo; it was this feeling of pride of having sufficient courage and strength to overcome all obstacles and accomplish the mission entrusted to him].

As this passage illustrates, it is the ability to carry out the old man's will that ultimately produced his "sentimento de orgulho" [feelings of pride.] It also confirms that if a national allegory is to be read through the male/female union, then the self-sacrificing desire for nation ever present in Anderson's argument is planted not in the union that exists between this coupling, but is forged through the promise of one man to another. The fire that consumes this small community is symbolic of this, insofar as it marks the end of one civilization and the beginning of another. This is the ultimate destruction of what Alencar once refers to as a small fragment of Portugal in Brazil: "Para D. Antônio e para seus companheiros a quem ele havia imposto sua fidelidade, esse torrão brasileiro, esse pedaço de sertão, não era senão um fragmento de Portugal livre, de sua

pátria primitiva” [For Dom Antônio and his companions, to whom he had imposed his fidelity, this Brazilian corner, the piece of backlands, was but a fragment of free Portugal, of his old homeland] (9).

In turn, the deaths of those who once flourished there signal the end of one race (the Portuguese) in Brazil and the commencement of another but it can only occur through Peri’s assimilation to whiteness which bestowed upon him by Dom Antônio and extends itself through Peri’s “responsibility” to protect and serve his daughter. Like the pistols that are extended to him (the more civilized weapon), Peri’s masculinity must also be “upgraded” should he be worthy of acceptance by Cecília’s father.

In fact, when Peri becomes Cecília’s *bodyguard*, this is also one of the most telling examples where Sommer arguably misses “the point.” In describing the pistol given to Peri whereby it becomes an extension of his masculinity, Sommer writes:

Ceci had already made a real (civilized) man of Peri when she gave him the pistol that belonged to her father. “This [firing] arm, which comes from the lady, and Peri will be one single body,” pledges the slave in a characteristically self-estranged third person (Alencar 1857, 75; 170). That new and improved body of his, bound to Ceci thanks to the pistol, helps Peri lead the escape from the final cataclysmic danger. (Sommer, 143)

Here homosociality is made visible as the *arma* doesn’t come from Cecília, but tellingly must pass through her hands. Sommer clearly reads this as a phallic symbol of the penis but insists that it is the female who possesses the power to grant Peri his masculinity. However, it wasn’t Cecilia who made Peri a civilized man, but an extension of Dom Antônio’s masculinity (through the pistol) that he inherits.



One need only view Alencar's description of the mini-civilization to confirm that male-male relationships are that which have long upheld it: "essa pequena comunhão de homens, governando-se com as suas leis, os seus usos e costumes" [this small community of men governed by their laws, use and customs]--these men who were "unidos entre si pela ambição da riqueza, e ligados ao seu chefe pelo respeito, pelo hábito da obediência e por essa superioridade moral que a inteligência e a coragem exercem sobre as massas" [united amongst themselves by ambition for wealth, loyalty to their leader due to respect, their habit of obedience and moral superiority, that intelligence and valor exercised over the masses] (99).

Peri is no exception within this community and if anything, becomes a submissive extension of it. Dom Antônio recognizes from the start when he says, "Crede-me, Álvaro, é um cavalheiro português no corpo de um selvagem" [Believe me, Álvaro, this one is a Portuguese gentlemen in the body of a savage] (31). Peri is destined to become a Christian, and in doing so, to assume the values of the "superior race." How he does this is quite evident: through his servitude to whiteness masked by his desire for Cecília.

Unlike *Iracema's* Martim who assumes the highest authority, at least eventually, Peri is persistently lacking despite the fact that he is, in the most "natural" way, a man: strong, protecting, dignified, noble, and tough. Despite this, he is submissive, not in control of events per se, but always reacting in the best way possible, in order to protect his eventual prize: the young virgin. Thus, Peri's masculinity is still in service to whiteness and, in this way, is an extension of Dom Antônio's mini-civilization in the woods: a means of protecting his daughter. In converting to Christianity, Dom Antônio builds upon his Peri's noble status through baptism which marks his entrance not only into Christianity, but his rise to nobility.

Peri, although idolized as a “noble figure,” does not quite reach the same status as Martim has in his appropriation of the female. Despite the fact that Peri, “wins” Cecília in this homosocial exchange and that the hidalgo’s masculinity is transposed upon him (he gives him his name) no sexual union is present between Cecília and Peri as it was between Martim and Iracema. Though worthy of her love he is still a servant. Hegemonic masculinity is still embodied by the Fidalgo, the well-established land holder and faithful servant to the King of Portugal, and thus, both loyal subject on a macro-level and divine leader at the micro-level. Despite the fact that such a “civilized man” finds himself in the midst of the wilderness, the home (a small fortress) marks his political and economic prowess as a natural leader of the small civilization and by extension, his family.

On the same token, in assuming the role of a Christian, and of course as a result of the flood, all else is lost and erased from those cultural manifestations that have occurred before it. This is what Rita Schmit has admiringly referred to as the “homogenizing foundational thrust” that “started with the imposition of a national language that “forgot” and “erased” all linguistic and cultural manifestations that did not fit the project that intellectuals and men of letters took upon themselves to promote and impose through the writing of power and the power of writing” (4). This same process seemingly operates through Peri’s characterization in that he assumes the character, in Dom Antônio’s professions of his identity, that of a European gentleman in the body of a savage.

So what is lost and furthermore, how it is lost and, at the same time, what is gained? Beyond the narrative, lost are all accounts of violence toward the indigenous people on the part of the Portuguese conquistadors. After all, Alencar tells us that the war between the Aimorés and the Portuguese was merely a hunting accident. In turn, the reader gains an abundant description

of the diabolical nature of all savages with the exception of Peri: “Sobre o montão de ruínas formado pela parede que desmoronara, desenhavam-se as figuras sinistras dos selvagens, semelhantes a espíritos diabólicos dançando nas chamas infernais” [On the pile of ruins formed by the wall that had crumbled, they drew the sinister figures of the savages, similar to diabolic spirits dancing in the infernal flames] (234). Álvaro also manages to kill their sinister chief before his own death.

All and all, before Cecília can accept Peri as a man as the narrative’s end implies, it is Dom Antônio who recognizes, declares and even improvises Peri’s masculinity. The oddity that remains is that Peri, even after Dom Antônio’s death continues to be ruled by a woman even in a land where the native is king: the wilderness. In many ways, Peri’s masculinity is an “indigenous purity” of manhood whose proximity to civilization and thus, hegemonic masculinity (embodied by Dom Antônio) is negotiated in such a way that Peri can renounce his heritage but never truly assimilate.

In turn, the “evil European” (embodied by Peri’s rival, the treacherous Italian, Leôncio) remains a stagnant cutout of the Western Romanic tradition. The same applies to the tragic love entanglement of Isabel and Álvaro (Álvaro dies in Isabel’s arms after she has poisoned herself). Both of these characterizations are model of an Old World “affair.” Peri too, assumes the position of a sort of noble warrior who shall protect the princess, but Peri, for this reason cannot be king: his purpose is to serve the noble white man and to protect him from “other” evil savages through his “other” worldly knowledge. This is quite emblematic in the baptismal scene / the moment that Peri earns his knighthood (also marking the moment when white masculinity bestows upon him its powers). In the end, the message is clear: Peri has fulfilled his promise to the white man as the ideal docile servant: willing to convert to Christianity, worship whiteness,

assimilate to the more “civilized” white culture, and to carry on the will of his god-like European male mentor. Unlike *Iracema*, Peri survives; and yet, his indigenous culture, his familial past, and all other connections to his “diabolic” people, does not. Peri has been successfully “(re)produced” by whiteness.

### 3.0 ON MODELS AND MEN: MEXICAN MASCULINITES AND ITS REFORMATIONS

As the wars of independence that define the eightieth and early nineteenth-centuries trickle into a unique period where many new nations, their leaders, citizens, and non-citizens attempt to define who they are as a people and tellingly, who they are not, nineteenth-century Latin America becomes a temporal hotbed for rapid social change. Following Benedict Anderson, this phenomenon is most visible on the literary stage as print capitalism, in the form of newspapers, novels, etc., provides the necessary medias through which the nation is imagined. It is precisely from the literary view of a rapidly changing socio-political context in Mexico that Benedict Anderson is able to formulate his theory of “imagined communities,” having employed José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi’s *El Periquillo Sarniento* (1816) as a primary example.

*El Periquillo Sarniento*, hailed as the first Latin American novel, was written during the war of Mexican Independence and relates the social ills to be found in one young man’s journey through several institutions and interactions with various male figures found within them. Not surprisingly, the text is a homosocial hotbed. Robert McKee Irwin’s *Mexican Masculinities* (2003) explores homosociality in the novel calling it a central force that enabled national integration and ultimately the rhetoric of “Mexicanness” (16). As many critics such as Irwin and Jean Franco argue, the novel, although presented to its readers as one man’s reflection on his life as he passes this knowledge onto his sons, could ultimately function as a metaphorical growth of

Mexico, or “the path to a mature nation,” that is capable of governing itself during a time of transition. Written under the guise of a picaresque novel, it relates the adventures of Pedro Sarniento, aptly nicknamed Periquillo Sarniento or, the Mangy Parrot, who, born of a Criollo family and thus of “good birth,” consistently fails in his attempts to make an earned living. The narrator assumes the voice of an older Pedro who reflects on his life to his sons while on his deathbed. One begins to understand that the novel as youth’s journey into maturity—a boy repeatedly subjected to institutionalized practices left over from colonial times. Thus, the education, or rather, mis-education of Pedro, as it is mapped out in both childhood and adolescence, could stand for the symbolic formation of the national subject as he experiences various forms of education within different institutions—family, school, governmental, etc.—all of which will guide him into an adulthood that will reflect these processes.

Through his encounters with differentiating male role models, Lizardi seems to gradually present his reader with an ideal model as the dying narrator does not hesitate to employ his deathbed voice as a conduit for reflection, moralization, and criticism of the social conditions that have led to his wasted life. These reflections are spliced with obvious character comparisons and blatant social commentary within the walls of a given institution (Pedro passes through every institution imaginable). For instance, his memories of the first three educators of his childhood within institutionalized education are exemplary of this comparative process. The first educator is presented to the reader as a man of virtue, although one later learns that he is ignorant. The second, while intelligent, has no virtue, and finally, the reader is presented with the perfect model of an educator via the third who is able to intervene “before it is too late” for young Pedro. Similar parallels are made between priests, scientists, lawyers, doctors, etc. Thus, one might say that Pedro’s quest is one that is in search of ideal male role-models whereas women are almost

entirely excluded from the novel; furthermore, many of the social ills that the character rejects are attributed to women and/or the indigenous.

In short, the novel is concerned with the individual in relation to the collective, specifically with regard to the various colonial institutions that Pedro, the main protagonist, encounters in his attempts to “become a man.” As a whole, the novel may be read as a series of social criticisms of the era in which it was written; it informs the reader of the various social ills and collective vices wherein the narrator posits himself (again, the narrator is writing on his death bed to his sons), and even his manhood, a victim of societal ills.

In this regard, since the novel’s narrative structure spins its moralizing web around an individual as opposed to a pairing of two characters, *El Periquillo Sarniento*, as a whole, presents a powerful example of “(re)producing men” or in this case, “revising” men while invoking a national identity that is largely figured as male. It doesn’t, at least not in any central way, exemplify the trope of the female body as a means through which it forges its “new identity.” If anything, it rejects “the feminine” as yet another social ill (over-protecting mothers, contaminated breast milk, lack of reason in exchange for “old wives’ tales,” naiveté, etc.). Where the allegorical production of “good citizens” is concerned, masculinity is negotiated through an exchange between younger and older men while the youth/maturity configuration also lends itself to an individual development that is specific to “what it means to be a man.”

It is not my intention to take up a close reading of Lizardi’s text with regard to homosociality but to mention its importance to the concept of imagined communities, while emphasizing the arguments brought forth regarding this novel in Robert Irwin’s *Mexican Masculinities* (2003). Irwin provides his reader with new and provocative ways of understanding how male-male relationships in the novel function in overtly homoerotic ways. For starters,

Irwin argues that beyond Pedro's path to maturity or the symbol of the wise elder on his deathbed, the social categories of youth / maturity inform specific male-male relationships throughout the text. Most of these relationships develop into a search for the paternal figure beyond the walls of the nuclear family and thus symbolically establish the fraternal / paternal bonds necessary for imagining community.

Master / apprentice; teacher / student; authority and father figures / youth, etc. are just a few of the male-male bonds that Irwin convincingly reads as "queer scenes of fraternal love" (23). Irwin even suggests that when Pedro gets married, he does so not out of love for his wife, but explicitly in order to be closer to her father, his ideal mentor. Irwin pushes his reading even further by stating: "[a]fter more than five hundred pages and twenty years of adventures Pedro Sarniento has had relations, all of them brief, with a handful of women, but he has loved dozens of men" (27). Finally, amidst the trials and tribulations of the protagonist, one finds in abundance naked men throughout the homosocial spaces depicted in the novel. These and other observations lead Irwin to conclude, "if Lizardi was not "queer," he certainly did have an interesting erotic bent to his imagination" (28).

Beyond Irwin's claim that there may be an "erotic bent to [Lizardi's] imagination," his analysis serves to illustrate how narratives arguably concerned with national identity, under close observation, reveal themselves as texts that address the complexities of male-male relations often through triangular configurations of desire (Pedro marrying to be closer to his father-in-law, who is also his mentor, for instance). This does not mean, however, that Lizardi's narrative should be thought of as a so-called "gay text" (and perhaps it does not mean that it should be read as "heterosexual text," either). Nevertheless, it is an open, uninhibited narrative whose "no girls allowed" attitude unabashedly represents male-male desire. Lizardi presents "fraternal bonding"



as a quest for a mature male role-model, sorting through all “types of men” who either obscure this quest or contribute to it. Thus, the “fraternal bonds” that Anderson defines as an essential component to the forging of national identities are, at least in Lizardi’s text, gendered as male-male desire.

Pedro’s struggle is essentially a struggle that occurs upon the loss of his father, as well as his home. His is a journey of failure to fit into the very categories that define “family values.” When Pedro fails to become a priest he is given over to a “degenerate” lifestyle. He can’t hold a job, nor can he make money. He squanders his family fortune and thus, has no inheritance left to carry him through. He fails at his first marriage (he doesn’t marry out of love but because he is supposed to). Conversely, the novel’s resolution will insert him back into this normative framework. In its bizarre configurations of hope and cynicism, normative and non-normative, destruction and construction, social invalids somehow merge with hegemonic ideals. Pedro becomes reabsorbed into the social fabric of everyday life through a process of both undoing and doing. Utilizing a range of attitudes and differentiating approaches to understand his reality, this text renders certain subjectivities as the abject in order to find an ideal.

This chapter, in many ways, centers itself as a Mexican quest for a masculine ideal, though, as one will discover, the ideal forms of masculinity once embraced by an earlier Mexican nationalism will mirror the same “types” that are later rejected by it some fifty years later. And while Mexican masculinity conducts its never-ending search for model masculinities, it consistently reproduces the national mythos of La Malinche as the symbolic moment of the origin of Mexican-ness. Thus, the first section of this chapter is an analysis of La Malinche’s (Cortés’s indigenous lady-conquest) treatment in Mexican literature and other cultural modes of production, with specific attention paid to the rhetoric of rape that, as I argue, informs how

Mexican masculinity as a national discourse operates through the objectified body via the power dynamics found there.

The last novel of this chapter, like Lizardi's novel, is concerned with social reform and nationalist ideals via idolizations of masculinity that undoubtedly figures into the category of "national narrative." Manuel Ignacio Altamirano's *El Zarco* (written 1885-1889, published 1901) centralizes itself around the novel's eponymous villain, Zarco. In many ways, the behaviors exhibited by Lizardi's main character, Pedro, are also present in Altamirano's villain, Zarco. Pedro, at least at certain points of his life surrounds himself with "bad men" and thus, is a liar, cheater, and thief who embellishes in a sinful life; he takes advantage of innocent victims, benefits from institutional corruption, and is taken to drinking and gambling with a group of misfits and social degenerates. One can easily parallel these behaviors with Altamirano's depiction of Zarco and his bandit buddies, who, like the characters in *El Periquillo Sarniento*, turn against one another out of greed and their inclinations to a life of crime. In Altamirano's text, these men will be the figures that must be expunged from the national front. In Lizardi's novel, these "types" of men are still capable of being reformed. Altamirano's heroes are of indigenous descent. In Lizardi's novel, even the milk from an indigenous nurse mother's breast are enough to taint a man forever. Lizardi posits whiteness as an ideal. Altamirano's villains, rather than his protagonists, are predominantly white though racial hierarchies still prevail.

Most importantly and as Irwin observes, both narratives focus on male characters and their virility as a central concern for forging a cohesive framework of national identity (73). Throughout Mexican literature of the nineteenth century, Irwin argues, both homosocial and homoerotic bonds between men are the predominant foundational trope. The devaluation of women, even in romance literature, is abundant. Not surprisingly then, the national allegory,

while certainly formulating itself through the heterosexual unions observed by Sommer, offers much more complicated negotiations of identity through the interactions of male characters who either band together in solidarity or rival one another in a way that is best exemplified through the model of homosociality wherein the female body merely serves as an accessory to the symbolic status of men who vow to “possess them” (73-74).

The Malinche paradigm (La Malinche gives birth to the first Mestizo via her alliance with the European) is, as I will argue, the best example through which to understand the relationship between male status and possession of the female body. Despite the fact that the Cortés-Malinche paradigm rests at the heart of Mexico’s origin story, following Irwin, Mexico is quite the exception to Doris Sommer’s model. Irwin writes:

Since fatherhood is so rarely attained (even couples who marry very seldom procreate in these novels), nineteenth-century Mexican novels do not unite different races or ethnicities through heterosexual union. More often it is through traffic in women that, for example, darker men are able to take the place of or attain the status of lighter skinned men (as is the case in the novels of Altamirano) (74)

In Lizardi’s novel, Pedro’s quest begins upon the loss of his father. In Altamirano’s text, the novel’s hero, the indigenous-looking Nicolás, loses both of his parents at a young age. Pedro’s is a quest for a strong and virile mentor (eventually his wife’s father); Nicolás, Altamirano’s hero, does well for himself as an ironsmith, but only after he gains an already successful mentor. Interestingly, there are no child characters whatsoever in *El Zarco* (beyond a brief mention of their victimization by bandits). Both texts respective narrators assume a moralizing stance towards the characterizations and actions displayed in their respective narrative. Although, one might say that Lizardi’s stance is a bit more “forgiving” as his novel is

based on the possibility of rehabilitation of the individual wherein moral lessons evolve from individual / collective experiences; this is not the case in Altamirano's text as I shall discuss further. In addition, the respective narrative structures of both texts move the reader from depictions of disorder and chaos to relative harmony; a central theme for both texts, then, is "order and progress." Each concern themselves immensely with the themes of lost innocence, debauchery, and crime, and both are extremely critical of certain institutions and the corrupt figures found within their walls.

*El Periquillo Sarniento* is written during the turbulent times of the Wars of Independence. As a whole, *El Zarco* undeniably displays the changing norms and social attitudes brought about in the aftermath of La Guerra de Reforma which, in effect, posits the mestizo (and largely indigenous men) as national heroes capable of social stratification. These same "types of men" are rejected by Lizardi. Although he was a politician, specifically the President of Mexico's Supreme Court, unlike many of the authors I have chosen Altamirano was indigenous. Thus, unsurprisingly, *El Zarco*, provides an interesting twist in the configuration of male rivalry by positing the indigenous-looking Nicolás as the triumphant hero. While Irwin has provided a highly recommendable and extensive analysis of Lizardi's text, his analysis of *El Zarco* is very brief yet provocative. Viewing the two side-by-side can serve as a means to understanding the points of convergence and departure of masculine ideals in Mexican literature. Since Irwin has already managed to provide his reader of an understanding of how *El Periquillo Sarniento* rejects certain male figures in exchange for others, I hope to commence my analysis by honoring his notion that peripheral masculine identities emerge as central components in the formation of masculine ideals through both male-male bonding as well as male-male rivalry in Altamirano's text as well. Finally, I commence my engagement with Mexican models of masculinity

ironically, by looking to one of Mexico most provocative models of femininity within its larger national framework as a thorough analysis of masculinities in the Mexican context could not be understood without a full grasp of La Malinche paradigm.

### 3.1 THE RHETORIC OF RAPE A LA CHINGADA

Naked, asleep, passive and dreaming with modern-day Mexico on her back; the messy church-topped bed covers mixed with the indigenous female body that is Mexico in Antônio Ruiz's *El sueño de la Malinche* [*La Malinche's Dream*] (1939) is far more than dream; it is a deeply rooted cultural fantasy. She is the body on which civilization is erected and yet, she, as woman, as the indigenous, as land and nature, must remain inactive: should she move from “her place” the structures built upon her back would crumble and crack much like the wall that stands behind her.



**Figure 3.1.** *El sueño de la Malinche* (1939) de Antonio Ruiz.

To say that Brazil's *Iracema* and Mexico's *La Malinche* bear remarkable similarities is an understatement. Whereas *Iracema* betrays her people (thus leading to the downfall of an entire civilization), *La Malinche*, once represented as Cortés's lover / interpreter, becomes, as Mexico reconstitutes itself as an independent nation, simultaneously traitor, mother, and/or a raped body—the violated mother of Mexico. Both in the Spanish colonial imaginary and during Mexico's nation-building projects of the nineteenth century, she is a symbolic mediator between two civilizations (the Indigenous and the European). During the nineteenth century, however, as I will discuss further, her image transforms into the violated (yet traitorous) mother of a third: Mexico's *mestizaje*. By examining *La Malinche*'s position as object through Sedgwick's model of triangulation, I will provide new insight as to why her reputation as a traitorous and/or raped woman might have emerged as such during Mexico's transition to an independent nation.

Generally speaking, *La Malinche* and *Iracema* are ultimately reduced to their reproductive capacity as “producers of male citizens” (both give birth to “the first mestizo” male child). They become gendered embodiments of the nation, and, however paradoxically, embodiments of their respective nation's indigenous identity. While these constructs are immensely complicated, they are also informed by a particular sexuality ascribed to their gender(ed) subjectivities; in many regards, *La Malinche*'s sexuality is multi-faceted in its depictions yet tremendously evocative of a repetitious anxiety embedded in the various masculinities that struggle with their own reinterpretations of her—a topic I will examine shortly.

In chapter two I discussed how *Iracema* arguably rapes the “irresistible” European explorer, Martim, thus ensuring that her male companion remains devoid of the cultural responsibility for having caused the symbolic downfall of the indigenous peoples. In this way, his symbolic representation (specifically that which codes his masculinity as a “good man,” and

his sexuality—he does not take advantage of her, rather she of him) remains unscathed. The culpability for the downfall of a civilization, then, is her inevitable lust for the irresistible white man whilst Martim “naturally” assumes his god-like role as founder of the nation upon the displacement of the male indigenous order. The sexual exchange (if one can call it “an exchange”) that occurs between La Malinche and Cortés—though it produces a variety of (re)interpretations—is not as rewarding to whiteness as it was in *Iracema*. In this way, these two prototypes of femininity differ drastically. La Malinche, in turn, by the nineteenth century will play host to a multitude of shaming representations whereby her body carries forth the metonymic scars of colonization.

Sandra Messinger Cypess’s *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (1991) is a model text for understanding how La Malinche’s body comes to abandon any and all holds as a tangibly biological or historical figure; rather, the many (re)visions of La Malinche are a sort of metafiction in their own right leading to what Cypess calls “a Malinche paradigm” (2). Hers is a chronological study of La Malinche’s presentation, her evolving significance, changing interpretations, etc. Convincingly, Cypess demonstrates that La Malinche’s treatment in Mexican literature coincides with the political agenda in which she is persistently “rewritten.” Thus, La Malinche’s gender and sexual codings are persistently evocative of the sociopolitical events that circulate through her body and its treatment within literary expression.

Doña Marina, Malinalli, Malintzin and most famously, La Chingada (the one who is fucked): once “the bad word that passes a dozen times a day from the lips of Chicanos” (Anzaldúa 44), she is now a queer icon of Chicana writers—the reason why is as simple as it is

complex.<sup>13</sup> This mother, whore, traitor, Eve, interpreter, victim, survivor, slut, martyr, lover, intermediary, is a model example of the instability of the subject; her “embodiment” of all of these identities, many of which are contradictory to one another, has led to countless volumes of work that attempt to understand the multiplicity of her “identities.” The irony, of course, is that in most of her representations her body acts as a “container” of some sort of “original” identity: the (feminine) indigenous roots of Mexico, and by extension, “a part” of Mexican identity—as if the “Mexican identity” were a stabilized identity in its own right (certainly the way that Octavio Paz has treated it in his famous essay, “Los hijos de la Chingada” [The Sons of the Chingada] as I will argue).

Contemporary analyses of La Malinche now understand the fluidity of her embodiment as a literary sign, or what Cypess would refer to as “La Malinche paradigm.” The nineteenth century, argues Cypess, is expressly the time period when La Malinche’s depictions earn their malevolent spin thus founding her body as the female (m)other. She writes:

To wrest control of the land from Spain meant dominating the images formed within a Spanish context. The new reading of the mother figure projected the resentment of the children for their progenitors and the system they created. As the text of newly independent Mexico show, many of the characteristics of Doña Marina considered positive by the Spaniards are reelaborated as negative elements. Disrobed of her accoutrements as the biblical heroine, Doña Marina is reincarnated as Desirable Whore / Terrible Mother, and the biblical image used to describe her at this stage is the serpent of

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<sup>13</sup> “Chingar,” the root of “La Chingada,” is a very similar to “to fuck or to rape” and is probably the most frequently used slang word in Mexican Spanish.



Eden. This transformation signals a protest rejecting Spain and all association with “*la patria*” ... From great lady to Terrible Mother, La Malinche serves the particular historical needs of a complex society in change (9)

The trend of depicting La Malinche as both temptress and whore would continue well into the twentieth century, particularly in the muralist movements of the 1920s and 30s, though, a new embracement of indigenous themes sometime casted her in a positive light (Cypess 9-11).

Tellingly, La Malinche’s characterization was largely ignored within the literary texts of the colonial period, with the exception, of course, of those who first brought her to the page: Cortés’s biographer, Francisco López de Gómara, a conquistador, Andrés de Tapia, and most famously, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who spoke of her frequently in his chronicle *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Cypess 431-32). The nineteenth-century retreatment of La Malinche, in turn, is precisely when she gains the most notoriety as “mother of a nation” (432). Lisa Nevárez’s “My *Reputación* Precedes Me”: La Malinche and Palimpsests of Sacrifice, Scapegoating, and *Mestizaje* in *Xicoténcatl* and *Los mártires del Anáhuac*,” further enables one to understand nineteenth-century mythical revisions of La Malinche through Nevárez’s examination of the novels *Xicoténcatl* (1836), published anonymously, and *Los mártires del Anáhuac* (1870), by Eligio Ancona (two time governor of the state of Yucatan). According to Nevárez, these works facilitate

a glimpse into the fictional revisions of La Malinche and the Conquest of Mexico. In each author’s reinterpretation of the Conquest, he inserts female figures, respectively Teutilia and Geliztli, whose efforts to repel colonizing forces meet with repeated failure and whose fertility male characters curtail, ultimately, he provides a scapegoat in place of La Malinche. In *Xicoténcatl* the author offers an account of the title hero of Tlaxcala

during the conquest of Mexico in the earliest historical novel by a Latin American, and Ancona also delves into the past to resurrect his nation's earliest colonial experience in *Los mártires del Anáhuac*. The conflicted dynamics between colonizer/colonized and male/female underscore these texts. (67-68)

Much of Nevárez's analysis is concerned with the abjection of the female body as well as René Girard's conceptualization of mimetic desire and the scapegoat mechanism both of which Eve Sedgwick has employed in order to formulate her theories on male rivalry. Cypess reiterates both *Xicoténcatl* and Ancona's *Los mártires del Anáhuac* as the first texts to cast La Malinche in a negative light. Citing the observations made by Luis Leal, Cypess reemphasizes the role of *Xicoténcatl* in La Malinche's portrait as "the evil temptress and betrayer of *la patria*." Cypess continues, "[b]y 1870, the phrase "seller of her nation" had become integral associated with Marina [La Malinche] in the portrait developed by Eligio Ancona in *Los mártires de Anáhuac*" (10). Similarly, Jean Franco observes the nineteenth century's role in the creation of La Malinche's symbolic downward spiral:

She was first regarded as an icon, both by the indigenous people who ascribed extraordinary power to her and by the Spaniards for whom she was the exemplary convert. Yet it was not until Mexico became an independent nation and the problem of national identity surfaced that Doña Marina, transformed into La Malinche, came to symbolize the humiliation—the rape—of the indigenous people and the act of treachery that would lead to their oppression. (131)

Ireneo Paz, grandfather of the well-known Mexican author, Octavio Paz, would also contribute to La Malinche's nineteenth century portraits with two romantic novels, *Amor y suplicio* (1873), and *Doña Marina* (1883). Following Sandra Messinger Cypess's observations,

Ireneo Paz would transform the “sexual encounter” of the Cortés-Malinche paradigm as a means of rewriting the political and military exploits of the conquest. Cypess argues: “he follows the patriarchal view of women as objects of exchange, but instead of considering the woman an inferior social being, he romanticizes her as noble being whose actions were dictated by destiny and the gods” (10). This is fitting as, unlike other national contexts, in the latter half of the nineteenth century Mexican nationalism is largely recognized by its attempts to embrace the once rejected indigenous aspects of its national identity. Thus, Paz’s “positive” interpretation of *mestizaje*, in Cypess’s words, “rewrites history in a way that fits the social and political ideologies of his time” (10).

Despite the more romanticized versions of La Malinche as a “noble” historical figure, her nineteenth-century legacy as traitor of her people had already been well-established within the national imaginary and, as discussed in the previous chapter with the case of Iracema, she was no exception to the role/rule. As Rebecca Biron observes in her introduction to *Murder and Masculinity: Violent Fictions of Twentieth-Century Latin America* (2000),

[t]he association of colonized people with women as a social category is not just an invention of the twentieth-century feminist movement of Europe and the United States. Rather, it appears overtly in a wealth of literature on the formation and analysis of Latin American identities at least since the independence movement of the early nineteenth-century. (23)

La Malinche, Biron asserts, is the most widely cited example of this phenomenon specifically in that it “allegorizes the nation as a son, and the nation’s history as dependence on a traitorous mother who must be violently rejected in order to establish national autonomy” (24). Following her argument and similar claims made by Cypess, Rolando Romero’s *Feminism*,

*nation and myth: La Malinche* (2005), Irwin's *Mexican Masculinities* (2003), and Jean Franco's *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (1989), the many reinterpretations of La Malinche become less about an indigenous woman and her role in the years of conquest, and more about how Mexicans, specifically Mexican masculinity, employ her body in order to (re)produce themselves as the sons of the "puta madre," or "whore mother" (puta is a derivative of 'prostituta').

Why, precisely, is it the nineteenth-century independence movement that recasts La Malinche into her "conquered mold,"—the raped one, the fucked one—*la chingada*? Why is male dominance over the female body as a metonymic device for "newly conquered land" so abundant from the nineteenth century onward? It would seem, on the one hand, that the resurfacing of her images becomes the means through which Mexicans are able to declare political autonomy. Following Cypess, this political autonomy required "new interpretations for the signs of the colonizers; they required a construction of signs that would serve as a signal of the new social political agenda" (431-32). Despite this "need" for a symbolic refashioning of national iconology, one might think that she would be recast in idyllic light: as a mother of a nation who suffered at the hands of the European man who "conquered her." This is not the case, as her many representations reveal.

By far, the most recognizable interpretation of La Malinche's status as the conquered Mexican mother is that of Octavio Paz. Paz's interpretation of La Malinche's hold on Mexico's national identity is the most canonized version of her interpretation today. Paz famously speculated that the figure of La Malinche, through both myth and language, functions in the collective consciousness of Mexican national identity. He writes:

Doña Marina se ha convertido en una figura que representa a las indias, fascinadas, violadas o seducidas por los españoles. Y del mismo modo que el niño no perdona a su madre que lo abandone para ir en busca de su padre, el pueblo mexicano no perdona su traición a la Malinche. Ella encarna lo abierto, lo chingado, frente a nuestros indios, estoicos, impasibles y cerrados. (94)

[Doña Marina has been converted into a figure that represents the Indian women, who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And in the same light that the boy will not pardon his mother if she abandons him in order to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal. She embodies the open, the *chingado* (*the fucked*), to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians].

To say the least, Paz's analysis of the myth of La Malinche clearly rests upon a gendered division that is informed by both race and sexuality. This is even more evident when he famously writes:

[e]l chingón es el macho, el que abre. La chingada, la hembra, la pasividad pura, inerme ante el exterior. La relación entre ambos es violenta, determinada por el poder cínico del primero y la impotencia de la otra. (85)

[the chingón (the one who does the fucking) is the macho; he opens (her up). The chingada (the fucked one), the female, is pure passivity, defenseless against the exterior world. The relationship between them is violent, determined by the cynical power of the first and the impotence of the second.]

Paz interprets this as Mexican masculinity's need to reject the feminine aspects of their identity in order to remain symbolically impenetrable / active. Biron observes that this violent break with a national mother figure is not solely confined within the figure of the Malinche. She

writes, “this drive to separate so violently from the mother resonates with the insistence of modern Latin American nations as well as many of their writers on breaking free of the colonial heritage to found the “newness of the New World” (24). The problem, Biron insists, arises “when the authority to found the New World is historically associated with illegitimate colonizing powers.” This leads Biron to ask, “When the promise of the identification with the father—against the mother—appears both unconvincing and undesirable, how do men imagine the legitimacy and authority of mature masculinity?” (25).

Paz’s analysis seems to provide an answer to this question. However, much of his articulations on the Malinche paradigm are a gendered paradox in its own right through multiple threads of analysis. He, bizarrely, is employing trauma theory (though he never explicitly says this) to explain Cortés’s rape of La Malinche as it effects Mexican identity (symbolically, within the Malinche paradigm, “Mexican” is the son of in the Father/Mother/Son configuration of Oedipal complex). Thus, Paz “reads” the construct of the La Malinche through a critical lens in which the penis (as privilege) is already a central component (“penis envy,” fear of castration, the clitoris as deformity, the inferior superego of the female, etc.). Thus, his analytical approach is already immensely gendered before it even begins.

Paz interrogates La Malinche’s subjectivity as if it were somehow knowable through his quest to adequately define her “intentions” (was she attracted to Cortez, how did she view her role, etc.). His approach, unsurprisingly, is male-centric and, despite the fact that he is not writing fiction, he undoubtedly further reiterates the nineteenth century “version” of La Malinche as a literary sign (one that, as I cited before, is a “new sign” that coincides with Mexico’s independence movements). Beyond this, he is employing that representation as a means of arriving to an explanation of Mexican gender relations, race relations, (male) sexuality, and the social condition of Mexican masculinity as a national pathology (i.e. explaining the Mexican’s

male's resistance to penetration by way of his rejection of his raped mother in that it is reflective of colonization).

Of course, Paz is "reading" (and interpreting) the gender and sexual codings pre-established through the representations brought forth in the nineteenth century by male authors, including his grandfather. Thus, his "reading" might be an exemplary way from which one can understand both gender and sexual discourse as Foucault has modeled it and more importantly, as it is functioning in Paz's text. Foucault writes in his *History of Sexuality; Volume 1*, through his definition of *scientia sexualis* as it emerges in the nineteenth century,

sexuality was defined as being "by nature": a domain susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for the therapeutic or normalizing interventions; a field of meanings to decipher; the site of processes concealed by specific mechanism; a focus on the indefinite causal relations; and an obscure speech (parole) that had to be fettered out and listened to. (68)

This could not be more true with regard to Paz's interpretation of the (imagined) sexual relations between his "macho chingón [the fucker] and his "chingada, la hembra, pasividad pura" [the one who is fucked, the female, pure passivity] which he then translates into the existential crisis of the Mexican male as it relates to sexuality.

In short, Paz is employing psychoanalytic tools regarding both gender and sexuality to render the "sexual condition" of the Mexican male visible (women are still object, "pure passivity" in Paz's text). Foucault continues:

The "economy" of discourses—their intrinsic technology, the necessities of their operation, the tactics they employ, the effects of power which underlie them and which they transmit—this, and not a system of representations, is what determines the essential

features of what they have to say. The history of sexuality—that is, the specific field of truth—must be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses. (68-69)

In many regards, Paz's analysis has shed light not so much on the means by which Mexicans have absorbed the figure of La Malinche into their collective psyche, but how representations of La Malinche's body shed light on the "economy" of discourse surrounding gender and sexuality as it plays out in the Mexican context with specific regard to the nation as discourse. In this way, in his employment of the "Malinche paradigm"—one that carries forth a means of "viewing" La Malinche's body, and therefore a set of gendered assumptions—Paz participates and even reestablishes a form of gender discourse also inherent within national discourse as that which goes well beyond a way of thinking and producing meaning. Rather, his interpretation of La Malinche (and her sons) reconstitutes "the nature" of the body (both male and female) while naturalizing both homophobia and misogyny in the same gesture. This process of naturalization is constituted via his insistence that the social condition of the Mexican male is to resist penetration in its dis-identification with "the mother" (the feminine). Moreover, he seemingly views Mexican national identity as if it were some sort of stable identity rather than a shift of performances (wherein La Malinche often assumes center stage) produced by the discursive regime in which "his knowledge of the subject" operates.

Despite the fact that Paz's main concern is the configuration of Mexican national identity, his is an obsession with masculinity that oddly blames male misogyny on an "originary rape." He perseveres on the topic of masculine identity's relationship to the feminine and yet fails to understand La Malinche's position within the symbolic national framework that is largely a male imaginary in the first place. In short, he fails to recognize his own participation within that same



configuration of power that relies upon a conjured notion of “female passivity” (the means by which Paz codes sexual violence) in the first place.

Furthermore, according to Paz, in assuming a Mexican identity, one is also assuming the position of the violated (penetrable) body symbolically inherited from the raped mother. Sexual violence, therefore, becomes a centralized component of Mexican national identity wherein, according to Paz, Mexican masculinity (*los hijos de la chingada*) attempt to shore up (through *machismo*) its inherited penetrable body and therefore threatened identity. Paz, in many ways, plays the role of the psychotherapist whose client is the Mexican male—a therapist, who, in my opinion, is unaware of his own counter-transference. Paz reflects on Freud's teachings as a means to find “a cure” through both self-revelation and the hidden aspect of one’s identity (15). And yet, despite his recognition that the voices of women have been historically subjugated and continues to be subordinated within the Mexican patriarchy, the means by which he does this contributes to the misogynist discourse inherent to that subjugation.

To have a clearer understanding of Mexican nationalism employment of rape at the basis of its story of origin, one needs to further understand the means by which masculinity is operating through the performance of that rape. In the case of Cortés and La Malinche, the ‘Other’ is not figured as male, but female, and depending on her representation, La Malinche either gives herself over to Cortés (thus being condemned her to the status of whore and traitor) or she is raped (and oddly, still seen as both whore and traitor). Either way, in each scenario, the exchange of power is hardly an exchange of power at all. Following Gayle Rubin’s definition of the sex/gender system, women hold no significance in the process of their own exchange. Rubin defines it as follows: “a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied”

(159). La Malinche, in both Paz's treatment of her, as well as in other (re)productions of her body, is symbolic configured as a product of consumption.

Rubin's position as a Marxist feminist enables her to understand that the material world is produced, and thus, sex, as commodity, is also socially produced, making the subordination of women ultimately a sort of raw material, a mode of production. Thus, the subordination of women is ultimately a product of the social organization of sex and gender—the 'sex/gender system'—wherein gender is socially imposed to divide the sexes, though it is also a product of the social relations of sexuality. Because women are "transacted" by men, they can only be a "conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it" and are denied the "benefits of their own circulation" (174). Depending on how she is represented, La Malinche is not exchanged (though it isn't difficult to imagine that she was likely a concubine). Rather, La Malinche is a "Malinchista"—a traitor. But again, as a national icon, La Malinche "embodies" the nation: a nation that is thought of as being a combination of two polarized racial identities (the indigenous and the European). In terms of her being "the floating stage" on which national identification is produced, there is an exchange of power taking place and that exchange rests on the bodies present within the national allegory: the indigenous, the European and the Mestizo, only one of whom is coded as female.

Following the allegory writ large, La Malinche gives birth not to a female but to a male child. Thus, the European and the Mestizo are figured as male while the indigenous is the female within this triangular model. In this scenario, the female body has to be either traitorous or raped, as I will further explain, because the Mestizo (the future of the nation) as a child has not yet entered into manhood and therefore cannot be an active participant within the exchange. In order to gain entrance into manhood (rather than being burdened by its traumatic past), the

object that cements the Mestizo's masculinity through the homosocial exchange (the female body) has to either be traitorous, or raped: this following the masculinist imaginary embedded and perpetuated by male-dominated intellectualism.

To understand this further, there is a need understand how the rhetoric of rape is operating within the Mother / Son / Father triangulation. Rhetorical rape is precisely the location where national and gender discourse converge. Feminist V. Spiker Peterson, for one, views rape as "a social strategy relies upon (and reproduces) rigid binaries of male-female, masculine-feminine, and self-other in which the domination by the first over the second term is 'justified' by reference to the latter's threatening or destabilizing potential" (62). As a national allegory, the rape of La Malinche is not just a figurative equation signifying colonization; rather, it hints at the destabilization of a social order. Because the rhetoric of rape informs national identity, and this rhetoric is popularized in the nineteenth century, "rape makes sense," to borrow from Spiker Peterson, because it signifies La Malinche (as land's) fertility, but also allows woman to be subsumed under the category of man while the masculine can retain its power. Rather than reject rape and abandon this aspect of their identity, as Paz implies, in this sense it would seem that rape is central to the reorganizational process of identity.

Should one follow this analysis, it reaffirms that gender is essential to nation *building*, particularly masculinity, whereby women must continue to assume their status as passive object; even if La Malinche is not passive but an active traitor, because of her gender, this bears no meaning on her semiotic relationship to the nation. Rather, La Malinche's "value" if one is to conceptualize it within the framework of Rubin's sex/gender system is not that she is a gift that forges the bond between indigenous and European, but that power is passed through her body in

a sexual exchange that occurs with the allegorical divide between the European and the Mestizo, both of whom assume the male position within the sex/gender system.

In Sedgwick's (re)visioning of Rubin's sex/gender system, she conceptualizes the objectified female body as a conduit of male-male desire. Kiran Kuar Grewal's compelling thesis "Gang Rape and the 'Nasty Migrant'" theorizes how the rhetoric of rape and Sedgwick's definition of the homosocial can be further understood. Grewal's explanation arguably explains the way in which rape is functioning within the father / son exchange. Grewal writes:

with women placed at the center of power transfers between men but excluded from active participation, it is possible to identify how both power structures between the genders and within the male gender are perpetuated. Rape provides a point of rupture where the 'gift' is taken not given, which destabilizes the order of power between men. However, at the same time it upholds the woman's passive role, as the raped object and therefore maintains gender order. Applying this reasoning, it becomes possible to see why the condemnation for rape comes from its impact upon men and male power structures rather than from its impact upon the sexual and social lives of women. Hence the national significance assigned to who women are given to (and who they are taken from), as well as how they reproduce and with whom. (64)

In terms of Paz's analysis of La Malinche's object positioning within the Mexican national imaginary, he claims that Mexican nationalism rejects the *madre chingada* or, the raped mother. Paradoxically, the ways in which Mexico has institutionalized her violated body clearly contradicts this rejection. On a symbolic level, her position within the female / male / male triangulation inherent to this national mythos is configured in a way that centralizes her violated body as the passive and penetrable object required for imagining the nation. Paz's analysis

clearly does not reject the feminine as passive (and penetrable) object: it embraces it as well, and even goes so far to claim it as a unique aspect of Mexican identity. Paz's anxiety and the anxiety that he attributes to other Mexican men (*los hijos de la chingada*) can be perceived not as that which contemplates the subjection of its raped mother, but as a constant motion to define Mexican masculinity in relation to that rape (i.e. male shame). I will add here that because homosociality is often an expression of homophobia (a recasting of male-male desire through the objectified female body) it makes complete and absolute sense that Paz's analysis of La Malinche as an extensive trope of male authorial anxiety participates in the perpetuation that the Mestizo male actively works to shore up his body as a means of rejecting the feminine aspects of his identity.

Following Grewal's explanation of how rape can operate within the realms of the homosocial, one might be able to conceptualize what is being configured and/or negotiated via the rhetoric of rape as it operates within this exchange. For one, because Cortés "takes" and then "abandons" her body, the exchange is less of an exchange and more of a violation and yet it inseminates her body (as land) with European vigor without having to remain connected to the European identity as such (he abandons her). Secondly, it casts corporeal vulnerability onto the female object despite the fact that colonization affected both male and female bodies thus allowing national masculinity to remain intact. Thirdly, in casting desire as a desire between mother and son, the Mestizo is able to distance himself from the indigenous masculinity while claiming that identity as part of its own. As son of the father, mestizo masculinity will be able to achieve his status in the social hierarchy, since the father abandons the mother. Most importantly, the rhetoric of rape as it operates here allows the power structures inherent to gender division to remain intact. In that femininity is also configured as indigenous, it allows the

mestizo to assume his symbolic position within a racial hierarchy wherein the indigenous (configured as female) is automatically subordinate. Finally, rape is configured in a way that allows national masculinity to stave off its own violation and to perceive itself as the recipient of a body (though that body has been taken) that it shall inherit since it is abandoned by the father. This allows for the female body to assume its place as “violated motherland” and the Mexican male as her rightful owner.

Rape has long been a rhetorical regime to express national humiliation, but its configuration doesn’t necessarily reside within the patriarchal heterosexist (and misogynist) relationship that a man’s status as “protector” of woman (in this case, mother) is somehow degraded should he fail in this endeavor (this seems implicit to Paz’s argument). I would like to remind my reader that Paz’s “dilemma” is how to negotiate this position of the Mexican male’s subjectivity as “son of the raped” (*hijo de la chingada*) and son of the father from whom he seeks independence (Spain in the figure of Cortés). Rape, at least as it is figured on the body of La Malinche, however twisted it may first appear, is the means by which same-sex desire is maintained through the sex/gender system.

Many have pointed out that Paz’s definition of national identity situates Mexican society within the allegorized paradigm of a family unit (Mother, Father, Son), wherein the Mexican nationality is also figured as male (Franco xix). Although this is the obvious reading—one that can easily be maintained—the power structure that underlies the allegory is an expression of masculinist fears and desires regarding an exchange through which masculinity is conferred onto the son (Cortés “takes” her but in abandoning her “gives” her back to his son who inherits part of his legacy). Thus, rape is not only metonymic of coloniality; it is the means by which the Mexican male citizen (at least in terms of this national mythos) gains his masculinity.

La Malinche's object positioning as a central component to Mexican (male) identity is, at the symbolic level, a form of gang rape in that it is a continuous expression of masculine power over the objectified female body whose masculinity is informed this process of objectification. Fundamentally, this identity configuration allegorizes the position of the female body as the site where men compete with other men for the entitlement of male power; thus, the feminine is perceived as the passive object that is meant to absorb the negotiation of masculinities. Rape as rhetoric is employed to express this power exchange; the irony is that rape culture is instigated precisely on this notion that masculinity and/or bonds between men must assert and reinforce female subordination in order to render power over O/other forms of masculinity.

Paz, in that he persistently insists on the so-called solitude of the Mexican male, who above all else, "just wants to be a man" and therefore must deny both his father and mother is right about one thing: the myth of the Malinche is about being a man, how to become one, how to be affirmed amidst one's own subordination. Irwin's *Mexican Masculinities* (2003) centralizes the academically-accepted notions of Mexican masculinity popularized by Paz. He vigorously interrogates Paz's hypothesis by focusing on the performative aspect of this configuration, largely the assumption that it proposes that a "natural" male sex highly relies on the social performance of resisting passivity, which can take away one's *manliness*. Thus, to *be* a homosexual is to *be penetrated*, in essence, to assume the role of *la chingada* / *La Malinche*, whereas to penetrate another man is not necessarily seen as a homosexual act. Irwin writes: "Whether or not we believe that such systems dominate sexual culture in Mexico, ... there is no doubt that Octavio Paz famously introduced homosexuality into mainstream intellectual discourse" (31).

Ultimately, the oddity that is Paz's model is that it "incorporates," or rather embodies, a rejection of penetration (read in light of feminine passivity) but by the same token, a rejection of the female body; thus, however paradoxically, there is an expression of same-sex desire as it embraces the masculine. Through the homosocial, then, one might say that La Malinche becomes the object through which male desire is cast or even diverted via the desire "to be a man." However, if La Malinche comes to represent conquest which is also the nation's past through the rhetoric of rape (*que vale madre*)<sup>14</sup> the future (national identity), while being forged on the image of the raped / conquered body, aligns itself with the hardened body and even celebrates *el chingón*, the masculine as the figure *that it clearly embraces*. (*Todo padre*).

In the next section, the threat of rape will reemerge as central theme in the latter part of Altamirano's novel, *El Zarco*. However, this time it is a means to articulate a lack of a male hierarchy within the bandit community as a contrast to what can allegorically be perceived as the "ideal community" which, in turn, is articulated through an ideal masculine model. As I've discussed in the first part of this chapter, Altamirano's novel is quite distinct in its reversal of racialized masculinities wherein whiteness is embodied by the characters who come to represent the less desirable codes of both masculinity and family. Interestingly, both gender and sexual codings occur thorough the process of perversion, marking the "pervert" as he (and by default, she) who poses a threat to national unity.

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<sup>14</sup> In Mexican slang the terms "madre" and "padre" (mother and father, respectively) are frequently employed. 'Madre' as in "que vale madre" means "its worth is mother" that it is no good, or a piece of shit, whereas phrases like "todo padre" means that everything is awesome.



### 3.2 BANDITS, BOOTIE, AND BUENA GENTE: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ALTAMIRANON'S *EL ZARCO*

Attraction and repulsion, desire and rejection—it would seem that in a novel as clear cut in its characterizations of "the good man" vs. "the bad man" and "the good woman" vs. "the bad woman," Altamirano would have given his reader a means to attribute these properties of desire precisely where they belong. He does not. However, there may be no better text from which to study the dramatic shift in masculine ideals and nationalism as those presented in Mexican literature during a time of radical political transformation in the second half of the nineteenth-century.

This unique time period is largely known as La Reforma—a bloody, turbulent, and historically complicated social shifting of national politics and ideals that would forever change the course of Mexico and its people through newly emerged liberal politics and social attitudes. It is marked by two wars: La Guerra de la Reforma (1857-1861) and the French intervention in Mexico (1861-1867) in addition to countless other moments of political and social upheaval. After Mexico's War of Independence (1810-1821), the country remained strongly divided between Liberals and Conservatives. Between 1821 and 1857 Mexicans would experience a slew of dictators, foreign incursions like the Mexican-American War (1846-48), several constitutional governments, and in short, the chaos of over fifty different forms of government (Kirkwood 107). Conservatives were largely in favor of the Catholic Church, a centralized government, and even a return to monarchy. Liberals argued for more of a federalist republic and leaned heavily on Latin American intellectuals, views produced by the European Enlightenment, and a variety of social theories that ultimately stood behind a need for the redistribution of wealth, increased educational opportunities for the poor, and the possibility of

social mobility for ethnic groups long exploited in Mexico. None of this would happen without an all-out bloody civil war.

Manuel Ignacio Altamirano's *El Zarco* (written 1885-1889, published 1901), as a whole, exhibits the changing norms and social attitudes brought about in the aftermath of this war through the direct comparison of two male characters and two female characters. The hero, Nicolás, falls in love with a whitened woman named Manuela, who, in turn, rejects him in exchange for the novel's villain and blue-eyed blonde bandit, Zarco. Manuela runs away with Zarco, although she soon begins to realize that Nicolás would have been the better choice insofar as her future is concerned. Nicolás, in turn, discovers that he never really loved Manuela anyway, and eventually marries "his true love" (also of indigenous origin), Pilar. Pilar, an orphan like Nicolás, is the god-daughter of Manuela's mother, the wise yet weak Doña Antonia; thus, the two have a sisterly relationship. Zarco, because he is the leader of a group of bandits that terrorizes the town, Los Plateados (named after the silver adornment they sport), and because he threatens to kill Nicolás, is eventually captured by a rural guard (a character who is vigilante turned lawman). Manuela subsequently dies from hysteria. Nicolás and his Pilar, predictably, live happily ever after.

Foreseeably, many have read *El Zarco* in light of the allegorical relationship that is forged through the romantic unions of Nicolás and Pilar and by contrast, Manuela and el Zarco; of course, such a reading ties the notion of family, heteronormativity, and the "ideal match," to notions of national progress, unity, etc. It seems to fit neatly into Doris Sommer's overall thesis in *Foundational Fictions* and has become yet another textual example she has employed to solidify her argument (220-32). Juan Pablo Dabove, among others, uses Sommer's analysis of

the text as his own launching pad of sorts in his *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latina America* (2007). Here he summarizes the basic plot quite nicely:

*El Zarco* is indeed the story of two romances. The first is the romance between Nicolás, an Indian ironsmith of the Atlihuayan hacienda who personifies all liberal civic virtues, and Pilar, a mestizo orphan living in the household of Doña Antonia, owner of an orchard and small plot of land in Yautepec, Morelos (at the time part of the state of Mexico). The second is the story of the ill-starred passion that Manuela, Antonia's daughter, harbors for Zarco, the irresistibly good-looking captain of the Plateados (The motif of the fateful, mistaken love for a bandit is a staple of the European gothic novel). (101)

Dabove's analysis does not diverge from Sommer's in any sort of foundational fashion. He merely amplifies her argument with his own unique critical observations, most of which enrich his reader's understanding of the novel's historical context (the Plateados were an actual sect of bandits) and thus informing the political and socio-historical components of the text's allegorical mappings. This includes the relationship between justice, revenge, and the State while promoting an understanding of how geographical localities inform the overall symbolic attributes of the narrative.

Perplexingly, however, for a theoretical trajectory that concerns itself with the figure of the bandit and banditry, Dabove largely abandons an analysis of the characterization of the bandits specific to Altamirano's novel. My hope is to revisit some of his observations while acknowledging what he seems to miss entirely: *El Zarco* is a novel where gender and sexuality are not only informative of specific characterizations; they are central to them. This extends well beyond the male / female dyads vital to both Sommer and Dabove's analyses. Though the text

hosts two male-female couplings, it is the blatant rivalry between the two couples (most specifically, between two “types” of men) that fully articulates contrasting notions of sexuality, carrying with it a powerful allegory of men’s relationship to the domestic (symbolically located in the female body).

Sommer, in her insistence that her reader focus on the heterosexual relationships, blatantly dismisses the weight that contrasting masculinities carry forth to the national allegory. Though she argues that the “romantic” relationships forge said allegory, much of her analysis concerns itself with atypical gender formations found within the main protagonists. Moreover, she consistently focuses on male-male relationships. She writes:

Although this novel celebrates heroism in the “real men,” meaning Nicolás and the mulatto Martín Chagollán (a hero against banditry in Mexican history) who successfully argues with President Juárez that the captured bandits deserve no pardon, *El Zarco* very much belongs to the domesticizing norm of foundation novels. The two patriotic heroes fight only in order to live at home, whereas the villains live to fight in the an obscene and parodic afterlife of legitimate mobilizations against the Conservatives. (227)

This passage is followed by her astute observations that there are various “gender-crossings” occurring in all characterizations of the heterosexual foursome. She notes that Nicolás’s masculinity is a “combination of heroism and sentimentality.” She even observes that each “feminine” attribute afforded to his characterization (tenderness, passion, etc) is followed by “masculinizing and elite qualifier after each feminine trait” (honor, dignity, a “man of iron” who begins to cry) (227).

Pilar, though submissive and sweet, is, in Sommer's words, "an ideal romantic heroine *because* she is resourceful and fearless"; Pilar attempts to organize political and military support when her beloved is imprisoned. Sommer continues: "But Manuela and el Zarco are equally gender-crossed in a parody of romantic lovers: she because her love of adventure conquers her feminine delicacy, and he because cowardice plagues his machismo" (227). Sommer then focuses her attention of contrasting one all-male group with another: the bandits vs. the militants.

Again, if one is to argue the point that national consolidations are forged through romantic unions, why is the emphasis largely concerned with contrasting masculinities? Moreover, the ideal heroine is not much of a character anyway. Nevertheless, her female counterpart most certainly is, as hers is the body through which multiple threads of desire and rivalry articulate themselves. The circulation of her body is precisely that which drives the plot forward. I would also disagree with Sommer that it is the want of "adventure" that is the so-called "crossing" of gender that is attributed to Manuela's characterization. It is Manuela's sexuality, her lust, and eventual perversion that drive her to her death.

The trope of perversion is abundant in the novel. All who are "bad" are also perverts. As such, *El Zarco* is a model text for understanding how the figure of the "pervert" (the bandit) is both sexualized and gendered as a means of contrasting prevailing notions of hegemonic masculinity during Mexico's reformation period. The heterosexual pairings are overtly didactic and thus moralizing to the point of banality. What isn't so obvious, however, is how the individualized components of love and desire inform gender/ed ideals. This is precisely a text that employs unique configurations of gendering the male "other," which I argue informs the sexualities of an imagined ideal citizen in the form of Nicolás. The practically asexual Pilar (she's a virgin, of course) is merely an accessory to his idealized manhood.

Dabove misses this point as well; he does not recognize the sexualization of banditry as Altamirano imagines it. In all 378 pages of *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America*, he employs the word “sexuality” only on two occasions. Consequently, the word “masculinity” merely appears twice; interestingly, both occasions are in direct reference to *El Zarco* and both, though only mentioned in passing, have tremendous implications. This does not mean, however, that gender analysis is completely absent from Dabove’s observations; he is cognizant of the relationship between Manuela’s gender role and its symbolic political implications.

He accurately observes that Manuela “abandons her gender role” (107) but does not make the same claim regarding Zarco’s gender role which hosts a far more provocative and significant thematic relationship to the overt didactic and moralizing overtones of both narrator and narrative. As is the convention in most nineteenth-century texts, women certainly have distinct personalities that may lead them to trust the “wrong man,” but the key word here is that they are “led.” Women are either directed or misdirected via the more (active) male characterizations. Therefore, to understand Zarco’s gender transgression one must understand Manuela’s as well, specifically how her gender and sexuality are “tainted” when they come into contact with the novel’s male “other,” in this case, Zarco.

For Dabove, Manuela’s love-object choice (her rejection of Nicolás in exchange for el Zarco) is a political transgression. Her refusal to accept Nicolás on the basis that he is an ugly (somewhat poor) Indian (the text repeats this on many occasions) is the means by which, in Dabove’s words, “Manuela rejects . . . class and race alliance.” He writes:

Once again, the romance is a major metaphor. Antonia wants Manuela to marry Nicolás, an Indian. Manuela rejects this class and race alliance. In reneging on her

obligations to her family and eloping with her lover, Manuela crosses the garden wall that encloses family, work, property, and definitive gender roles and separates them from the exterior (this garden has clear biblical resonance as the Garden of Eden). In so doing, she crosses over to crime. When the sentimental chaos is a metaphor for the political one, Manuela's election is not a bad choice of husband but a fatal political mistake (106-07)

But it is not the "life of crime" that Eve crosses into when she puts her mouth on the juicy forbidden fruit that God forbid the innocent and naked Adam and Eve to pleasure? Eve falls into the world of forbidden sexuality—sinful pleasure of the flesh, the taste of the "forbidden fruit"; she is, after all, the ultimate traitor through seduction alone. Manuela's constant rejection of marriage, and obvious lustful attraction to the handsome yet evil Zarco is clearly the moment she plummets from her gendered pedestal.

Conversely, there is no romance between the snake and Eve; there is no love, no unity or romantic partnership. The forbidden pleasure of the Garden of Eden is that which entices Eve to take the first bite, to cross over, to give in to the sinful (symbolically sexual) seduction of the serpent. Manuela "falls" for the same sort of seduction in her want of that which is forbidden to her. She rejects domesticity in exchange for a taste of pure pleasure: she's lured into choosing the "bad apple" and therefore, forbidden fruit. The snake ring given to her by Zarco just before their departure is a clear reference to this. Manuela stands in front of a mirror, a blood-stained snake ring sliding down her finger—the ring stolen by Zarco from a family he has killed; thus, the ring that marks their unity is in direct correlation with "destruction of the family." Briefly, she contemplates its murderous origins (her last flash of virtue), but the narrator makes it perfectly clear: she has transitioned from a woman of virtue to a perverted soul. Altamirano writes, "No era la virtud próxima a sucumbir ante la dádiva, sino la perversidad contemplándose

en el cieno [It was not inner virtue that succumbed to the gift, but perversity contemplating itself in the muddle]" (18). Shortly thereafter, she climbs out her window, down the steps, through the garden, and over the wall. Her inability to control her own sexual desires (presumably as a woman "taken advantage of" by an "evil man") marks the moment when she is convinced to abandon domesticity (represented by the home to which she is confined). When she does so, she is not only met by Zarco, but by Zarco and his entourage. This is an important detail because Manuela doesn't just abandon her domestic role, she enters into a world of men—specific "kinds of men" where no sexual authority can be found and thus, her sexuality (through sexual violation) is placed in constant risk. Her status as male property (now Zarco's property) is not respected primarily because Zarco's masculinity is consistently being thrown into question.

What women come to represent for Altamirano is abundantly clear and certainly not surprising. Women are limited to their domestic roles. This is evident from their first introduction to the reader. The women, are always "inside." Even when outside, they are often seated "en el patio interior" (3). The reader meets them as they are cutting flowers, sewing, and speaking about marriage—women, according to the text, seem to have no other aspirations other than finding a man who will protect and provide for them. In fact, it is difficult to find dialogue or even internal musings that have nothing to do with men in this novel, though Manuela does think about her mother once or twice.

As sexual property, Manuela's "worth" is made abundantly clear. She is absolutely beautiful, her body and features more European than not. Not only is she white, she is "esa blancura un poco pálida," [the type of whiteness that is a bit pale], with a perfect neck, robust body and a flirtatious smile. She appears (though she is not) part of the aristocracy: "Diríase 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” [One might say that was an aristocrat disguised and hidden in that garden of tierra caliente. Marta or Nancy fleeing the court to have an encounter with her boyfriend] (3). Her rival, Pilar, is non-white: “era morena; con ese tono suave y delicado de las criollas que se alejan del tipo español, sin confundirse con el indio, y que denuncia a la hija humilde del pueblo” [she was dark-skinned; that certain soft and delicate tone of the criollas that are more in akin with the Spanish type, without confusing her for an indian, and that denounces her the town’s humble daughter]. Physically, her appearance is more “humble-looking,” though she is not to “be confused with an Indian. She is somewhat sad-looking, fragile, sickly, with a melancholic smile. The narrator blatantly states, “podía comprenderse que aquella niña tenía un carácter diametralmente opuesto al de la otra” (3-4); the two women are complete opposites. The comparison of both their physical and personalities ends on one note: Pilar dreams of getting married, whereas Manuela blatantly declares that she’s not yet ready for marriage. For her, marriage is a sort of death: “Yo no, yo no pienso en casarme todavía, y me contento con las flores que más me gustan. Además, con la corona de azahares parece que va una a vestirse de muerta. Así entierran a las doncellas” [Not me, I’m not thinking about getting married yet, and I’m content with the flowers that I like best. That, and with the tiara of orange blossom, it looks like someone is dressing themselves up like a dead body. That’s how they bury young maids] (4). And as I’ve discussed previously, part of Manuela’s fall is precisely her rejection of the domestic in exchange for a non-traditional partnership motivated by sexual desire.

By contrast, for the honorable Doña Antonia, the girls’ mother and godmother respectively, to be without a man means death, as she is a woman in a precarious situation. She does nothing more than await the arrival of her brother to save her and her daughters, so fearful

that, as the reader is told on a few occasions, she very well might die. She serves the purpose of expressing fear and reiterating the expressions of the rest of the town's people under domestic threat: "que esta noche entra Salomé Plasencia" [tonight Salomé Plasencia will come]; "que se escondan las familias que ahí vienen el Zarco o Palo Seco" [families should hide themselves because here comes Zarco or Palo Seco] (4). Despite her knowledge and vocalization of male threat (the threat is not that they will steal her possessions, but that they will "steal" Manuela), Altamirano characterizes here as a model of complete and absolute passivity: fatalism that will come to fruit.

Her fatalism is in direct correlation to her gender. Now a widow, Antonia can do nothing. On the verge of hysteria, she wishes she were a man so that she could be an active protector against the threat of other men: "Quisiera ser hombre y fuerte, y le aseguro a ustedes que iría a buscar a esa desdichada aunque me mataran; ¡mejor para mí! ¡Un plateado! ¡Un plateado! —murmuró convulsa de ira" [I wish I could be a man and strong and I assure you all that I would go in search for that disgraceful man even if they would kill me; better for me! A plateado! A plateado!--she murmured convulsing in anger] (32). But Antonia is not a man, therefore she can do nothing to protect her daughters: "y yo estoy sin consuelo, sin saber qué hacer..., sola..." [and I am without console, no knowing what to do... alone...] (5). The only solution, of course, is for Manuela to marry Nicolás, "que es el solo protector que tenemos en la vida" [he is the only protector we have in our lives] (11) she declares; though, it would seem, this can't happen fast enough.

The women, as a collective and as individuals, clearly represent the classic Victorian outline of femininity: Antonia is the spiritual, motherly voice that is overtly moralistic--she does everything possible to teach her daughter and goddaughter what it means to be a "good woman"

(be virtuous, value “good men,” pray, etc.). She is the classic passive spiritual guardian and the voice through which the reader comes to know Nicolás’s status as a “good and honorable man” while persistently warning her girls of the “sinful, deceitful, and outright perverse men” who threaten their virtue. Pilar, in turn, is the humble, silent, obedient “good daughter” and eventual “good wife.” She is virginal, pure, and pious. She is female respectability.

Manuela, of course, is the classic “fallen woman” who is perverted by her naive innocence and thus her failure to recognize the sinful and deceitful nature of the man who lures her into his arms. And yet, Manuela, as we shall see, doesn’t quite fit the role of the “femme fatale,” the evil seductress who uses her powers to seduce and deceive men. Nicolás is overtaken by her beauty and is unable to see her “true nature,” but she doesn’t attempt to seduce or corrupt him; on the contrary, she rejects him. Oddly, and I will explore this further, Zarco assumes this role. He is the ultimate feminine seductress: a leg-crossing girly-boy with an obsession for adornment, a profound vanity, and a beauty that serves to disguise his demonic actions.

Both Manuela and Zarco are constantly depicted as being incredibly attractive people; Manuela, particularly Manuela’s irresistible, beautiful “almost aristocratic” white body, assumes an elevated status as *the body* in need of protection. “Bad men” encircle Antonia’s property in the dead of night, sometimes disguising themselves during the day for one simple reason: they are aware of Manuela’s presence there (5-6). Pilar is of no interest to the men; it is Manuela’s body that is under threat and in the utmost need of male protection as every man wants her for his own. Where Pilar comes to represent a model for domestic femininity, hence her name, Manuela, particularly Manuela’s body as object, *is* the domestic. Her status as the sexual property of men becomes the battleground on which opposing masculinities will define themselves as men. Thus, women are the property of men, and without a “real man” to protect

them, as Manuela puts it, they are, like Moors, without a master<sup>15</sup>: “estamos aquí como moro sin señor”(6). Women are men’s (sexual) property. Acknowledging this point is essential to understanding how masculinity functions within this text.

Men, on the other hand, are measured based on their suitability to rival sexual threat. Their “power” is openly discussed among the women. Manuela directly mocks Nicolás’s power basing it on his socioeconomic status: “Pero si ese hombre de bien no es más que el herrero de la hacienda de Atlihuayan ... ¿qué había de poder el herrero que es un pobre artesano?” [But if this good man is merely a metal worker from the Atlihuayan hacienda ... what power if the metal worker is a poor artisan?]. Doña Antonia interjects to defend and (re)define Nicolás’s masculinity for both Manuela and the reader, calling him “valiente” and “todo un hombre” [all man]. Both of these measurements of character are based on his ability to protect, but more importantly, his connectedness to other men who will aid him in his task to protect the female body. Doña Antonia declares: “En primer lugar, casándote, ya estarías bajo su potestad” [first of all, in marrying him you’d be under his authority], and later lists the importance of being a married woman as a means to be defended: “que cuenta con un marido, que tiene fuerzas para defenderla” [you can count on your husband, he has forces to defend you] (7).

Based on these observations, it would seem that women merely exist for men and that men’s social responsibility is to protect what is theirs. Women’s value, their survival, their aspirations come down to one thing and one thing only: their ability to get a man. This, of

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<sup>15</sup> In Christian-dominated Spain, the Moors often served as slaves after being captured from Muslim-identifying parts of Spain and North Africa and imported into the Christian section of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, this passage is likely in reference to slavery.

course, is not surprising. By contrast, what makes men valuable? “You can count on Nicolás,” Antonia declares. And why? He’s got “forces to defend you.” Thus, Nicolás’s value as a man is in direct correlation with other men’s desire for him—men who love him so much that they’d be willing to give their lives for him: “que tiene amigos, muchos amigos armados en la hacienda, que pelearían a su lado hasta perder la vida” [he has friends, many armed friends in the hacienda, and they’d fight by his side until their death] (7). Beyond battle, Nicolás plays host to other intense male bonds in well-connected places: “su maestro, que es un extranjero que lo dejó encargado de la herrería de la hacienda, está en México, lo quiere mucho, y podríamos irnos a vivir allá” [his teacher, who is a foreigner left him in charge of the metal work at the hacienda, he is in Mexico, he loves him very much, and we could go live there], Doña Antonia tells her girls.

There are several observations to take from this. First, Nicolás’s value as a man, as it depends on other men’s desire for him, lies outside of any sort of familial structure. Nicolás does not come from a “good family”; in fact, he seemingly has no family. His parents are never mentioned. Secondly, his socio-economic has been stressed repeatedly: Nicolás is poor. What he does have, however, are intense homosocial bonds with men of power: his teacher, the town mayor, and finally, Martín Sanchez (the vigilante turned army general via the authority of the President, Benito Juárez). Nicolás’s value as a man, though articulated by women, does not come from women: it comes from other men. And, as the novel’s ending reveals, this is important because men, specifically Martín Sanchez, *will* risk their life for him. Martín saves Nicolás’s life when el Zarco attempts to kill him on his wedding day.

Manuela, of course, does not recognize, or perhaps is unable to see, Nicolás’s worth as a man. Though she is the most objectified woman of the narrative, her downfall, ironically, is that she cannot recognize Nicolás’s subjectivity. She bases her desire on his physical traits, referring

to him as “ese indio horrible a quien no puedo ver” [that horrible Indian that I can’t look at], and later, an “Indio horrible” (7). The voice that echoes through Manuela’s characterization is that of a shallow false sense of aristocracy that is based on racial hierarchies.

Dabove’s reading of the text highlights this point. Without highlighting any sort of gender hierarchy, he observes that part of Manuela’s “traitor” status is her complete and absolute rejection of the class and racial alliances inherent to the social makeup of Yautepec. Instead, her physical movement is also the means by which, as Dabove states, she “remained in between two conflicting orders” (106). Dabove reminds his reader that both Nicolás and Zarco emerge from similar class backgrounds as workers on a hacienda. And yet, when the two men are contrasted, it is Nicolás who is able to ascend from his original social status despite the fact that Zarco’s plundering has given him wealth:

While Nicolás represents an image of the socially ascendant rural proletariat who is economically and ideologically integrated into the project to agrarian capitalism, Zarco opts out of that enterprise . . . The significant point is that this opting out (as with Manuela’s opting out of her gender role) is equated with crime, not with class struggle (Nicolás being living proof of the inconsequential character of class struggle: he ends the novel as part of the gentility [*gente decente*], as a leader of his community. (106)

Taking these points into consideration, one might ask how, in effect, might gender and masculinity inform Dabove’s point. Clearly the two men are juxtaposed, and, if in fact Nicolás comes to represent gentility—somewhat of a self-made man who hoists himself up from poverty—what does his nemesis’s gender codings tell us about the “type” of masculinity embodied by Zarco.

For one, if Manuela, through her refusal to marry, is rejecting the class and social alliance, in Dabove's words, she is rejecting it in exchange for something else: colonialism. Despite the fact that both of the antagonists originate from "humble" backgrounds yet adhere to false aristocratic sensibilities, their social transcendence is achieved through murder, plunder, and complete disregard for "the family" as a social unit (hence the reason why Zarco gifts the snake ring to his beloved after murdering an entire family). This scene, if my reader would recall, is also the scene that marks her "perversion" having come into contact with the "male pervert," as I will examine in more depth. Beyond perversion, banditry, in that it goes against the family unit, is also a return to false governance and social control through fear and injustice. Oddly, then, the national othering that exhibited by this gesture is—marking the outside threat to a harmonious community—is the othering of whiteness, specifically a white, false, and criminal claim to aristocracy (and to the upmost tier of the social hierarchy). This would also illuminate why Manuela's fantasies of wealth and control are precisely that: fantasies. Thus, Manuela's "election" of her suitor is overtly political and as such, is clearly a political mistake and a fatal one at that. Hers is a false misconception of a certain kind of "new man" that she clearly rejects in exchange for an outdated, no longer functional social order that is coded through both lack of control and sexual perversion.

### 3.3     **MASCULINITY AND ITS DEFENSES: HOMOSOCIALITY AND THE ORDER OF SOCIAL CONTROL**

Though Nicolás is clearly the hero of the narrative, oddly his masculinity must constantly be defended. Manuela, the “evil” woman that she is, serves as the interlocutor of a much larger conversation that defines Mexico’s reform period. She is the voice that accuses the mestizo Nicolás of being, through his racial makeup, not a man but a monster: “Quien hubiera oído hablar a Manuela en tono tan despreciativo, como lo había hecho, del herrero de Atlihuayan, se habría podido figurar que era un monstruo, un espantajo repugnante que no debiese inspirar más que susto o repulsión” [Had someone heard Manuela speak in a depreciative tone towards Nicolás, the ironsmith of Atlihuayan, as she has done, they would figure that he was a monster, a repugnant bogeyman, that shouldn’t inspire anything more than fear or repulsion] (9). Thus, the narrative immediately takes a defensive stance against the “perverse” Manuela’s position that Nicolás’s race automatically defines him as defective. Antonia, always the voice that serves to defend Nicolás’s male honor, interjects once again: “No es blanco, ni español, ni anda relumbrando de oro y de plata como los administradores de las haciendas o como los plateados, ni luce en los bailes y en las fiestas. Es quieto y encogido, pero eso me parece a mí que no es un defecto” [He’s not white, or Spanish, nor does he walk about in gold and silver like some of the hacienda administrators or like the Plateados do, nor does he shine in balls or parties. He is reserved and shy but to me, that doesn’t seem to be a defect] (8).

It is important to note that, although many critics, including Dabove, refer to Nicolás as “an Indian” (a racially loaded word to employ, regardless), Altamirano makes it clear that he is not “un indio” but of clear indigenous descent. When providing Nicolás’s physical description,



the narrator reveals the following: “era un joven trigueño, con el tipo indígena bien marcado, pero de cuerpo alto y esbelto, de formas hercúleas, bien proporcionado y cuya fisonomía inteligente y benévola predisponía desde luego a su favor” [He was dark-skinned young man with well-marked indigenous traits, but with a tall and slender body, of Herculean form, well-proportioned and whose intelligent and benevolent physiognomy were predisposed in his favor] (9). Rather, it is Manuela who “reduces” him to “Indian status.” The problem with Manuela, the narrative tells us, is that she confuses race and honor. This is voiced through the figure of Antonia, who again, is the sole defender of Nicolás’s honor but also serves to put Manuela “in her place” as a poor woman who believes that her whiteness affords her something more. Antonia calls her “presumida” [conceited], asking her daughter, “¿De dónde te vienen tantos humos a ti que eres una pobre muchacha, aunque tengas, por la gracia de Nuestro Señor, esa carita blanca y esos ojos que tanto te alaban los tenderos de Yautepec? Eres tan entonada que cualquiera diría que eras dueña de hacienda” [Where do you get off blowing so much smoke, you, being a poor girl even if you have, by the grace of our Lord, that white face and those eyes for which the shopkeepers of Yautepec praise you? Given your tone, you’d think you were the owner of hacienda] (7).

Nicolás has graciously taken on the three women as his duty, via male honor, to protect them from “other” men. In this way, his relationship to the domestic may serve as a metonymic device pointing towards a larger, national context: to protect and serve a specific territory, whether the bodies of women, or the town itself. Notably when Nicolás enters the home of the three women during his regularly scheduled visits he does not simply enter it, he “penetrates” it after checking its parameters for “bad men,” of course. This verbiage is employed every time he visits the women: “después de atravesar las piezas de habitación de la casa, penetró hasta el

patio” [after crossing the spare room in the house, he penetrated [entered] the courtyard] (8), thus further reinforcing the women’s vulnerable sexual status: their ability to be penetrated by the opposite sex. But again, his status as their protector is dependent on his relationships with other men. For example, Nicolás has enough connections that he is able to arrange for an entire army to escort the women to Mexico City where they will presumably be safe with his former mentor.

In contrast, Zarco, when asked by Manuela to attack the army marching from the north that is to serve as her protective entourage, refuses, citing that his men will be disinterested without the promise of booty. Unlike Nicolás’s bonds with other men, who are willing to die for him based on male honor alone, Zarco’s men will only act with their own interests in mind. Manuela asks him to attack the troop several times: “Ahora, mi deseo de que atacaran a la tropa, debes suponer que es causado por el amor mismo que te tengo, para que no nos separemos. Si tienes otro medio..., el de casarnos, por ejemplo” [Now, my desire for you all to attack the troops, you should assume, is caused by the same love that I have for you, so that we should not be separated. If you have another means ... marriage, for instance] (16). One needn’t decipher how desire is being mediated through Manuela in this instance; it’s quite clear. She is a catalyst of male-rivalry through her own provocations. She invokes the reversal of the masculine role of protectionism. To clarify, the reader is already aware that the troop is to be employed as a means to protect all three women, the defenseless domestic so-to-speak, which of course has been defined as the noble duty: the honorable requirement that defines a “good man.” Manuela is exploiting masculinity here. She doesn’t ask for protection, but violence as a means to obtain what she wants: a life with Zarco. In short, Manuela asks for an invasion. Perhaps then, Manuela, in having “crossed over,” is no longer the benevolent domestic, but a threat against it: a

sort of (m)otherland rallying one group of men against another and thus asking for an illegitimate and vain war.

If viewed in terms of male rivalry, what does it mean when the “trophy woman” begs a man, the supposed leader of collectivity of men, to attack another male collectivity? What is symbolically implied by Zarco’s refusal to do so? His insecurities provide a hint. He states that his men would not follow him (for lack of the promise of booty); that he’d need five hundred men just to conquer their hundred. Therefore, as both an individual man and leader of a collectivity, Zarco is clearly lacking. His masculinity as a leader who is unable to lead, and the male collectivity that he leads, are both insufficient when measured against the other group of men. The following passage notes other reasons for his inability to attack, which interestingly accompanies his refusal to marry Manuela: “Por mil razones. Llevando la vida que llevo, siendo como soy tan conocido, teniendo tantas causas pendientes en los juzgados, habiendo, naturalmente, orden de colgarne donde me cojan, ¿a dónde había yo de ir a presentarme para que nos casaran? ¡Estás loca!” [For a thousand reasons. Carrying about in life as I do, being how it is that I am so well known, having so many pending cases in the courts, and so naturally, there is order to hang me wherever I am caught. Where would I even go to present myself in order for us to be married? You are crazy!] (16).

Zarco, in his own words, has no access to the institution of marriage because of his lifestyle. The risks that also mark this inaccessibility may be insightful as to how his “type” of masculinity is insufficient. Following the passage above, he states that “naturally” theirs is an

order to “colgarme donde me cojan”.<sup>16</sup> His is a subjectivity, similar to others, that is placed at risk of being invaded. This is true for all of the characters, as there is a constant threat of invasion, either by Zarco and his men, or in this case, those who seek justice and/or revenge against them. Corporal vulnerability is relevant here particularly because his is a subjectivity that is linked to women and other “defenseless victims,” who, when under threat, do not and cannot fight but flee. The conversation between the three women, confined to their domesticity, cites that the women’s only option is to either hide or flee. Though Zarco is a threat, he is also under threat. This threat has been imposed upon him “naturally” through an “order.”

Earlier, in one of his first introductions to the reader, he is described in this way: “como todos los hombres de su especie, prefería estar siempre listo para la fuga o para la pelea” [like all the men of his type [species], he’d prefer to always be ready for flight or flight] (11). But unlike Nicolás, who is under major threat due to their rivalry, Zarco does not immediately fight, but chooses instead to run and hide. Nicolás, in turn, will walk great distances to see his beloved despite the threat against him. El Zarco reacts to his own vulnerability as if he were a woman or a defenseless victim; his masculinity is one that can and will be penetrated in subjective terms.

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<sup>16</sup> Whether or not the verb ‘coger’ is employed in 1870s Mexico would be an interesting question to eventually investigate as this word, though used in other Spanish-speaking contexts to mean “to grab” or “to get caught” has another meaning in Mexico. Modern-day Mexican Spanish uses ‘recoger’ or ‘agarrar’ instead as the verb ‘coger,’ which has come to mean “to fuck” in Mexico. Thus, this line would have a double-meaning: [they would hang me wherever I’m fucked]. Again, I’m unsure at this time if this linguistic distinction is applicable to the time period in which the novel was being written but if so, it can easily be read as a play on words.

Conversely, one of the physical characteristics attributed to Zarco is that he rides his horse side saddle, legs crossed, “like the women.” This is noted again: “alargó la pierna que traía cruzada, se estiró perezosamente” [he extended his crossed leg and stretched it out lazily] (12). Unlike other characters, the description of El Zarco takes up an entire three pages wherein his beauty, fashionable attire and vanity take center stage (12-13). Without assuming that in this temporal context effeminacy is in reference to homosexuality, one thing, however, is most certainly clear: Zarco’s sexuality is marked as other.

Insofar as literary criticism surrounding *El Zarco* is concerned, there is a huge undercurrent that has gone largely unarticulated: most of the novel is concerned with themes and characterizations that fall outside of heteronormativity, not within it. The plot is forged through its obsession with sexual transgression. Sexuality, without a doubt, assumes an elevated importance in Altamirano’s novel although it is never explicitly discussed, or better, because it is very much “glossed-over” in the novel. Take, for instance, Zarco; to understand how sexuality functions through his characterization, one need only look to the “amorous exchanges” happening between the villain and villainess. Zarco’s “love” is described as “un amor apasionado y violento” [a passionate and violent love]—his kisses, filled with fury, kisses that devour Manuela, “tan apasionada, tan loca” [so passionate, so crazy] an “obsesión constante.” In short, his is a love that is as out of control as it is all-consuming. “Consuming” is the key word here. Zarco wants Manuela, not based on any sort of love precisely, but because everyone else wants her: “Aquel no era amor, en el sentido elevado de la palabra, era el deseo espoleado por la impaciencia y halagado por la vanidad, porque, efectivamente, el bandido debía creerse afortunado con merecer la preferencia de la mujer más bonita del rumbo” [that kind wasn’t love, in the elevated sense of the word, it was spurred by impatience desire and flattered by vanity,

because, indeed, the villain must believe himself fortunate to deserve the attention of the prettiest woman around] (16). It isn't love, Altamirano tells his reader, it's an obsession based on pure vanity. Manuela is merely an accessory to el Zarco's masculinity, a prize—not someone who actually loves “in the elevated sense of the word”; she's part of his fancy outfit (16-17).

Again, based on my previous analysis of Manuela's “crossing over” to sexual dissonance and thus her conversion into “un alma pervertida” [a perverted soul] (17), perversion is precisely what defines Zarco's sexuality as well. Zarco is undoubtedly a pervert with “un sensualismo bestial” [a bestial sensuality] whose real pleasures are robbery, murder, and vanity. Almost every depiction of him is accompanied by a dark and stormy horizon. His skills as a horseman, and thus, a person who “controls animals” is where he gains his first physical description:

un gallardo jinete montado en brioso alazán que parecía impacientarse, marchando tortuosamente en aquel sendero en que resonaban echando chispas sus herraduras. El jinete lo contenía a cada paso, y en la actitud más tranquila, parecía abandonarse a una deliciosa meditación, cruzando una pierna sobre la cabeza de la silla, como las mujeres [a dashing rider on spirited Spanish horse that seemed to be getting impatient, marching tortuously along that path as sparks resonated from its horseshoes. The rider controlled it at every step, and in a most peaceful attitude, seemed to indulge in a delicious meditation, crossing one leg over the head of the saddle like women do] (11)

Notably, any of the men supposedly under his control share names with animals and of course, they embody an animalistic sexuality. Zarco's relationship to women in the text might not even be described as a sexual desire but one of control and humiliation. When it comes to women, he's not interested; if anything, he finds more pleasure in dreams of ruining their reputation:

aquellas muchachas que según su posición amaban al rico, al dependiente o al jornalero, le inspiraban un deseo insensato de arrebatarlas y de mancharlas. No había entre todas una que hubiera fijado los ojos en él, porque él tampoco había procurado acercarse a ninguna de ellas con intenciones amorosas. (21)

[all those girls, who in according with their status, loved the rich man, the clerk, or the journeyman, inspired [in el Zarco] an insatiable desire to snatch them up and stain their reputations. There had not been as single woman in their midst who had fixed her eyes on him, but he hadn't attempted to approach them with any amorous intentions either.]

How Zarco gains his perversion is equally indicative of how Altamirano attempts to define his character's innermost desires. All and all, Zarco is incapable of love beyond material things despite the fact that his parents, "honrados padres" [honorable parents], gave it their best effort to shape his masculinity into that of a hardworking and useful man: "habían querido hacer de él un hombre laborioso y útil" [they wanted to make him into a hard-working and useful man] (20). In other words, his parents wished that he be more like a man more comparable to Nicolás. Instead, he runs away to offer his services to a horse trainer where he doesn't have "friends," but "compañeros de placer y de vicio" [companions of pleasure and vice]. Note that this is the moment when his "perversions" begin to "infect" him:

en aquellos días su carácter se formó completamente, y ya no dio cabida en su corazón más que a las malas pasiones. Así, la servidumbre consumó lo que la holgazanería, y los instintos perversos, que no estaban equilibrados por ninguna noción de bien, acabaron por llenar aquella alma oscura, como las algas infectas de un pantano. (21)

[in those days his character formed completely, and no longer did he have room in his heart for things other than evil passions. Thus, in servitude his laziness and perverse

instincts were achieved, unbalanced by any notion of good, eventually filling that dark soul just as as algae infects a swamp.]

In many ways, Zarco's sexuality as well as his character are marked by one thing: he is not a "productive" citizen (perhaps another reason as to why he has no access to the institution of marriage). Rather, Zarco's sexuality is consumptive and is directly associated with materialism and vanity accompanied by vice and laziness.

Dabove certainly understands the role that consumption plays here, specifically in relation to the gendering of women. However, his lack of focus on questions of masculinity dismisses how the hero/villain dyad highlights the political observations that Dabove has already recognized: how the political connotations of productivity directly relate to hegemonic masculinity. For example, he seemingly understands the juxtaposition of the two men as a political comparison, the contrast between a utopic contributor to the overall "good" (Nicolás), and a man who elects to steal, pillage, and exploit (Zarco). Dabove may not recognize it, but he's indirectly underlined the notion that Altamirano has employed masculinity, or rather masculinities, as politics. His analysis of the hero/villain split is similar to the conclusions he makes (and fails to make) with regard to the obvious contrasting of landscapes of the narrative: Yautepec vs. Xocimacas. He recognizes that the split between town, Yautepec, and the outlying home of the bandits, Xocimacas, is structured differently with regard to political hierarchy. Dabove reads Yautepec as a sort of utopic mini-state, "where mestizaje (either racial or cultural) is a harmonious reality," and by contrast, the geographical local of the bandits, Xocimancas, "is a hodge-podge of races without racial hierarchy. This heterogeneity is replicated in the lack of organic solidarity between the bandits" (115).



Consequently, Debove views the organizational chaos of Xocimacas in terms of race, not gender or sexuality. The pivotal seed of Debove's reading of banditry in the novel, though, is that he understands the lack of solidarity between men as that which marks their exteriority to the national project. In other words, there are no powerful male-male bonds to hold the mini-state of banditry together. But where exactly are the racialized transgressions that violate fraternal order within Xocimacas? Debove does not tell his reader what they are precisely. No one steals another's treasure, or threatens to kill their leader. Rather, Zarco's men, as I will explore further, do not respect the fact that Manuela is Zarco's property. They all but threaten to rape her. Thus, male-male rivalry prevails within this band of banditry, based on a notion of Zarco's masculinity that is veiled in his relation to his "trophy woman." This is precisely why Manuela's entrance into Xocimacas is the beginning of the end for these men.

Through the threat of sexual violation, the political transgression is against the idea that women, as tangible objects, objects that symbolically contain men's alleged role to protect them, and thus, their safety is a reflection of that masculinity. In a sense, it is a breach in the fraternal bond, an invasion of the domestic as it is upheld in the notion of femininity. The potential violation of Manuela's body, which is carried throughout the narrative once she "crosses over," marks both her body (and perhaps the "other" domestic) as a place without sexual authority and thus in constant danger. In short, Xocimacas is a place where women can, and probably will, be raped. This is made abundantly clear from the moment of her arrival and is deserving of a closer analysis.

It is precisely the moment that Manuela steps foot into the bandit state that she comes to realize her own vulnerability as a woman: the threat of rape is a constant. Zarco's strongest desire for her, to possess her as a trophy, an adornment to his masculinity, comes to fruit here.

The men automatically reduce her to a sexual object, shouting obscenities and cheering on Zarco, most of which could translate to “what a fine piece of meat”: “¡Miren al Zarco! ¡Qué maldito!... ¡Qué buena garra se trae! --¿Dónde te has encontrado ese buen trozo, Zarco de tal? -- preguntaban otros riendo. --Esta es para mí no más --contestaba el Zarco en el mismo tono. - ¿Para ti no más?... Pos ya veremos...” [Look at Zarco! That bastard! ... What a fine thing he’s got! Where’d you find yourself that piece of meat, Zarco?--others asked laughingly. This one is for me and me alone--Zarco answered in the same tone .--For you and no one else? ... Yeah we’ll see about that...] (50). The threat of sexual violation is immediate. The remarks, when attributed to specific men, are always attributed to black men, or rather mulatto men. One shouts at her: “¡Adiós güerita, es usted muy chula para un hombre solo!” [see you later blondie, you’re too fine for just for one man!] (51).

Thus, the fear, the chaos, the lack of racial hierarchy noted by Dabove, is almost purely sexual. Manuela’s inner thoughts reflect this perfectly. The narrator reveals that she felt her womanly pride had been hurt: “había sentido herida en su orgullo de mujer” (51). And since her pride as a woman is directly linked to the masculinity (i.e. a trophy woman) of Zarco, the next quote reveals, that at least in her eyes, these men are not living up to her expectations insofar as “men” are concerned:

y puede decirse en su pudor de virgen, al oír aquellas exclamaciones burlonas, aquellas chanzonetas malignas con que la habían saludado al llegar, a ella, que por lo menos esperaba ser respetada yendo al lado de uno de los jefes de aquellos hombres.

[and one could say that in her modesty as a virgin, upon hearing these ridiculing exclams, those evil jokes with which they had greeted her, at the very least, she had expected to be respected walking along side one of the leaders of those men]. (52)

She recognizes that Nicolás, as a “real man,” would have never let this happen: “no habría permitido jamás que la amada de su corazón fuese ultrajada de esa manera” [he would never have permitted that the love of his heart be treated in this way] (52).

There is another scene that is highly emblematic of the “types” of masculinity that contradict Manuela’s sense of “what a man should be,” leading her to realize her mistake as a woman. In this scene, which Altamirano aptly calls “La Orgía” [The Orgy], the lack of a clearly defined masculine hierarchy is quite evident. The chapter is filled with a bunch of leg-crossing men, some of them lying face down: “algunos de los jugadores se hallaban sentados en cuclillas, otros con las piernas cruzadas, otros estaban tendidos boca abajo, unos tarareaban con voz aguda y nasal canciones” [some of the players were squatting, others had their legs crossed, others were lying face down, some hummed with songs with an acute nasally voice] (63). Though nothing is explicitly stated about what sorts of vices the men are engaging in, the narrator makes it clear that they are “satisfying their needs” and do not wish to be discovered: “no descuidaban ninguna de las precauciones para evitar ser sorprendidos, y sólo así se entregaban con tranquilidad a sus vicios o a la satisfacción de sus necesidades” [they did not neglect any precautions to avoid being surprised, and only then did they calmly give into their vices or the satisfaction of their needs] (64).

At “the orgy” the reader (and Manuela) is introduced to el Zarco’s closest entourage of men: Félix, Palo Seco, Juan Linares, el Tigre, el Coyote, and “el principal,” Salomé. Thus, the second-in-line to Zarco’s “evil” power is a figure by the name of Salomé—the dancing woman of the new testament—who, according to Christian mythology, betrays an entire kingdom through seduction, eroticism, and ultimately the beheading of John the Baptist. Salomé, in other words, while evocative of sin, is a name associated with a detestable form of femininity: the

saint-killing *femme fatale*. Altamirano, in his condemnation of Zarco and his men, clearly illustrates that in Xocimacas, nothing is off limits: men act like women, everyone is a pervert, there is no demarcation of a clearly defined masculine hierarchy and the men's sexuality, as a collective, is clearly not the norm. Conversely, the antagonists' crossing into Xocimacas begins to reveal that Zarco's men mean far more to him than his recent "love" interest. When she complains of their behavior towards her, he warns: "cuidado con disgustar a mis compañeros" [be careful not to upset my comrades] (62). Finally, Salomé declares the real value of women at Xocimacas: "pero no sigas con ellas mucho tiempo, hermano, porque no convienen" [don't bother with too much, brother, they're not worth it] (63).

The only time that Manuela seems to be "worth it" amidst the men of Xocimacas is when she becomes a pawn in a power play between the town's supposed leader, Zarco, and his animalistic bandit rival. At the "orgy" Manuela is approached by el Tigre, who eventually forces the unwilling Manuela to dance with him. Since the chapter is called "the orgy," it's easy to conclude that being forced to dance is stand-in for forceful sex. For Manuela, there's no hope in this situation. He immediately begins to paw at her waist; the man is all monster: a cyclops, that "devoured her" with the only eye he had left, bathing her with his brandy soaked breath. The other men tease: "¡Ah, Tigre, no te comas a esa venadita!" [Tiger, don't you eat that little doe] (66).

Even in this case of overt sexual display, el Tigre's sexual dominance has very little to do with desire for Manuela. He decides that he will harass her at all costs just for the chance to kill el Zarco. She, of course, "estaba destinada a ser el botín del vencedor" [was destined to be the winner's booty] (66); he reconfirms her status of object when he tells her: "ves para qué naciste" [you see what you born for] (67). The duel is explicitly about male-male rivalry and the means

by which masculinity is circulated through the “trophy woman.” El Tigre declares of Zarco’s masculinity: “lo ha creído hombre, no es más que un lambrijo” [thought to be a man, he’s nothing more than a runt] (66). Reinforcing the narrative’s loose association with John the Baptist and Salomé, el Tigre informs Manuela that she will bring her Nicolás’s head “para que la comas en barbacoa, y después te morirás tú, pero no te has de quedar riendo de mí!” [so you can eat at a barbecue, and then you will die so as to quell your desire to laugh at me!] (67)

Several critics, like Dabove and Sommer, have attributed Manuela’s fall into madness to the realization that she has chosen the wrong man, or made the wrong political choice. While this is true, in part, the text makes it explicitly clear that Manuela loses her sanity because she is now a defenseless woman against constant sexual threat: “tantos peligros, tantas amenazas, tantos horrores, habían abatido aquella naturaleza débil ...Manuela estaba como idiota y no hacía más que llorar en silencio” [so many dangers, so many threats, so many horrors had killed nature’s weak creature ... Manuela was like an idiot and could do nothing more than mourn in silence] (67). Conversely, while Manuela begins her descent into madness, rather than protect her, El Zarco’s jealousy swells and with it, his “desire” for Manuela. The two antagonists and their emotional turmoil are compared side-by-side. Rather than concern himself with Manuela’s well-being his inner world is consumed by male-rivalry: “El Zarco, preocupado también con mil pensamientos diversos, encolerizado contra el Tigre, celoso de Nicolás, cada vez más enamorado de Manuela, pero contrariado infinitamente por las últimas noticias, y por la necesidad que había de marchar, no sabía qué hacer” [Zarco, worried too with a thousand diverse thoughts, enraged by el Tigre, jealous of Nicolás, increasingly in love with Manuela, but infinitely antagonized by the latest news, the need to flee, did not know what to do] (68). Again, it becomes quite obvious

here that el Zarco's desire for Manuela serves no purpose (he does not wish to protect his love-object), rather, her status as sex object, with the introduction of yet another rival, is augmented.

Rather than reading this as a text whose main concern is the forging of a new national frontier through the heterosexual union of Nicolás and Pilar, it is ultimately perversion, a lack of sexual order and male hierarchy that clearly denounces one "version" of male-centered communities over another. Again, Manuela's fall is that she fails to recognize the perverse before it is too late. Regarding Zarco, she begins to realize: "no era más que un perverso sin entrañas" [a pervert without guts]. Thus it is only through a clearly denounced pervert that the ideal heterosexual pair begins to emerge within Manuela's now distraught psyche.

Moreover, perversion is in direct association with both whiteness and wealth both of which are into question by Altamirano. Perversion (clearly exterior to the ideal community of Yautepec) is in direct contrast to hegemonic masculinity displayed through the characterization of Nicolás via his moral values and willingness to work within the law. After all, he does not kill Zarco; rather, Altamirano tells us that the law will take care of its good citizens. Thus, male rivalry is specifically unique in this text in that it is resolved (through death) only when it is placed within the confines of law and justice via the homosocial bonds between Martin and Nicolás. Nevertheless, towards the end of *El Zarco*, private quarrels are undoubtedly a communal concern; thus, Nicolás is both saved and redeemed through justice through the powerful masculine ideal as it relates to the law, and this, as I will explore further, has very little to do with a romantic union, and everything to do with, once again, the homosocial ties forged through the narrative.

When viewing this novel's depictions of gendered identities, particularly the strategically constructed notion of masculinity as that which functions within the larger socio-political

framework vis-à-vis the formation of national and political identities, *El Zarco* works within a framework that links the notion of the domestic role of the masculine to the larger “public”/citizenry or civic role of the masculine. In other words, domestic relationships are directly transferred to the public sphere. The correlation of love stories, then, serves as a national allegory, yes, but it is the broader implications of male authority, legitimization, and cooperative social organization between men, that ultimately provide the substance of an ideal national front. In turn, this ideal is produced through a unique notion of male honor that is eventually institutionalized via marriage, yet even marriage is not so much centered on the heterosexual union as one might assume.

Like the ceremonious announcement of Iracema’s pregnancy in Alencar’s *Iracema*, in which the dialogue is directly handed over to Poti, his indigenous brother, wherein it appears that the two men are forever linked together through the first Brazilian, rather than Iracema / Martim, so here the ceremonial wedding of Nicolás to Pilar, is a sort of mirror of this scene in multiple ways. And, like Martim, Nicolás is the clear victor, a sort of king within his kingdom. Martim, however, assumes a paternal “founding father” role in the story of Brazil’s colonization. Nicolás’s role, is quite different.

If one takes the above cited “life story” of Nicolás some may recognize its similarity to the biographical background of Benito Juárez, then president of Mexico. The oddity of this text is that an actual Mexican president, Juárez, is also a character, however briefly, in the novel. Martín Sánchez, the vigilante turned lawman, travels directly to Mexico to meet with Juárez in order to obtain the legal authorization to hunt and kill the bandits. Dabove reads this as a means by which the “letrado-warrior” emerges as a figure representing “civilizing ideal of the metropolis,” wherein “it is civil society itself that rises to the task of eliminating the bandits. In

this task, there is an alliance between civil society and state and between center and periphery that is central to the ideology of the novel” (101).

Anyone familiar with the biography of Juárez can easily make a connection between his life and the life of Nicolás as Juárez too, was of indigenous heritage, and an orphan. At the age of 12, Juárez obtained employment as a domestic servant, learned to read and write, and through both intelligence and the social connections he made, eventually went on to study law. In many ways, both the characterization of Nicolás as well as the actual President exemplify what is easily read as a masculine ideal. Nicolás, however, does not assume any sort of elevated “founding father” role, nor does even rise to a level of state leadership like Juárez. The reason is simple: Nicolás is an ideal citizen. As such, he cannot take the law into his own hands. An intermediary between himself and the highest authority (Juárez, in the novel) must interject. This occurs through the figure of Martín Sánchez.

Again, Nicolás’s male honor is largely defined not on his relationship to women, but the many powerful bonds that he has forged with men. Provided that Martín Sánchez has actual physical contact with Juárez, and Sánchez has, in essence, committed himself to protecting not only the town of Yautepec, but specifically, Nicolás; this is the means by which Nicolás’s male honor is yet again, reflected in his well-connectedness. In turn, Nicolás’s marriage to Pilar has very little to do with Pilar. Rather, it is the moment when the metonymic nation-state represented by the town of Yautepec emerges to declare its all-out love for him and to watch the fall of his rival, Zarco. Nicolás, the text tells us, upon seeing the grandiosity of his wedding day, is too humble to fully accept this praise: “no había deseado tanto ruido” [he hadn’t desired so much hype]; nonetheless, a long list of attendees emerge, the first among them, the authorities: “las autoridades, el cura, los vecinos, habían querido demostrar así al estimable obrero y a su bella



esposa el amor con que los veían" [the authorities, the priest, the neighbors, they wanted to demonstrate to the esteemed worker and his beautiful wife the love that they felt for them] (77). This is precisely because the wedding scene is not the marriage of a man and woman, but the town's marriage to reform laws: "la ley de Reforma acababa de establecerse, y en Yautepec, como en todos los pueblos de la República, estaba siendo una novedad. Nicolás, buen ciudadano, ante todo, se había conformado a ella con sincero acatamiento" [the law of Reform had just established itself and in Yautepec, just like all the Republican communities, was becoming a novelty. Nicolás, the good citizen before all, had conformed to the law with sincere compliance] (77). And, once again, just like Iracema's announcement of her birth, the ceremony becomes a symbol of the eternal unity between men, rather than unity between men and women.

The latter point is particularly relevant should one consider how Martín Sánchez and an entire army interrupt the celebration. Soon after, the screams of Manuela announce the reason: el Zarco has been captured and Martín and his men will execute him that day (79). Martín has saved the day, but he has also saved Nicolás, as el Zarco and his men plotted to kill Nicolás and his new bride on the day of their wedding. The wedding bizarrely turns into "an honourous" execution day. Martín announces: "los he matado a casi todos, pero vengo a colgar a los capitanes en este camino; al Zarco aquí, al Tigre lo voy a colgar en Xochimancas" [I've killed almost all of them, but I come to hang the captains on my way through; Zarco here, and I'm going to hang el Tigre in Xochimancas] (79). Being the honorable man that he is, Nicolás begs Martín to spare their lives, not for him, of course, but for the sake of "esta pobre mujer," referring to Manuela. And while there are no audible words exchanged between husband and wife, a lengthy pledge of allegiance between two men seemingly takes their place. Martín declares his love:

usted es mi señor, usted me manda, por usted doy la vida, pídamela usted y es suya, pero no me pida que perdone a ningún bandido y menos a estos dos... Señor, usted sabe quienes son...; asesinos como estos y plagiarios no los hay en toda la tierra. ¡Si no pagan con una vida...! ¡Y lo iban a matar a usted...! ... Señor don Nicolás, siga usted su camino con todos estos señores, y déjeme que yo haga justicia.

[Sir, I am your servant, you command me, for you sir I give my life, ask me for it and it's yours but do not ask me to pardon a bandit especially not these days... Sir, you know who they are.... Assassins, whose likeness has never been seen before in all the land. If they do not pay with their lives... they were going to kill you, sir! ... Don Nicolás, you follow the path with these people, and leave me to impart justice.] (78-79)

And with that, the sexual deviants were dead through the establishment of intimate male bonds that readily rallied themselves around their ideal male model citizen. The masculine hierarchy, though not establishing Nicolás as its leader, has finally found how to best arrange themselves in accordance to their desire for one another: male-male desire, in its united force against its perverted outsiders has finally found its harmonious ideal.

In conclusion, *El Zarco*, again, isn't so much a text that forges the national ideal through the heterosexual union of Pilar and Nicolás; it is a text that enormously concerns itself with a growing fascination of sexual perversion that must be expelled from the national fabric in order for national harmony to establish itself. In many ways, the narrator pathologizes the life of Zarco and his men as that which exists outside the realm of social acceptability through the sometimes mentionable, sometimes unmentionable sick desires (i.e. the men lurk in corners in the scene described as an orgy fulfilling their "needs"—needs that are never specifically described). While the reader cannot discern whether or not this text is blatantly commenting on

the figure of the homosexual, there is no doubt that sexual deviance is *the* marker of gender difference far beyond the male / female binary (that which codes *the difference* between one man and another). At the same time, the novel establishes the male bond of a “different” kind as a requirement for national survival, one that must rely on the female body (via protectionism) in order to fully articulate itself. This is certainly not the same kind of male bond seen in Lizardi’s *El Periquillo Sarniento* (one that clearly rejects the feminine in its quest for the ideal male citizen).

The difference to be seen in these pillars of Mexican national literature with regard to male-male desire is one that can be seen in Octavio Paz’s reading of Mexican nationalism and its relationship to the raped female body which, I argued, begins to formulate itself in the images of La Malinche refashioned in the nineteenth century as the raped conquest by white masculinity. All three approaches to Mexican nationalism are largely figured around the Mexican male citizen. Whereas the first novel openly embraces male-male desire as that which resides at the basis of the imagined community, the second two rely heavily on the female body (specifically the raped or potentially raped) female body, through which it is able to articulate that ideal.

Finally, the text that takes place in the latter half of the nineteenth century, *El Zarco*, clearly relies upon the figure of the male pervert to serve as a contrast to the ideal male citizen. This, of course, would make sense given the rise of the latter half of the nineteenth century’s preoccupation with sexual perversion that will eventually lead to the so-called “birth” of the homosexual. Ironically, as racial configuration within national identity give way to a certain flexibility, another “male other” begins to emerge wherein sexual deviance eventually gives way to sexual difference. This difference is also coded within the context of criminality which is

clearly the case of Altamirano's narrative. This is not only true for *El Zarco*, but can be seen, as I will argue in this next chapter, in the Brazilian context as well.

#### **4.0 (RE)AUTHORIZING THE “INNOCENT” WHITE: SLAVERY, SEXUAL CONTROL, AND THE PERVERT IN GUIMARÃES’S *A ESCRAVA ISAURA***

Published in 1875 and written by Bernardo Guimarães, *A escrava Isaura* is widely considered to be the abolitionist text that exposed popular Brazilian imagination to the unbearable situations of captivity associated with slavery. Historically, Guimarães was considered, along with the names of Joaquim Manuel de Macedo and José de Alencar, a master of the Brazilian novel, and of all his works *A Escrava Isaura* was the most popular. According to Rita Terenzinha Schmit’s essay, “The Nation and Its Other,” the novel has recently been repositioned under a strong postcolonial lens for having created fatalistic characterizations of its black protagonists. By characterizing the enslaved as both humble and obedient, passively awaiting to be freed, this novel, among others, manages to cover up, whiten, and ultimately silence those who were most affected by slavery (2-8).

I will add to Schmit that, in light of Eve Sedgwick’s concept of the homosocial, *A escrava Isaura* should be considered as a text that provides a clear example of “the pervert” as the figure which absorbs the social ills of slavery and thus, in a certain regard, highlights the sexual deviant as an internal threat to national well-being. The sexual deviant must be killed off by the novel’s end (via self-destruction). Leôncio, the landlord of the plantation, assumes the position of sexual deviant while a young, free-thinking aristocrat, Álvaro, assumes the position of the nation’s masculine ideal. Álvaro not only wins the girl, Isaura, but he wins Leôncio’s

property rights (including Isaura). After paying off Leôncio's massive debts, all the slaves, including his love, are set free.

The text works to shift the blame of slavery not to the “good people” of Brazil, but to a figure that may very well be considered a pre-cursor to the “homosexual”: the maniacal, dandified pervert who actively works to destroy the family. Again, I argue that the novel has less to do with love or desire for women and is more concerned with how white men wish to see themselves in relation to slavery. How “different kinds” of men encircle the black female body (which ironically, is a white body) is extremely telling in this narrative as clear masculine hierarchies are rearticulated via these triangulations.

The novel is centered upon Isaura, a young woman educated and refined in the cult of white domesticity: a “good woman,” innocent, sweet, virginal, and child-like. Her physical attributes are inherited from the traditional western images associated with the ideal female body: her face is angelic; she is described as being “like the piano keys” that she adores so much—white with a little bit of black (Guimarães 2). In other words, the slave represented in this work is largely depicted as a white woman, while the black body (male and female) remains racially marked and largely preserves its status as property. Guimarães's characterization of her abandons or invalidates Isaura's blackness by whitening her and pronounces that slavery couldn't have been that bad since it produced such a lovely woman.

The plot line is as equally conventional as the main protagonist's characterization: it narrates the ordeals faced by Isaura, who suffers sexual harassment from a lecherous master, falls in love with a kind white gentleman who wants to marry her, is wickedly persecuted to the point of running away, is recaptured and, finally, after many obstacles, finds happiness with the white gentleman. In short, *A escrava Isaura* might be read as a love story that attempts to reconcile, or

rather conceal, the realities of slavery, the mass-denial of miscegenation, while simultaneously uplifting the white dominant class as the bearer of freedom, goodness, and national self-definition.

Although Isaura possesses little to no agency in her characterization, the narrator ironically introduces her to the reader via her voice. After a lengthy, typically realist, description of the plantation, the weather, and the various animals and buildings found there, we are told of a lovely voice: “uma voz de mulher, voz melodiosa, suave, apaixonada” [a woman’s voice, a melodious voice, soft, passionate] that disturbs the tranquility of the “beautiful” hacienda, “a única voz que quebrava o silêncio da vasta e tranqüila vivenda” [the only voice that broke the silence of the vast and tranquil home] (2). There are several reason why this is of importance. The first is that Guimarães chooses to announce the temporal context of the novel by affiliation with its political context. The opening lines read: “Era nos primeiros anos do reinado do Sr. D. Pedro II” (1) [It was in the first years of Don Pedro II’s reign]. The lines that immediately follow produce a zoom-effect; the setting miniaturizes to that of the municipality, the town, the hacienda, the buildings to be found there, and finally, the vegetation that surrounds all. Several of these descriptions evoke harmony: the “silêncio harmonioso da natureza” [harmonious silence of nature] and later, “[e]ra um edifício de harmoniosas proporções” [it was a building of harmonious proportions] (1-2). Here it is indicated that it is ultimately her voice, and only her voice, that disrupts this notion of harmony: “a única voz que quebrava o silêncio da vasta e tranqüila vivenda” (2). In turn, the effects of the beautiful and harmonious land (and the structures that occupy it) are disrupted in both form and content. The text breaks out of the realist mode to provide the lyrics of Isaura’s song. The content of this song is equally disruptive as its first stanza reveals: “Em terra de maldição, / A vida passo chorando/ Minha triste

condição” [In the land of the damned/ I pass through life crying of/ my sad condition] (2). The land of supposed beauty and harmony is now being referred to as the land of the damned. Furthermore, the first words given to Isaura are reflective of both her passivity and fatalistic embracement of her “sad condition.”

At first glance, one might assume that the condition of which she sings is that of her social status of slave, however, the song quickly reveals that this is not the case; rather, her “triste condição” may have more to do with the impossibility for her to find true love. She sings:

Os meus braços estão presos,  
A ninguém posso abraçar,  
Nem meus lábios, nem meus olhos  
Não podem de amor falar;  
Deume Deus um coração  
Somente para penar.

[My arms are imprisoned,  
I can hug no one,  
my lips, my eyes  
cannot of love speak;  
God gave me a heart  
Only to suffer.]

And later,  
A vida não te pertence,  
Não é teu teu coração. (3)

[Life does not belong to you



Nor is your heart yours.]

Again, the song is reflective of Isaura's passive admittance that her life is not her own, "A vida não te pertence, / Não é teu teu coração" [Life does not belong to you / Your heart is not your heart] which ultimately she attributes to God's will: "Deume Deus um coração/ Somente para penar." Moreover, the descriptive process of the song exhumes a fragmentary presentation of Isaura's body: her arms, her eyes, her lips, and finally, her heart. The narrator then begins to pore over her body with precision, from hands to breasts, commencing with her skin color: "As linhas do perfil desenham-se distintamente entre o ébano da caixa do piano, e as bastas madeixas ainda mais negras do que ele" (2) [the lines of her profile were could be situated between the piano keys and the ebony part that were a deep black], again comparing her to skin color to a piano key: white with a little bit of black. The means by which the text frames Isaura, as a slave, is directly connected to her sexual objectification via the male gaze, even blatantly mentioning her "busto maravilhoso" (3).

Her physical attributes correspond with those of her social upbringing as a young woman educated and refined in the cult of white domesticity. Malvinha, Isaura's mistress, scolds her from complaining in her song by stating, "Entretanto passas aqui uma vida que faria inveja a muita gente livre. Gozas da estima de teus senhores. Deramte uma educação, como não tiveram muitas ricas e ilustres damas que eu conheço" (7) [Overall you have a good life here that would cause many free people to feel jealous. You enjoy the esteem of your senhores. We gave you a good education, like many rich and illustrious women that I know didn't even have].

Should one consider both the narrator's depiction/objectification of Isaura's body and [her] characterization as someone who remains within the cult of white domesticity and thus, white femininity, Guimarães is able to safely place "his slave" as a target for male desire while

not venturing too far from the feminine ideal, as I will argue. Thus, the novel might be read as a struggle to “contain” her purity as well as an attempt to protect the abstract rational contours of her body that threaten to be breached—an allegorical implication towards her symbolic relationship with the nation but, oddly, her relationship to racial others in the text as well.

The female body, as it is presented here, might be thought of as a permeable entity whose contents constantly threaten to “leak out,” or be “obtained” by others. Male characters in turn, must take charge and be in control of that body whereby the good, “solid” or “holistic” attributes of reason associated with one type of masculinity must combat the irrational, out of control, “false control” of the male other. By identifying women as victims, gender norms that enable that victimization are thus reinscribed, and more importantly, allow for a distinction of masculinities to flow through her status of vulnerable and helpless victim. In short, her status as helpless victim is vital to the negotiation of a masculine hierarchy.

In presenting the female slave as a passive victim who “knows her place” (as a slave living in a white world of aristocracy), Guimarães makes it difficult to speak of resistance in the novel. There are numerous occasions wherein Isaura expresses, “que sou eu mais do que uma simples escrava?” [what am I more than a simple slave?] (4). Moreover, the horrors that she faces in captivity have little to do with her slave status but are in direct association with her beauty and her proprietor Leôncio’s inability to control his sexual desires for her: “Enfureceuse com tanta resistência, e deliberou em seu coração perverso vingarse da maneira a mais bárbara e ignóbil, acabrunhandoa de trabalhos e castigos” [Becoming infuriated due to so much resistance, deliberated in his perverse heart in the most barbaric and ignoble way he avenged himself by humiliating her with chores and punishments] (8). Her resistance is not located in challenging her status as slave, but rather, in maintaining her sexual purity as a white woman. Oddly, her

enslavement is not attributed to her race and thus racial discrimination, but displaced onto the figure of the male pervert: she has more laborious tasks because Leôncio is sexually frustrated with her, not because she has black skin.

Conversely, it is the white aristocrat who actively challenges slavery, in this particular case, Isaura's white father, and eventually her white male suitor. Hence, the text renders resistance on the part of the female slave, and indeed on slaves as a whole, invisible. This lack of resistance also upholds what many critics of abolitionist literature are quick to point out: slaves are often presented as fatalistic, childlike, passive victims, and therefore need to be "saved" and thus, assimilated into white culture (e.g. receive moral instruction, etc.). In the case of *A escrava Isaura*, Jerome Branche observes that it is through the introduction of Isaura's "savior," the white millionaire bachelor, Álvaro, that Guimarães places the emancipatory project in the hands of the ruling elite. Álvaro, a liberal with republican leanings, is described as almost socialist. He is also a "passionate abolitionist" who has freed his slaves and created a colony of paid workers on one of his plantations (Guimarães 57). According to Branche, "Álvaro's example of remunerated black labor that does not result in a loss to the planters, and which provides the ex-slaves with white tutelage in the arts of freedom, is presumably the model for republican, postslavery Brazil" (160). The same argument is repeatedly reflected by those protagonists (either through their own dialogue or the narrator who relates the past to the reader), wherein they argue against granting Isaura freedom on the basis that she couldn't possibly function in the world. This inability to function unprotected, however, might also be attributed to her gender, which also positions her as childlike, innocent, and incapable of taking care of herself.

And yet, innocence isn't always so aptly defined when detached from the cult of white domesticity. In the public arena, it is merely assumed that those who are "good" are also innocent. As Branche explains, Guimarães is quick to address the horrors of slavery "without delving into the unsavory details of how slave-grown sugar and coffee made Álvaro's family wealthy in the first place and also enriched the Brazilian empire" (160). Thus, the reader is led to assume that some people are just "naturally" privileged. Such cover-ups may allow us to forge a connection between the treatment of Isaura's (de)racialized body and that of the national body as it is presented by the narrator: "If overlooking the agency of black labor in creating the nation means that blacks are somehow absorbed into the nation body, it makes Guimarães a precursor to the explicit statements of black extinction in Brazil, due to Darwinist evolutionism and Positivism that would be articulated early in the new century" (Branche 160).

Considering Branche's idea, how might Guimarães's depictions of sexuality work to "cleans" the nation, dismissing the evils of slavery as a mere perversion, rather than an inherent reality of slavery, so central to both the creation and maintenance of the colonial state. Branche recognizes the other side of this argument, not as it relates to legitimizing slavery, but as another sort of national "cleansing" historically practiced in the form of extinguishing blackness from the nation all together:

For several Brazilian social scientists, natural selection, sexual selection, and white immigration would make Brazil white in a period of from one hundred to three hundred years. To the degree, then, that Isaura, the daughter of a mulatto woman and a Portuguese father, is white enough to be confused with an Andalusian or a Neapolitan, she can be considered a "perfect Brazilian." The reference does not deny her mixed heritage; it merely underscores the evolutionary premise. For her male admirers, the

mole on her face is a beauty mark. For her female rivals it is a telltale sign of her African forbears. For Guimarães, the mole is a metonymic indication of the (remaining) black spot on the face of the nation. (21)

Branche's observation seems to imply Isaura's body acts, in his words, as "a metonymic indication" of national identity. Though the nation is not explicitly mentioned, it is implicitly linked to the strict societal roles reflected in the dialogue of characters as well as the narrator's commentary regarding who would (or wouldn't) make an ideal match for her according to the potential suitor's physical appearance). For example, the only male slave that is presented as a potential suitor for Isaura, is in fact, her antithesis, Belchior, the gardener: although humble, he is cognitively "lacking." The narrator's introduction of him is handed over to a lengthy description wherein Belchior is depicted as:

um monstrengo afetando formas humanas, um homúnculo em tudo mal construído, de cabeça enorme, tronco raquítico, pernas curtas e arqueadas para fora, cabeludo como um urso, e feio como um mono. Era como um desses truões disformes, que formavam parte indispensável do séquito de um grande rei da Média Idade, para divertimento dele e de seus Cortésões. (16)

[a monstrosity assuming human forms, a homunculus badly constructed in every way, with an enormous head, rickety trunk for his short and hooped legs, as furry as a bear, and ugly as a monkey. He was like one of those deformed hunchbacks that formed part of the entourage of the great kings of the Middle Ages for the amusement of the court].

Branche, while focusing on the whitening projects of the late nineteenth century, reminds readers of the sociological mindset with regard to race. However, as Belchior's description indicates, the late nineteenth century is highly emerged in an obsession with abnormality, and

sexual abnormality is most certainly incorporated into this discursive framework. As I will argue, the text provides a particular obsession with perversion relevant to Foucault's notion of the perverse implantation wherein the sex act is no longer one that concerns itself with reproduction; instead, it is centralized through medical, psychological discourse wherein a series of what Foucault would refer to as sexual heterogeneities emerge, eventually "giving birth" to the homosexual.

"Naturally" Isaura is also disgusted by Belchior's constant professions of love. Leôncio, in turn, employs the threat of marrying her off to Belchior as yet another cruel and unusual punishment for having resisted his own advances. Isaura threatens to commit suicide at the very prospect of marrying one of the only black men represented in the novel. Even Leôncio's advances, at least for Isaura, are not that disgusting.

One might say that within the triangulation of desire presented here, both Leôncio and Belchior's desire for Isaura evokes a racialized model of Sedgwick's original conceptualization precisely because her body is the object within that triangulation. Nevertheless, because Isaura's body is coded as a white body, the very possibility that she might choose Belchior is depicted as an absurdity. Moreover, the black male body, depicted by the narrator, is seen as lacking, or at least it is a degenerate version of the human form. By choosing to represent Belchior in this way, one might conclude that racial rivalry is minimalized. Despite the fact that Belchior may consider himself a contender for Isaura's hand in marriage, interracial homosocial rivalry is quickly dispelled as Belchior retains his subhuman status even when compared to the degenerate, Leôncio. Secondly, it is only Leôncio who has the power to grant Belchior with Isaura's hand in marriage making this triangulated model as extremely imbalanced in terms of racialized

masculinities. Thus, Isaura's oscillation in the triangle is figured closer to Leôncio's position as her proprietor, but also as a white male. In this way, white masculinity still "wins" the girl.

These observations are extremely relevant to the novel's ending as Álvaro manages to "save" Isaura just as Leôncio is about to marry her off as a final form of punishment, to Belchior. Thus, Álvaro not only saves her from her treacherous master, one might conclude that in disrupting the marriage ceremony between Belchior and Isaura, Belchior is further racialized in that he now becomes the losing rival to Álvaro. Again, with Álvaro thrown into the mix, the reader is presented, once again, with a white and a non-white rival who desire the same object. Due to blatant racism, the white man must step in to "save" Isaura from this marriage. In this way both the whitened woman and the black man become pure objects in relation to white hegemonic masculinity. As Todd Reeser points out, often in racialized erotic triangles the white man as competitor against a black man's desire for a white woman, when turned into a threat, "allows the white man to save her from him and to make the black man his rival" (210). Though there isn't any sort of real rivalry between Belchior and the white gentlemen, the rivalry between Álvaro and Leôncio threatens to marry Isaura to Belchior should Leôncio prevail. Conversely, one might think of Belchior as Leôncio's pawn against Álvaro and thus, as Belchior's deformed body an extension of Leôncio "sick" mind and therefore Álvaro must save Isaura from marrying the him.

Insofar as eugenics is concerned, it appears that race isn't the only concern of the text. When the stereotypes of virtue and vice are explicitly pronounced wherein one masculine type is clearly a masculinist ideal, who better to highlight that ideal than a pervert, a man who lacks self-control, and one who pursues his satanic fantasies? Thus, if Guimarães is engaged with eugenics, he most certainly has thought about its sexual implications. The black man is still "a

joke” in the narrative in that his deformities cast him as a foolish half-wit to think that Isaura could possibly return his love. His unrequited desire is, thus, an impossibility; the real threat to white masculinity is the character who must be completely expunged from the nation, the one that has to kill himself at the novel’s end, and that is the giant pervert who constantly threatens “a happy ending.”

Leôncio, the malicious slave proprietor of the narrative, isn’t a bad person because he owns slaves; according to Guimarães, he is a bad person because he is a sexual deviant and is unable to manage his fortunes as a direct result. He is described as an only child, a bad pupil, one who is given over to a bohemian lifestyle in his brief trip to Europe as a young man, never having worked to earn his keep. It was upon his return from Europe that Leôncio “voltou à pátria um perfeito dândi, gentil e elegante como ninguém” [returned to his homeland as a perfect dandy, gentle and elegant as no other] (6).

Leôncio is described as being the only child of a rich and influential governor, the actual proprietor of the hacienda until his unexpected death shortly into the narration. The father is described as “full of diseases” (6). After Leôncio’s marriage to Malvina, the administration of the hacienda is passed on to Leôncio. The narrator foreshadows the impending administrative disaster as he spends several paragraphs describing Leôncio’s irresponsibility as a child, then as a teenager, and later as an adult. Special attention is brought to his friendship with Henrique; both are described as beautiful and elegant: “belos e elegantes mancebos” [beautiful and elegant youths] (5). As a young adult, after dropping out of medical school and pretending to be in law school, Leôncio manages to spend all “da fortuna paterna na satisfação de todos os seus vícios e loucas fantasias” (5) [his paternal inheritance on satisfying his vices and crazy fantasies]. Shortly thereafter, he convinces his father to send him to Europe, Paris to be exact, which the narrator



describes as the site of his engagement with: “um vasto pandemônio do luxo e dos prazeres” [a pandemonium of vast luxury and pleasures] (6). These descriptions are telling when informed of Leôncio’s actions during his prolonged “study” abroad as he was a “frequentador do Jardim Mabile, assim como de todos os cafés e teatros mais em voga, e tomarase um dos mais afamados e elegantes leões dos bulevares” [a frequenter of Jardim Mabile (a French garden) like all of the cafes and theatres most in vogue, he formed part of the most elegant crew on the streets] (6).

In addition, the reader learns that Leôncio is unable to please his wife sexually: “Esta boa e respeitável senhora não tinha sido muito feliz nas relações da vida íntima com seu marido, que, como homem de coração árido e frio, desconhecia as santas e puras delícias da afeição conjugal, e com suas libertinagens e devassidões dilacerava cotidianamente o coração de sua esposa” (7) [This good and respectable woman had not been very happy in the intimate relations with her husband, who, as man of a barren and cold heart, was unaware of the saintly and pure delights of the conjugal affection, and with his libertinism and lewdnesses daily tore his wife’s heart to pieces]. Thus, Leôncio’s “libertinisms” are of a sexual nature.

Furthermore, Leôncio’s abuses as a proprietor of slaves are never outright physical as one might expect; rather, it is his uncontrollable desires for Isaura, persistently referred to as perverse, that may convince the reader that he is inherently malicious. To further my point, there are benevolent characters who are also slave owners but Leôncio, like his father, is a sexual deviant (both are described as “sick”). Thus, the problem with slavery is not the physical control that white men and women exude over their slaves, the novel tells us; it is certain white men, and certain forms of corporal domination, that are “the problems” of slavery. Those problems boil down to one thing: sexuality. Like father, like son, the reader is informed on several occasions:

the fate that awaits Isaura should she remain at the plantation will result in the same actions faced by Isaura's mother vis-à-vis Leôncio's father: sexual abuse.

However, certain white men aren't the only perverted souls of slave society—certain women are too. White women are still considered pure, and, as reflected in the figure of Isaura, white(ned) slave women are also innocent (should they be brought up in the cult of white domesticity, of course). Rather, it is the black female slave who harbors the feminine side of perversion, the black woman who gives herself over to the white man via her own free will. Branche observes: "Isaura's superiority is clearly a function of whiteness, as we see in the pointed contrast with the sexualized mulata Rosa" (160). Rosa is given over to gossip and trickery. It is blatantly stated that she is sleeping with her master, and as a result, she is extremely jealous of Leôncio's fantasies about Isaura. Thus, not only does Rosa invite the sexual relationship between slave and proprietor, she desires it. She wears see-through shirts and flaunts herself regularly in a sexual manner. In short, Rosa is depicted as a wicked woman, as sinful as she is conniving. Any chances that Isaura has in obtaining her own freedom are thwarted by her nemesis, she who clearly functions in contrast to Isaura's characterization.

If Isaura's body is metonymic for the nation, as Branche has suggested (mostly white via a hint of blackness "like piano keys" and/or a small mole on her body), then Isaura's whitened body can only mean one thing: Rosa, as the "purer" version of black femininity as sexual excess, perversion, and sinful sexuality poses a threat to the nation. Black men, in turn, as I will argue, still assume the position of the sub-human and are not even considered as threats to white masculinity. Black women, however, pose a clear threat to white and white(ned) femininity via their relationship with the white male proprietor. This is yet another way in which configurations of gender and race are working in tandem. In short, the narrator informs us through these

representations that ideal femininity is also inherent to racialized femininity. It is primarily for this reason that the novel evolves into an obsession with whether or not Isaura is able to pass within the aristocratic circles of Recife where she seeks refuge when her father rescues her from the plantation.

In turn, if Isaura serves to represent the nation then the message written upon her body is this: Brazil must hide its blackness; it must seek to “pass” in order to overcome alienation. This conceptually serves as an erasure of racialized identity or a threat of misrecognition or misidentification, even a disidentification as a liberating strategy for minority subjects, even if those subjects just so happen to be the majority in terms of their actual population but nonetheless encounter themselves outside of the dominant public sphere. Thus, Isaura’s body becomes culturally coded as a sort of disidentifying subject: a reworking of racial mixture into the folds of white hegemony. Her personal struggles are those of reworking her past into a future that is easily conceived to be her destiny: to become “one of us” and again, this can only be done when both racial and sexual “deformities” are displaced.

This displacement could explain, in part, why the image of her biological mother appears as a sort of primordial memory, a hidden memory of Isaura’s past and of Brazil itself. In turn, it is her white father who is given over to the task of “filling in the gaps” of Isaura’s personal history to those who seek it. Indeed, the white father upholds his responsibility to provide the narrative fillers of Isaura’s forgotten past. He alone is capable of this. Thus, it is the white male who is the only survivor and agent available to narrate the past, but also the bearer of her freedom / future (most certainly reminiscent of *Iracema*). Beyond his role of historian, this older white man (Álvaro will arguably assume his place), Isaura’s father (an older form of white hegemonic masculinity) assumes the responsibility of uplifting a wounded patriarchy.

He is described as a “filho de uma nobre e honrada família de miguelistas, que havia emigrado para o Brasil. Seus pais, vítimas de perseguições políticas, morreram sem ter nada que legar ao filho” [son of a nobleman and honored family of miguelistas,<sup>17</sup> who had emigrated to Brazil. His parents, victims of persecutions politics, had died without having anything to bequeath to their son] (22). Thus, Isaura’s father, though depicted as belonging to the working class, is in fact of a noble status that is mirrored in his mannerisms. As a “good gentleman,” he is hired to manage the Leôncio’s plantation by Leôncio’s father (who is unable to manage it himself, which, in its own right, is significant, as I will argue). It is there that he falls in love with Isaura’s mother, also a mulata. Although he is honored and respected by all, he is forced to leave for sleeping with Isaura’s mother (she is never given a name), with whom he was in love. He, in turn, is filled with bitter resentment and hurt because he can no longer protect his lover and child (hence, his wounded patriarchal status): “Miguel concebeu amargo ressentimento e mágoa profunda, não tanto por si, como por amor das duas infelizes criaturas, que não podia proteger contra a sanha de um senhor perverso e brutal. Mas forçoso lhe foi resignarse” [Miguel was filled with the bitter taste of resentment and was deeply hurt, not because of what happened, but for loving the two unhappy creatures, whom he could not protect against the wrath of a perverse and brutal man. But forcefully, he had to resign himself from it] (22).

Several things have happened here. First, in many ways, Isaura’s father, Miguel, is metonymic of Brazil’s “wounded” past that is still able to assume the position of “innocent

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<sup>17</sup>A Miguelista is a political affiliation in reference to those who supported King Miguel I of Portugal who was exiled. The name is also in reference to those who supported Absolutism and/or the traditional values of a conservative monarchy based on Roman Catholic values.

whiteness.” He, or rather his family, is politically wronged during colonial times, which allows him to remain “noble” yet “wrongfully” poor. He, like the young Álvaro, serves to contrast Leôncio’s father (a perversion of whiteness), who, like his son, is not “man enough” to manage his own estate. Thus, both Leôncio’s and his father’s wealth (as well as Isaura’s ability to have a “good white” upbringing) are a direct result the destined ability of “innocent whiteness” to be wealthy. In this way, the money gained from the exploits of slave labor is not attributed to that labor, but to the “good” white’s innate and noble ability to secure finances.

Secondly, Miguel’s class status as “poor white” may be that which promotes the acceptability of his sexual relationship with Isaura’s mother (also distanced from blackness via her mulata status). As a victim of colonialist politics (again, he is “wrongfully” poor), this version of whiteness has no other choice but to temporarily retreat from its enemy, the “bad” whites. Hence, the victim of both colonialism and perverted whiteness is not the black slave (the female black slave is an accomplice to the horrors of slavery, according to the novel); it is a wounded white past that must be reclaimed. Miguel’s status as a respectable gentleman rests and is symbolically reignited through his relationship to his daughter: his last hope at restoring the sort of protection necessary to regain a damaged masculinity not based on his love for her, but rather his inability to prevail against a rival as her rightful proprietor, her father.

Nonetheless, Isaura is not raised by her biological father. Rather, she is depicted as being the adopted daughter of her white mistress. This leads one to ask: what is the difference between adoption and assimilation as the two are presented in conjuncture within this narrative? She is never said to be her mistress’s daughter; rather, she is “like a daughter” which means that Isaura is only part of the family via an extension. Furthermore, her cultural ties to blackness, as represented in the figure of her biological mother, are dispelled from the narrative. Not only are

they dead like her mother, but they are also forgotten. They remain in a past that is forbidden to reemerge in the future. Her white father, in turn, in the fact that he is still alive, is key to understanding how Isaura's characterization fits into the heteronormative mold of the nuclear family. If her mistress was her adoptive mother, that that would ultimately make her proprietor her adoptive father. Therefore, a "true" biological and unsurprisingly white father must "re-claim" her in order that her origins reiterate whiteness and all that it symbolically embodies here. In short, Isaura's cultural mother is white, while her biological mother (and only living blood relative) is also white. Thus, the fusion of biology and culture practically erases the "tainted" African blood that could threaten Isaura's social credibility. Jerome Branche aptly points out, "[t]aking into consideration her reiterated submissiveness and lack of rebelliousness as a slave, one is given to suppose that as a free woman with the shackles gone, she would indeed embody the perfect model of republican womanhood; competent in the domestic sphere, yet acquiescent in relation to the patriarchal order" (161).

But Isaura's shackles aren't entirely gone. Rather, some within the social spheres of Recife to which she and her father eventually flee begin to notice that Isaura is, indeed, "out of place." Branche, while observing that many nineteenth-century slave narratives generally served as a "reinscription of racial pedigree," has remarked that the criollo imagination in its "pronationalist attempt to give voice to the laboring slave bodies" often engaged in strict taxonomies of bodily discourse. This gesture, he argues, while providing a possibility for black agency in accordance with "the nineteenth-century ethos of emancipation, independence, and postslavery polity" simultaneously serves to mask another serious problem by "repressing of the (darker) slave masses who might emerge as the protagonist of any real project for social change" (115). Thus, the embracing of *mulatez*, while providing a new opportunity for agency,

simultaneously reinserts the colonial structures that regards blackness as both dangerous and inferior.

I would add that the sexual identities depicted in the narrative emerge out of a world of politics far beyond a world of love. That is to say, it is arguable that sexual identities are both produced out of colonial matrices, and that there is a sort of collision in the ideal depiction of national identity as well as an idealized sexual identity that emerges out of distinct histories, involving national (and perhaps even personal) fantasies. One version of whiteness has permissible access of to Isaura's body, while another does not, and this is clearly attributed to a politicized mismanagement of "affairs." Therefore, any attempt to reconcile the nation could be conceived, in part, as a way of reconciling sexual configurations that may threaten national ideals as depicted by the bourgeoisie. The romantic narrative, in its conventional attempts to consolidate sex and politics, does so under the guise of heteronormativity as it relates to both cultural identity and the (re)production of sexual desires. In other words, tropes of sexuality figure into the tropes of citizenship, law, and ultimately national discourse: "decent" sexuality is attributed to the law-abiding citizen, whereas indecency is attributed to those who are to blame for the nation's political ills. For example, the sort of familial exile and political repercussions of "discovering" Isaura's blackness may be a way of negotiating patriarchal pride, and a feeling of "alienation" from larger societal ideals which is able to be reconciled by the narrative's end. This exile is as true for Isaura's reality as it is for her father's who was also forced to flee the plantation for different reasons.

However, what I find to be most interesting are the ways in which both the white female and black female bodies are employed to legitimize racial supremacy and a hierarchy of masculinity in a similar gesture. In other words, they serve to idealize and promote white

women as a symbol of white supremacy, moral authority, and sexual purity, which, of course, is not surprising. What is intriguing, however, is the ways in which one can easily see how racial and cultural hegemony may be reinforced vis-à-vis heteronormativity, that is, in the relationship between male and female as it is perceived to be the social norm despite the fact that racial miscegenation is still being negotiated there. In this context, the logics of whitening the female body and the erasure of Isaura's personal cultural heritage in relation to blackness reveals that she must aspire to full assimilation if she is to marry a respectable male counterpart. In turn, because Álvaro is already endowed with certain national ideals of class, gender, race, and morality, the heterosexual union achieved by these two protagonists only requires that one of them must somehow integrate their identity to achieve this unity. Thus, if the "happy ending" of this love story is equated to producing national unity, then the feminine as well as blackness are not complements to white male subjectivity, they are further consumed by it. In other words, the (de)racialized female body provides the raw material for fashioning national ideals that undeniably value white ethnicity as a means to national self-definition and communal recognition. While the heterosexual union may enable the collective forgetfulness required to give birth to a cohesiveness surrounding romance and nation-building, that heterosexual union can only be defined as an ideal through perversion (the white "other") and the positioning of racialized others against it. Thus, in forging new identity constructions through marriage, national stability and unification are achieved on this fictional plane. Marriage is the means through which racial differences are fully absorbed or neutralized in relation to whiteness, yes, but the heterosexual union presented here is far more complicated than this.

If one looks to patriarchal logistics (e.g. protecting women, demonstrating women's purity or impurity, competing for females, etc.) as it is presented here, again, it has far more to



do with the rivalry and the reproduction of white masculinity through the enslaved female body where blackness, bizarrely, cannot exist beyond a small speck. Moreover, certain types of masculinity are defined not only by their race, but their relationship to particular (in many cases racialized) female (and male, in the case of Belchior) bodies. It might be said that the plot, although it ends in marriage, is most certainly a means of resolving male-male rivalry than a consolidation of two distinct male/female counterparts. Rather, the novel's end is a means of resolving the white wounded patriarchy, who, the novel bizarrely argues, is a victim of the slave proprietor. By now, my reader should understand that this trope of victimization must play itself out through the male-male rivalry that is cast through the female body and again, this is articulated via the threat of rape as the sole element that moves the plot forward. For instance, even after Isaura is rescued by her biological father, should she be "found out" she would ultimately be turned over to the lustful hands of Leôncio.

Because the threat of rape is that which drives the plot forward, any analysis of this work that questions the relationship between gender and sexuality must again deal with the rhetoric of sexual violence or "reading rape" as Sabine Sielke has labeled it. Following Sielke's analysis of this topic, I'd like to show how this particular text participates in something that she calls "the othering of sexuality," which is similar to the way in which the threat of rape was employed in Altamirano's *El Zarco* yet distinct from the rape of La Malnche.

What these narratives all have in common is the most basic function of the rhetoric of rape that positions the passive female body (victimization) against the "bad men" (the penetrative force that must be stopped by the "good men"). Sielke's readings of rape narratives do two things that are informative for my reading of *A escrava Isaura*. First, she highlights how "rape narratives are overdetermined by a distinct history of racial conflict and a discourse on race

that itself tends to overdetermine issues of class.” Secondly, she extends this question to ask how “distinct” rape narratives are informative in their relationship to a “distinct history of racial conflict” (3). With her question in mind, I would like to ask how the rhetoric of rape is functioning within the specific socio-historical configurations of race and gender as they are depicted by Guimarães’s narrative.

To state the obvious, Guimarães chooses to depict the trials and tribulation of a female slave, which in its own right is extremely relevant. Isaura is clearly a victim, though interestingly not because she is a slave but because she is met with unwanted sexual advances. In this case, the threat of rape not only reinforces the gender norm that equates femininity with passivity and, as a result, victimization, the (de)racialized codings of Isaura equate her sexuality with that of a white woman’s sexuality and thus, as a potentially raped white woman. The reader is never made aware that other slaves held captive by Leôncio are sexually threatened by him. Rather, as I have discussed before, with the case of Rosa (the black female slave), they are complacent participants willing to fulfill their master’s sexual needs as a means of obtaining certain favors or advancements. Take the passage below as an example:

Rosa havia sido de há muito amásia de Leôncio, para quem fora fácil conquista, que não lhe custou nem rogos nem ameaças. Desde que, porém, inclinouse a Isaura, Rosa ficou inteiramente abandonada e esquecida. A gentil mulatinha sentiuse cruelmente ferida em seu coração com esse desdém, e como era maligna e vingativa, não podendo vingarse de seu senhor, jurou descarregar todo o peso de seu rancor sobre a pessoa de sua infeliz rival [Rosa had often been Leôncio’s lover, for whom she was an easy conquest who did not cost him pleas or threats. Ever since he was inclined to Isaura, however, Rosa was entirely abandoned and forgotten. The gentle mulatinha felt cruelly wounded in her heart

and with disdain, since she was malignant and vengeful, and unable to avenge herself because of her master, swore to unload all of the weight of her rancor upon her unfortunate rival]. (29)

Moreover, Guimarães would lead his reader to believe that white women are also innocent (and unaware) of the maltreatment of enslaved women. In fact, the narrator tells us that Isaura “[p]referia antes morrer como sua mãe, vítima das mais cruéis sevícias” [preferred to die like her mother, victim of the cruelest of maltreatments] (15) rather than tell Malvinha about the latter's husband's sexual advances. Thus, in terms of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the colonizer, or in this case, proprietor and slave, the former is immediately thrust into the position of the masculine/dominant while the latter, the colonized/enslaved, symbolically assumes a submissive/passive status that is fatalistic in her attitude towards her master's sexual behavior. She is even willing to sacrifice herself to “save” the white woman from the realization that her husband is a rapist. Furthermore, rape isn't depicted as a social reality but as a perversion of one man, and this is quite significant. All other sexual encounters between white men and black women (as is the case with Isaura's biological parents) are based on loving relationships.

Not surprisingly, underlying the power dynamics within the rhetoric of rape, one often uncovers the female body as it is literally positioned against the body of an O/other. How Leôncio's masculinity becomes “othered” is an interesting question. There are two ways in which this functions. For one, his masculinity is contrasted with that of Álvaro's, as well as with that of Isaura's father. Both of these men, those who essentially “win” Isaura in the end are of noble status. Leôncio seems to lose his status as a gentleman via his interactions with the bohemian lifestyle in Europe. Again, he is called a “dandy” and is given over to idleness and

vice, and on several occasions he is depicted as a sexual deviant. In this way, sexual deviancy gives way to sexual difference, and by extension, as I argue, gender difference.

Taking these observations into account, one might conclude that Guimarães is employing rape as a rhetorical function not to denounce violence against women, specifically against enslaved women, but rather as a means to expressing power dynamics occurring between male protagonists. As Sielke proposes, it is “to recontextualize and challenge readings of rape, paying close attention to the relation between rape and representation, to an economy wherein “rape and its meaning,” as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick trenchantly puts it, “circulate in precisely opposite directions” (5; 10). Isaura is clearly a passive sexual object from the beginning of the narrative: her body is not hers, she sings, whilst the narrator pores over her voluptuous breasts. Thus, the novel’s plot unfolds as a means of determining who gets to claim her body and why. This determination has everything to do with the sexual distribution of power as it lies outside of the objectified female body: who can control his sexuality and who cannot will become informative of a clear hierarchy of masculinity that will extend itself far beyond the realms of sexuality.

This contrast of sexuality is played out via the main rivalry as it occurs between Isaura’s eventual fiancé, Álvaro, and Leôncio. Leôncio is easily recognizable as a hypersexualized male who is seemingly out of control of his own sexual desires and comes to represent a sexual threat to the female protagonist, and more generally, to society at large. As he constantly threatens to rape the young Isaura, both his masculinity and sexuality are informed by his obsession with making Isaura his concubine; thus, he is unable to manage his social and economic life as a direct result of his lack of sexual control (and that lack of control informs his masculinity—

“lack” being the key word here). In consequence, he accumulates massive amounts of debt through his vice of gambling and the mismanagement of his inherited fortune.

By contrast, Isaura is eventually saved by Álvaro, a free-thinking aristocrat and millionaire who not only wins Isaura’s hand in marriage at the end of the novel, but also manages to acquire Leôncio’s property rights, chattel, and goods (including Isaura whom he frees) by paying off his massive debt. At the novel’s end, Leôncio, realizing his defeat, will kill himself (an act of self-destruction). The message, then, becomes quite clear: not only is Leôncio a sexual deviant due to his hypersexualization; he has failed in his masculinity altogether, in that his behaviors threaten social stability, given his inability to manage his fortune, his property, and his penis. Thus, Leôncio becomes the model man of excess and when subjected to the norms of hegemonic masculinity, specifically those inherent to the characterization of Álvaro (who serves to contrast with his lack of ability), he is the clear loser: Álvaro is in complete control of both his sexuality as well as his fortunes. This contrast may explain why Leôncio must eventually abolish himself, as otherwise Álvaro would be working outside of the law that he may symbolically represent.

In essence, masculinity and alterity become a relationship between bodies, and this is played out through the rhetoric of rape. The narrative unfolds by informing the reader who can better manage their own body and, by extension, become a master of one’s own sexual desires. Of course, this is easily translatable in this specific context to a mastery of one’s ability to control other things as well: vices, finances, and even the economic substructure in miniature of slave-society as a whole, and perhaps, even more broadly, of the nation, a polis influence by

liberal ideologies.<sup>18</sup> Thus, a specific construction of sexuality might be determined by other systems of power as well, and vice versa. How it is employed within a given context both internal and external to the text should always be taken into consideration, specifically how or why the discourse of rape “claims” a powerful hold on the female body in surprising ways. The difficulty of understanding sexual violence in this narrative is that rape is a discursive construct that is employed to regulate other social categories such as race, class, and even political ideology. It might even be said that the “rhetoric of rape” or the “movement against sexual violence” reinforce the female body’s status of property or, following Rubin, an object to be exchanged.

Furthermore, the novel as a whole does not seem to unveil racist assumptions of white superiority and black sub-humanity, but rather it employs these configurations as a means to define certain characters in relation to one another. In turn, these social configurations differ radically in presentation, representation, and treatment of the intersections of collective social categories such as race, class and, ultimately, nationality. These differences are best understood by emphasizing the fiction of power as it is mapped out on the territorialized female body, which I will explain in the following section.

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<sup>18</sup> Roberto Schwartz famously argued in *Misplaced Ideas* (through a variety of essays) that slave-owning Brazil confronted a persistent friction in its attempts to embrace liberal ideas that directly contradicted the Brazilian reality of the nineteenth century, much of which had to do with ideologies based on the free market whereas the Brazilian market was highly dependent on forced labor.

#### **4.1 PERFORMING TERROR: (EN)GENDERING THE FICTION OF POWER**

“Terror” and “territory”—how can one understand these terms in their connection to one another and to the fraternal bonds that establish national belonging? How should one read the literary representation of the violent abuses against the material body by which they may attempt to control and/or possess another human being through corporeal violence? The “taking” of control over another’s body, when politicized within a national imaginary, can unfold in multiple directions: it can be used as a means to legitimize other forms of violence by means of defense or retaliation, or it may symbolize a fictionalized superiority over weakness. In this text, “the fictions of whiteness,” beyond a doubt, are deeply invested in the “properties” of the material body whereby several convoluted themes are “embodied” by this idea. Each of these themes is informed by fictionalized accounts of power dynamics in relation to the female body as “territory.” Rather than being a narrative that concerns itself with the power dynamics of slavery—the illegitimate control of one body over another that is based on the fictions of power inherent to racism (i.e. whiteness is naturally superior thus legitimizing its power over the black body)—, this novel centers itself on another form of corporeal control: rape. By shifting the performance of terror as it is represented in this novel away from the horrors of slavery to that of the performance of terror inherent in rape, the narrative is able to reestablish the fiction of whiteness as the “appropriate” proprietor of the national body (figured as female). Again, in this way, the novel is less about slavery, and more of a fictionalized (re)vision of whiteness (as masculinity) as the best “body” to remain in control of “other” bodies.

First of all, in developing an understanding between the relationship between the fiction of power and property, I first contend with the fiction that whiteness is inscribed on the body. Whiteness, in its fiction, becomes a marker of identity that attempts to distinguish white from

non-white. While this idea may seem unproblematic for some, the means by which whiteness is able to distinguish itself is already based upon taxonomic categories of bodily discourse that invented white and non-white in the first place. As is the case within *A escrava Isaura*, a problem arises when there is no “clear definition” of whiteness, and by that I mean, rather than being a novel about an Afro-Brazilian slave, this is a narrative that seeks to both liberate (from its own cruelties) and redefine whiteness. Blackness, in turn, is meant to be absorbed into the white body as I have previously argued. One cannot employ taxonomic categories of bodily discourse to define the fiction of whiteness here, for it is largely a part of that fiction. Perhaps, then, one must seek out another meaning for the idea that “whiteness is invested in the properties of the material body,” in that these “properties” cannot be conceptualized as that which is visually found on the human body. Rather, it might be helpful to think of the word “property” as a word with clear economic and structural implications.

As David R. Roediger informs “When the founders used the wonderful phrase, ‘the pursuit of happiness,’ political theorists tell us that they must have had in mind the pursuit of property” (581). He is largely speaking about race in the contextualization of the United States; however, I believe that parts of his argument are certainly applicable to this so-called “Brazilian Abolitionist” text. Roediger contends that this idea—“the pursuit of happiness”—not only hinges on the vocabulary of Lockean political philosophy, “but also on the ways in which both property and happiness found meaning in their relationship to whiteness and white privilege.” This idea, though convoluted with the thoughts of the old white men still very much alive in our history books of today, is not so difficult to prove. Obviously, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” were destined for those who were... well, free: “From Edmund Morgan to the recent work of the political philosopher Charles Mills, it has been clear that ideas of freedom for the



mass of white males developed hard by and against notions and practices ensuring that those not white could not pursue happiness effectively in political, social, and economic realms” (581-82). This of course was as true for interpersonal relationships as it was, and all too often still is, as it was/is for collective (ethnic, national and global) relations. I am referring to the idea that non-white once equated to the non- or subhuman, and the postcolonial affirmation that these historical structures affect power relations in our contemporary time.

Roediger’s argument draws closely on the work of Cheryl Harris’s article, “Whiteness as Property,” and Saidiya Hartman’s “Scenes of Subjection,” in which these authors explore the complex relationship between whiteness, as an aspect of identity, but also as a property interest. Whereas Harris’s interests lie in the legal and historical observations concerning property, whiteness, and enjoyment, Hartman’s work would fall into the realm of cultural studies; the two undoubtedly form a “connective tissue.” Where Harris contends that those categorized as white enjoyed the “right to use and enjoy their racial position” (Harris, as qtd. in Roediger, 582), Hartman connects the ideas of property and enjoyment to representation, specifically, blackface minstrelsy and melodrama. She writes:

The punitive pleasures yielded through figurative possession of blackness cannot be disentangled from the bodily politics of chattel slavery. The terror of pleasure—that violence that undergirded the comic moment in minstrelsy—and the pleasure of terror—the force of evil that propelled the plot of melodrama and fascinated the spectator--filtrated the coffle, the auction block, the popular stage, and plantation amusements in a scandalous equality. (Hartman qtd. in Roediger 583)

What all three of these authors afford us is this abstract notion that part of the “fiction of whiteness” involves countless other meta-fictional attributes deeply entwined within a rather

convoluted notion of “representation”—whether that be legal, artistic/cultural, or even “self-evident” forms of representation. Thus, if there is a “property” that defines this fiction, it must be found in the ways in which those who define themselves as white seek (and have sought) to represent this conceived identity to the exterior world and to themselves.

Perhaps the most violent coupling of “whiteness and property” is the idea inherent in slavery: that one person can possess another as his or her property. While this was “legitimized” in various forms, I am predominately interested in addressing the way in which, “whiteness” is “invested in” the black body, not so much in its obvious economical dependence on the slave body as a means to producing material wealth, rather, the means by which the black body is essentially employed as a means to legitimize both racial supremacy and a hegemonic social order, particularly through the spectacle of violence. Thus, I might conclude by asking what racial violence may seek to “represent.”

Returning to Hartman’s idea that the “figurative possession of blackness” as seen in the dramatic genre of the minstrel show “cannot be disentangled from the bodily politics of chattel slavery,” one might conclude that chattel slavery cannot be disentangled from a dramatic production/performance either. Of course I am not implying the absurd idea that slavery was somehow fiction, but rather, that it involved “the conversion of real pain into power,” returning to this notion of a fictional conversion of power that was inherent to the real, embodied experience of slavery: Given the fact that “the fiction of whiteness” was somehow embedded in the idea that those categorized as white enjoyed the “right to use and enjoy their racial position” as Harris has stated, and the “pursuit of property,” even in the form of fellow human beings, as Roediger’s argument brings forth, perhaps I have encountered one of the biggest insights as to how one may begin to reformulate the concept of homosociality as it functions in this text.

I would argue that *A escrava Isaura*, as a narrative whole, is very deeply entrenched in the fiction of whiteness beyond the obvious: Isaura, “the slave,” is quite white. I wonder if the “figurative possession of blackness,” and the assumption that this narrative operates against it, is predominately false. Rather, through the gendered (and very sexualized) hierarchies that I pointed out, the fictionalized proprietary needs of “white power” over blackness have merely been transferred onto the (whitened) female body. In this way, “whiteness” in its ideal form (Álvaro) is able to restructure itself by producing hierarchies of whiteness through sexual perversion and hyper-masculinity of both white and black men—Leôncio and Belchor, respectively.

Part of my attention, then, is paid to the rhetorical function of rape as it relates to victimization (and the passivity often associated with it), or again, as Sabine Sielke proposes “to recontextualize and challenge readings of rape, paying close attention to the relation between rape and representation, to an economy wherein” (4) citing Sedgwick *‘rape and its meaning, circulate in precisely opposite directions* (10). I spoke to this point before, but I believe it should be reemphasized here. One of the components of rape, be it a fictional account or a lived experience, is what I would like to refer to as “the hijacking of the female body.” There is no doubt, however misunderstood or under-examined, that the act of rape hosts a plethora of complex relations between the realms of the individual and the social. The example of Mexico’s La Malinche in Chapter 3 hopefully made this point. Inherent to the discourse of victimization, specifically regarding rape, but also operative within other forms of “victimization,” is the masculinist discourse of protection which, in the case of this narrative, operates through the millionaire aristocrat. Judith Butler offers a particularly convincing example of this through her analysis of Spivak’s “A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing

Present,” in which Spivak addresses the phenomenon of “white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men” (Spivak, 303 as qtd. in Butler *Precarious Life* 41). Butler offers the specific example of the Bush administration’s “sudden feminist conversion” which “retroactively transformed the liberation of women into a rationale for its military actions against Afghanistan.” This, Butler maintains, can be a primary example of what Spivak has described as “the culturally imperialist exploitation of feminism” (Butler, *Precarious Life* 41).

Of course, within the literary example of *A escrava Isaura*, among others, I can’t exactly refer to it as the hijacking of feminism, since “feminism” certainly didn’t exist, at least not in our contemporary definition of feminism. Yet this narrative exhibits a mode of protectionism, wherein protector and protected (whether real or imagined) constitute a gendered bond in relation to a perceived (and yes, often imagined) “enemy” or “threat.” One could, however, consider this a sort of hijacking of abolitionism, and by that, I mean that here the supposed stance against slavery is being employed as a means to reestablish the fiction of whiteness as the rightful “owner” of property and “controller” of national affairs, including the redistribution of race. One can clearly see how race is redistributed: by absorbing blackness into whiteness, while casting the “darker” side of race as both deformity and perversion. Paradoxically, real violence, then, is often made legitimate through imagined violence—gender violence, sexualized gender violence. Homophobia (and in this case, what I would call a precursor to homophobia in the text’s focus on sexual difference) is bizarrely similar to this phenomenon wherein a perceived threat often times begets a violent (re)action both within the realms of the individual but also in individual collectivities—the nation, sometimes, being one of them.

Within the pages of *A escrava Isaura*, it is an “enlightened” white man who saves whitened slave woman from “other” white men; yet again, black men are still seen as subhuman

and therefore aren't even taken into consideration as a potential "match" for such a lovely woman. One of the questions one might ask: how might a protectionist discourse function through the female body as it relates to a national embodiment? Secondly, how does this function if femininity (and even perversion) is "displaced" on the male body, as was the case with El Zarco or Leôncio when they are defined as a particular kind of rival to masculinity? And finally, what are the relationships between these two configurations wherein a particular "enemy" is exposed by placing the objectified body against the body of "the pervert," "the effeminate male," or the "racialized other"? Is this the fundamental thread through which homophobia (and/or "heterosexual panic") and misogyny truly function together to support the racial and class hierarchies at the heart of national identity? What happens when rhetoric of rape is used not with the female body as its centerpiece, but with the male body placed upon the allegorical table that links sexual violence to the (de)legitimization of certain identities? The next chapter will hopefully provide some answers.

## 5.0 DIGNIFIED BUT DEAD: NATIONAL (DIS)EMBODIMENT AND MALE-ON-MALE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ECHEVERRÍA'S "EL MATADERO"

'*Carne*': beef, meat, skin, flesh—the word in Spanish hosts all of these meanings. To fully understand the symbolic implications Esteban Echeverría's short story, "El matadero" ("The Slaughteryard" in English),<sup>19</sup> one must constantly bear in mind the semiotic relationship between meat and flesh, skin and sex, be it a referent to the material body of humans, animals, or both. In a narrative that reaches its climax via the threat of male-male rape wherein a politically charged type of masculinity is literally laid out on the table to be sexually "consumed" by a mob of political fanatics, perhaps one should view this word, 'carne,' as the crossroads through which the production of meaning between man/animal is fully fleshed out. Despite the rape scene's reputation for being the critical focal point of many, I hold that the narrative, as a whole, is more about the relationship between power and consumption, the battle between body and mind, social control and the expression of individuality. The *costumbrista* sketch-like qualities of the narrative carry these themes forward and thus guide the reader to the final scene of sexual violence, which cannot be understood without them.

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<sup>19</sup> All English translations of "El matadero" in this chapter should be attributed to Norman Thomas di Giovanni and Susan Ashe's *The Slaughteryard* (see bibliography). Translations of literary criticism in the Spanish language are mine.

Like the narrative convention of sexual violence that positions the material body against its aggressor as a means of emphasizing the dynamics of dominance and submission, oppressive control or colonization / free will or autonomy, etc., the narrative's representation of the regulatory control of meat (during Lent) by means of both religious and state institutions does precisely the same. The semantic relationship between 'body' and 'meat' are conflated when, for instance, the overtly sarcastic narrator unveils a series of questions meant to expose both the hypocrisy and oppressive nature of the Church/State apparatus during a "shortage" of meat: Who is and who is not permitted to consume meat? Who gets the best and the most meat? Who, in their quest for meat, is left crawling through the muddy, blood-filled streets amidst piss and shit to fight with dogs and seagulls for mere morsels? As it is positioned here against the oppressive gluttony of elitist leaders and other members of society, the abject hunger of the masses becomes the center of attention, orbiting through the relationship between body and consumption. And because "the body" is by no means genderless, sexless, or deracialized, any insight as to how it is utilized as a thematic element is pivotal to an in-depth reading of the narrative's final scene wherein gender and sexuality are invoked in ways that surely need to be further "fleshed out" before they can be understood.

From the opening paragraph, the first act of Echeverría's narrator is to propel the reader into the blurry figurings of this single word, 'carne': sustenance, skin, sex, and sin. The story begins, in the narrator's own words, as a brief historical account of the events that took place in Argentina at the end of the 1830s during Lent. Because of the supposed shortage of meat the Church "ordena vigilia y abstinencia a los estómagos de los fieles" [ordains fasting and abstinence for the stomachs of the faithful] (Echeverría; Giovanni). The author's use of the word 'abstinencia' is particularly alluring when one considers the Church's reasoning: "a causa de que

la carne es pecaminosa, y, como dice el proverbio, busca a la carne” [on the grounds that the flesh is sinful and, according to the proverb, flesh seeks flesh.] The proverb alluded to here might be one of many, but most likely stems from Galatians 5:17, which reads: “For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.” “Flesh,” in that it is opposite of the “Spirit,” produces the basic hierarchy of those who can and those who cannot control “earthly” desires. Similarly, Galatians 5:19 reads: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery.” Of course, the ‘abstinence’ from ‘carne’ has a double meaning: abstinence from meat but also, implicitly, an abstinence from sex. It also alludes to self-sacrifice, maintaining corporal “purity,” and thwarting individual desire in exchange for handing one’s self over to the much larger “Spirit.” Provided that this text is overtly political in nature and is easily read as a blatant critique of Argentina’s Federalist nationalism during Juan Manuel de Rosas’s infamous regime, I ask how the national imaginary textually operates in relation to corporal “purity,” abstinence, and the so-called “powers of the flesh.”

The biblical didacticism of “The Flesh vs. The Spirit” can be thought of as a battle of many sorts: of good vs. evil, god vs. the devil and of obedience vs. free will. Ultimately though, it can be loosely summarized as the internal battle or inward conflict of the body vs the mind / spirit. Thus, abstaining from meat is not only a battle between sin and evil; it is also, Echeverría tells us “una especie de guerra intestina entre los estómagos y las conciencias” [a kind of intestinal struggle between stomachs and consciences.] This so-called intestinal war also embodies the nation. This anthropomorphic gesture—the battle between the body and the mind—extends well beyond the confines of the material body to expose the “head” of State’s struggle to control the inner workings of the nation. By representing the people of Buenos Aires



as a mob-like entity controlled by the “head” of state (e.g. Rosas), the masses of Argentina bear a stark resemblance to the festering, gastronomical muck of the body, and in this case, the body politic. The masses become a sort of semi-human apparatus that is controlled, yet oddly forms a part of the overall apparatus of control over its subjects: “the head” cannot survive without the “intestinal workings” that feeds it.

The ways in which the discursive powers of the Church / State apparatus control public consumption (be it meat or propaganda) is linked to how they subjugate bodies through regulatory control. It is also the means through which Echeverría is easily able to expose the hypocrisy and injustice that has befallen Argentina’s political scene. Echeverría’s concerns against governmental regulation were more than justifiable should one consider that the very narrative, “El matadero,” could not be published in Argentina during its time. Should the masses be permitted to consume its words upon its completion, Echeverría surely would have been slaughtered.

Written in exile sometime during 1838-1840, “El matadero” would not be published until 1871, long after the Echeverría’s death in 1851. Like another of Argentina’s well-known texts of the era, eventual Argentine president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* (1845), “El matadero” depicts the clash between “civilization and barbarism”—a theme that, again, is symbolically concentrated on the human / animal non-distinction of the word ‘carne.’ One might think of this text as sort of satirical sketch combined with political allegory in order depict the very real, terrifying, cruel and disastrous “Federalist” regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas and his infamous security agency, the Mazorca.

Additionally, though its publication was likely halted for its blatant critique of Rosas’s regime, there are other reasons why it might not have been perceived as “suitable” for the times.

According to Adrián Melo's *Historia de la literatura argentina* (2013) it is in Argentine literature where "aparece por primera vez una imagen de sexo anal entre hombres como metáfora de la violencia, del salvajismo y el terrorismo político" [for the first time there appears the image of anal sex between men as a metaphor of violence, savagery, and political terrorism]. Melo refers to it as "anal sex between men," others have called it "torture," "somasochism," "homoeroticism," and oddly, very few have called it "rape" (perhaps an indication of how our own times views both masculinity and sexuality). Regardless of how or what one decides to name it (I would argue that all the above-mentioned assumptions are correct), the scene wherein a young, male *unitario* is held against his will by a mob of all-male *federales*, his clothes ripped off, is irrefutably the most critically dissected scene of the narrative.

Melo, for one, provides an in-depth analysis this controversial scene and what he reads as the homoerotic components that bring the narrative to its climax. Others have blatantly declared: "[t]here is no homoeroticism in this story" (Davies et al. 93). Regardless of how it is interpreted, the rape is not consummated—'consummated' being the key word here, as the young *unitario* dies in a fit of rage before his aggressors are able to follow through with the threat, and thus, subjugate the young man's body.

Unlike the majority of rape scenes in Romantic literature throughout the nineteenth century, there is no female body that is posited either in alliance with the romantic hero, and by contrast, violently against other sorts of masculinities who wish to own / devour / conquer her body as a means of establishing male dominance over both women and other men. Nevertheless, how this rape, as a performance of both gender and sexuality, is coded should be informed by feminist insight regarding the "rhetoric of rape"—in other words, how a narrative thrusts gender codings into a dichotomy of female submission or passivity against male dominance or innate

aggression. In conventional literary representations of rape, the question of who survives and how, of who prevails and why, follows the logic of a battle for (male) dominance that is centralized through the body. The twist this narrative provides, of course, is that there is no female body through which the tropes of gender can easily flow.

Because of the text's sexually violent end, I would like to decode how the body of the young *unitario* is acting as both an instrument and agent of power, without assuming, as many critics do, that his passivity (he is forcibly subdued and tied down) automatically means that his gender is somehow coded as "feminine" and/or "effeminate." Or, as critics like David William Foster have done, over-simplify the complexity of rape as a performance of gender/sexuality by interpreting it through an innate gender bias:

Whereas a woman is raped by a man for having been perceived to challenge male supremacy, a man is raped by a man not only for the same reason but also, and more significantly, as punishment for failing to realize standards of masculinity (a failure that is, of course, an implied challenge to masculine supremacy). Gender performance entails a perpetual engagement with the over determined enactments of masculinity required to stave off assaults, including literal and figurative rapes, that are the cost of inadequate enactments in speech, dress, body language, interpersonal comportment, affective object choice, and sexual behavior (both direct and implied). (193)

Certainly, as I argue in previous chapters, rape is a "dominant theme" that hosts many of the generalities observed by Foster. Conversely, the ways in which rape operates are almost always informed by how gender is performed. But (and this specifically true for this text), one must first understand the narrative structure on which that performance is enacted. For example, women are most often raped by men on the literary front not as means of "putting them in their place," or

in Foster's words "for having perceived to challenge male supremacy" (this is rarely the case with the texts I've examined), but because their body acts as the conduit through which male rivalry and/or male-male desire can run its course. But how does one apply this same theory to a scene of rape where woman is absent?

In "El matadero," the centralized body, literally laid out upon the table, is the male body. And unlike the narratives of Alencar, or Guimarães, male protectionism over the female body (in this case male body) has no means through which it can operate as (and give shape to) national allegory by playing the opposition of goodness/evil *against* (an)other by means of the body under "threat." Or does it? In this case, rape is not actualized; the "terror" is in the threat of its actualization. And yet, it is thwarted. By whom? The very body through which the threat of sexualized violence is positioned (or as I have referred to it before, "territorialized") is also the body, the only body that is able to ward off penetration (through an explosive death). How should this young man's death be read in relation to gender performativity? Does he die by free will, thus exemplifying the idealistic traits of "modern man"? Or is it the "nature" of his body (and by extension, his sex) that wards off penetration by another man? Why must state violence against an individual be sexualized in the first place? And yes, how does the hypersexual nature of rape inform gender? If Echeverría's aim had been to show the brutality of Rosas's regime vis-à-vis the potentially violated male body, why not depict this potentially violated "national body" in need of protection as a female body much like the other texts that make up my literary corpus have done?

For one, many critics have explained that historically, Rosas's regime did in fact use male-male rape as a tactic of instilling terror in his opposition (Foster 8; Melo; Lynch 159). For those who are unfamiliar with the figure of Juan Manuel de Rosas, he was the undisputed leader

of the Federalist Party who would reign over Argentina as a brutal dictator by means of state terror. Nicknamed *El Restaurador de las Leyes*, or the Restorer of Laws, Rosas is well known for his authoritarian rule wherein any and all forms of opposition were to be silenced. The largest political opposition to the *federales* was the *unitarios*: the political party to which Echeverría belonged. “Death to the Savage Unitarians” was not only a popular slogan; it was to be inscribed at the head of all official documents (Lynch 160). The slogan also appears on the entrance to the Slaughteryard depicted in Echeverría’s short story.

Consequently, many of the depictions found within “El matadero,” though they be shocking, like the rape, have some form of historical accuracy. According to biographer and historian, John Lynch, any official under Rosas’s regime was obliged to wear a red badge with the inscription “Federation or Death.” Uniformity, at least in the case of males, went far beyond the sporting of a red badge. Every male was to grow a large mustache and sideburns, a “federal look”— “a la federale” as Echeverría writes when the young *unitario* is violently stripped of his outwardly *unitario*-looking identity. Some men, according to Lynch, went so far as to wear false mustaches. Soldiers wore red *chiripás*, a particular kind of pants. Civilians were also required to wear the color red, the official color of the federalists. Even horses bore the color red. Civilian men wore red hat bands and badges, women tied red ribbons in their hair and children’s school uniforms were also modeled in the same fashion. Even the exteriors and interiors of buildings were decorated in the color red (Lynch 160-63).

Both within and beyond the pages of “El matadero,” the self-fashioning of citizens serves as yet another example of how individual expression and therefore possible rebellion were regularly thwarted. Nevertheless, one with little to no knowledge of the socio-historical contexts in which the text was written may automatically gain a sense that there is in the text an air of

distrust, indeed, an outward disdain for the masses--the masses that support the rituals and requirements of social, political, and cultural life of Rosas's regime. Offering very few descriptions of actual individuals, Echeverría sets the narrative action aside from its onset to address the hypocrisy of the Church and State. His tendency to depict large hordes of people lends to the idea that they are animalistic by nature, reactive to the events around them much like the cattle that will bloodily hang about the slaughteryard having easily been led to their brutal deaths.

The narrative voice alludes to both the ease with which people are prone to obey as well as the financial, spiritual, and political leaders' knowledge of the same:

Los abastecedores, por otra parte, buenos federales, y por lo mismo buenos católicos, sabiendo que el pueblo de Buenos Aires atesora una docilidad singular para someterse a toda especie de mandamiento, sólo traen en días cuaresmales al matadero, los novillos necesarios para el sustento de los niños y de los enfermos dispensados de la abstinencia por la Bula...,

[The victuallers, knowing as good Federalists and therefore good Catholics that the people of Buenos Aires are peculiarly inclined to obey orders of any sort, during Lent take to the slaughteryard only enough young steers to feed the children and the sick, as is allowed by papal bull]

In full, the text presents a series of criticism against the Rosas reign of power but also against the people who blindly follow the order of both Church and State. The loss of individualism is, by far, one of the most predominant themes found throughout. In its place, the reader is presented with a series of cruel and barbaric incidents enacted by the masses as a sort of cohesive yet chaotic mob: a boy is accidentally decapitated, an Englishman knocked off of his

horse, etc. This mob is unquestioning, obedient, and so it would seem that both the powers of the Church and the powers of State, in the eyes of the people, are more closely aligned with Absolutism and Despotic rule than a centralist form of government.

Nevertheless, the masses are not exactly depicted as victims of a brutal regime. Rather, they are indistinguishable from it: cruel, stupid, and reactive. And just as the masses come to mirror a herd of cattle—a stampede of stupidity running in every which direction—the bloody brutality of the slaughteryard, in the author’s own words, unfolds to become a microcosmic representation of Rosas’s era. Echeverría refers to it as a small Republic deligated by Rosas and later, “Simulacro en pequeño [...] era éste del modo bárbaro con que se ventilan en nuestro país las cuestiones y los derechos individuales y sociales” [All this was a reflection in minature of the savage manner in which individuals and society claim their rights and thrash out their disputes in our country.] Noé Jitrik’s “Forma y significación en ‘El matadero’ de Esteban Echeverría” (1971) stresses the significance of the geographical location of the slaughteryard. For one, it is located on the outskirts of the city. This is symbolic, Jitrik observes, as it marks the divide between civilization and barbarism (the country being where many *unitarios* fled to escape being murdered). This would also serve to divide the distinction between the individual and the masses, and finally, the *unitarios* and *federales* (67-68). Like these divisions, the material body of animals and their relationship to people will also serve to demarcate a hierarchy of social stature.

## 5.1 INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

“Simulacro en pequeño”—if the slaughteryard is meant to bear an obvious likeness to Argentine society, how does one understand the image of the stampede of cattle-like masses both within and beyond the walls of the slaughteryard? If, as I have suggested earlier, the nation is given the characteristics of the human body and its “guerra intestina entre los estómagos y las conciencias” [an intestinal war between stomachs and consciences] what of the simulational connection between stomachs, barbarism, and the masses? Echeverría seems to have a bit of fun with this allegory. The so-called “struggles of the belly” are two-fold. Some die of hunger competing with dogs and sea gulls for mere morsels while others gorge themselves and die from mixing meat and fish together at the same time. The “intestinal war” is directly tied to a gluttonous clergy and other members of the elite class who did not think twice about relaxing their “Catholic customs.” General Rosas is not excluded from this hypocrisy after he is rewarded the head of the first slaughtered animal. The narrator notes this discrepancy with a large dose of sarcasm: “Es de creer que el Restaurador tuviese permiso especial de su ilustrísima para no abstenerse de carne, porque siendo tan buen observador de las leyes, tan buen católico y tan acérrimo protector de la religión, no hubiera dado mal ejemplo aceptando semejante regalo en día santo” [It is thought that the Restorer had special permission from His Eminence not to abstain from meat, for, otherwise, as a close observer of the laws, a good Catholic, and a staunch defender of the faith, he would have never have set the bad example of accepting such a gift on a holy day].

Due to this “awkward” change in diet, a series of grumbles and flatulence begins to erupt from a variety of individuals, largely from the pulpits themselves. The Restorer’s government, confusing the noises and other groans from the pulpits, mistakes them for the beginnings of a



revolution (attributed to the *unitarios*, of course). This confusion—the uproar of stomachs for the vocalization of grievances—ultimately causes the ban on meats to be lifted. This “plight of the bellies” is again playing on the link between “intestinal battles” of the human with the “internal struggles” of the body politic, though this time it is in direct reference to it. Secondly, it is also the means by which Echeverría is able to comically expose the idiocy of Rosas’s regime. Ultimately though, it is the means through which Echeverría is able to expose the “internal workings” of hypocrisy by directly linking it to human stomachs. The narrator exclaims: “¡Cosa extraña que haya estómagos privilegiados y estómagos sujetos a leyes inviolables y que la iglesia tenga la llave de los estómagos!” [How odd that some stomachs should be privileged and some bound by inviolable laws, and that the Church should hold the key to both!]. He continues:

Pero no es extraño, supuesto que el diablo con la carne suele meterse en el cuerpo y que la iglesia tiene el poder de conjurarlo: el caso es reducir al hombre a una máquina cuyo móvil principal no sea su voluntad sino la de la iglesia y el gobierno. Quizá llegue el día en que sea prohibido respirar aire libre, pasearse y hasta conversar con un amigo, sin permiso de autoridad competente.

[But maybe it is not odd, since it is by way of the flesh that the devil most often finds his way into the body, while it is the Church that has the power to cast him out. The consequence is that man is reduced to a machine whose mainspring is not his own free will but the will of the Church and the government. Perhaps the day is not far off when to breath the free air, to stroll about, and even to chat to a friend will be forbidden without the consent or requisite of authority.]

And where does this absurdity stop? Echeverría makes it abundantly clear that the powers of the Church and the powers of the *federales* are closely aligned, if not indistinguishable. Both of these entities have a clearly defined enemy: *los unitarios*. The *unitarios* are not only enemies of the State, but are depicted as “monstrous heretics,” constantly on the verge of contaminating society by setting a bad example. To be in affiliation with a Unitarian is to be aligned with the devil. To consume meat is also to be aligned with the devil. “Demonio unitario” [Unitarian demon] is a constant reference to those who oppose the federalist regime. Following the above-quoted passage, “el diablo con la carne suele meterse en el cuerpo y que la iglesia tiene el poder de conjurarlo”—the devil tries to insert himself into the body with meat—it would follow that the devil is a penetrative force, and if the devil can penetrate the people, so can the *unitarios*, as the two are one in the same.

Both State and Church, have control of which is contained “in the belly” (and therefore the body) of society as a whole through the consumption of religion, have control of that which is “contained in the belly” (and therefore the body) of society as a whole. The *unitario*, according to federalist logic, is a penetrative force marginal to the body itself. The masses are vulnerable to “sinful contamination” should any form of Unitarian / diabolic “forces” find its way into that body. What are the ironic implications here should one consider the narrative’s end: that it is a man (or rather, the man’s body), not the church, who is able to stop the federalists from penetrating his body in this propagandistic reversal?

Following this theme of the “controlled body”—a body that is both regulated and sustained by Church and State (“the head”)—the masses are pictured without a mind of their own. They are non-individuals. Again, following the above-cited passage, “el caso es reducir al hombre a una máquina cuyo móvil no sea su voluntad sino la de la iglesia y el gobierno,”—man

is merely a machine without a mind or a free will to call his own. His will is reduced to the will of both Church and State. With no free will, man has no self-control; he is reduced to state-control and state-control only. If the *unitario* does not form part but is marginal to this body, again, what does it mean that the *federales* attempt to penetrate the young *unitario*?

Corporal control plays out in other ways. For one, the *federales* attempt to “convert” the body of the young *unitario* against his individual will and consent by shaving his ‘u’-shaped beard to mirror the facial hair of a *federal*. They then strip his body of all cultural signifiers and oppositional expression (his unitarian-style clothes). They bind the young man’s body to the table. The ultimate form of corporal control over another, however, is the ability to “meterse en el cuerpo con la carne”—to get into the body with meat / flesh. While this quote is in reference to the devil’s ability to get inside the body through meat, it also seems to be applicable here, though in terms of the rape, this overpowering exploit of the body is left unconsummated. The young man, unlike the masses who attack him, is able to express his opposition. But is it the young *unitario* who actively makes a conscious decision to resist? No, not exactly. Surprisingly, his body takes control of the active threat and rebels against the men who are the actual penetrative force that threaten to violate the man’s free will. One need only recall that he dies in a fit of rage until blood pours from his mouth: internal rebellion. This is pivotal for our understanding of how (the resistance to) rape functions within this text. If the masses are the body politic, the Church and State, the head, what of this other body, this other internal battle that presents itself (and wins?) at the narrative’s end?

Furthermore, is the rape scene also homoerotic, as many critics have suggested? Conversely, what does that body come to represent following the allegorical connotations that I have mapped out thus far? Again, to fully answer these questions, I must further examine the

ways in which “the body”—more importantly, certain kinds of bodies—construct this allegorical overarch between body and nation.

## **5.2 WEARING THE GUTS ON THEIR SKIRTS: “SAVAGE” WOMEN AS ABJECT OTHERS**

If the masses are metonymic to the body, how does “El matadero” taxonomize that body? Just as there is an important divide in the text between the body and the mind, the trope of slaughtered cattle—a body cut up and divided into pieces—also becomes significant. Immediately after addressing the idea of consumptive religion and its hypocrisies, Echeverría invokes the different types of meats (including eggs) consumed by different social groups, thus reflecting an inequality in terms of food consumption: “Los pobres niños y enfermos se alimentaban con huevos y gallinas, y los gringos y herejotes bramaban por el beef-steak y el asado” [The sick and the children of the poor ate eggs and chickens, while foreigners and heretics bellowed for steak and roasts]. This is not to say that the narrator is critiquing these inequalities, but in effect, that he may be creating his own taxonomies of bodily discourse by equating certain groups of people with certain “choices” of meat. While the sick wasted away from lack of hot food, a large number of foreign heretics are given over to an instant death after committing the “sacrilege” of “gorging” on Extremadura sausages, ham, and cod, for which they are dispatched to “the other world” to pay for the abominable sin of mixing meat and fish (Echeverría).

To the contemporary reader, perhaps the most startling description of the masses in Echeverría are the depictions of women, specifically black women. Echeverría uses the term

‘harpie’—the mythological bird-like creature with a human face—to depict them as animalistic, half-humans:

[una] [m]ultitud de negras rebusconas de achuras, como los caranchos de presa, se desbandaron por la ciudad como otras tantas harpías prontas a devorar cuanto hallaran comible. Las gaviotas y los perros inseparables rivales suyos en el matadero, emigraron en busca de alimento animal.

[A horde of black women, out scavenging off like buzzards, prowled the city like so many Harpies, ready to devour whatever edible matter they found. Their inseparable rivals in the shambles, dogs and gulls, ranged far afield in search of carrion.]

Note that while di Giovanni and Ashe’s translation uses the word ‘horde,’ the original Spanish employs the word ‘multitud’ which is also the word that identifies ‘the masses.’ Though not entirely feminine, the masses are abundantly made up of women. Beyond a brief mentioning of Rosas’s wife, women are only represented when they form part of masses by comparison to their male counterparts, who are sometimes given individual identities. There are two ways that women, as the masses, are presented: as religious fanatics of the church, and in the more abundant depiction, as sub-human, animal-like, foul beings both within and beyond the walls of the slaughter yard.

Writing about these representations, Catherine Davies, Hilary Owen, and Claire Brewster observe: “At most, the feminine may be said to signify the disavowed abject other, the horror of engulfment, which must be repressed. The text also foregrounds the relational complexities of gender, that is, how other relation of power pertaining to race and caste are constructed in terms of sexual difference and hierarchy” (87). Similarly, Jáuregui writes, “El Otro étnico se representa por su género sexual e hibridez monstruosa entre lo animal y lo humano, entre el

lenguaje y el gruñido” [The ethnic Other is represented by gender and monstrous hybridity between animal and human, between language and grunting] (272).

It is indisputable that women of color are associated in the text with the abject—blood, entrails, piss, etc.; like the “choices” of meat they squabble over, they are allegorically the least-desired “parts” of the overall (social) body. However, these depictions are central to the allegorical representation of the body politic under Rosas’s rule. Many, if not all, mentions of black and *mulata* women are directly preceded or followed by a reference to either guts, entrails, or stomachs. However, while the narrator’s depiction of them might very well belong to the gutters where some dwell amidst rats, they are not marginal, but central to the allegorical representation of the body-politic beneath Rosas’s rule. For example, after it is slain, each animal carcass is accompanied by an encircling mob: perhaps another microcosmic representation of Echeverría’s representation of the federalist state. This interpretation is more viable if one is to consider that each group is led by a bloody butcher. Note in the passage below that “behind him,” and “following his every move” was an “entourage” of animal-like “scavengers”:

En torno de cada res resaltaba un grupo de figuras humanas de tez y raza distintas. La figura más prominente de cada grupo era el carnicero con el cuchillo en mano, brazo y pecho desnudos, cabello largo y revuelto, camisa y chiripá y rostro embadurnado de sangre. A sus espaldas se rebullían caracoleando y siguiendo los movimientos una comparsa de muchachos, de negras y mulatas achuradoras, cuya fealdad trasuntaba las harpías de la fábula, y entremezclados con ella algunos enormes mastines, olfateaban, gruñían o se daban de tarascones por la presa.

[Each carcass was ringed by a group of human figures of varying race and colour. Prominent in every group was a butcher, a knife in his hand, forearms and chest bared,

his long hair matted, his shirt, chiripá, and face smeared with blood. Behind him, twisting and turning to follow his every move, was a milling entourage of louts and black and mulatto scavengers—women as ugly as Harpies—amongst whom mastiffs sniffed and growled, nipping at each other over their quarry.]

Although these “figuras humanas”—not necessarily human—are multi-diverse in their skin color and racial makeup, a large number of them are “de negras y mulatas.” The male butchers, in turn, are given an individualized description. Perhaps most significantly, unlike female bodies, the male body is subject to the male gaze. In the scenes depicting the masses, it is the body of the butcher that is subject to this gaze (though the narrative’s end will provide a similarly lengthy depiction of the unitario’s body as well). Women, by contrast, beyond their race and gender, are not given detailed descriptors; instead, women are described via general declarations of their ugliness and/or their likeness to harpies and scavenger animals.

Although no individualized descriptors are allocated to women, there are several instances when women, specifically black and *mulata* women, are associated with the entrails and intestines of the beef cows. For example, Echeverría describes two “africanas” who are dragging a heap of animal entrails: “[...] dos africanas llevaban arrastrando las entrañas de un animal” [...two African women were dragging off a heap of entrails.] Shortly thereafter “una mulata” trips and falls into a puddle of blood while carrying an armload of intestines: “allá una mulata se alejaba con un ovillo de tripas y resbalando de repente sobre un charco de sangre, caía a plomo, cubriendo con su cuerpo la codiciada presa” [Clutching an armload of intestines, a mulatta crone slipped in a puddle of blood and fell headlong onto her ill-gotten booty.] Note that her body is covered with intestines. And lastly, perhaps the most extreme reference linking black women to intestines is the following:

Acullá se veían acurrucadas en hilera 400 negras destejiendo sobre las faldas el ovillo y arrancando uno a uno los sebitos que el avaro cuchillo del carnicero había dejado en la tripa como rezagados, al paso que otras vaciaban panzas y vejigas y las henchían de aire de sus pulmones para depositar en ellas, luego de secas, la achura.

[Four hundred black women squatted in rows, unravelling strings of guts on their skirts and picking out one by one the few lumps of tallow that a butcher's miserly knife had left behind like stragglers. Others emptied stomachs and bladders and inflated them so that once dry they could use them to carry the offal.]

Following the passage above, one can also observe the male gaze mentioned previously as it meticulously details the butcher's body: "con el cuchillo en mano, brazo y pecho desnudos, cabello largo y revuelto, camisa y chiripá y rostro embadurnado de sangre" [a knife in his hand, forearms and chest bared, his long hair matted, his shirt, *chiripá*, and face smeared with blood.] It is also significant that the butcher's knife figures into the description of his otherwise, purely physical attributes. In the passage that describes the 400 women, the only male referent could arguably be the presence of the knife, as a sort of stand-in for the leader of the satellite or orbital mob described previously. If this is true, the knife may also tell us something regarding the representation of the butcher's masculinity. The knife is a "miserly knife" (el avaro cuchillo); 'avaro' can be translated as both 'miserly' or 'cheap.' Either way, the knife is inadequate.

If the knife can be read as an extension of the butcher's masculinity where his body is otherwise absent, note the accessory that is given to black women: stomachs and bladders turned into bags to carry the guts in. In yet another scene, a man accuses a woman of sticking some meat between her breasts, which she denies. She then begs the butcher for the belly and guts of the beef cow. After a small dispute wherein she is referred to as a witch, this woman, like the



*mulata* woman who was covered in guts after slipping in a puddle of blood, has kidney fat and gullets (the esophagus) dumped on her head by the mob.

Taking all of this into account, Echeverría is clearly making a connection between women of color and the internal struggle / intestinal battle as it relates to the national body by associating them with the least desirable parts of the beef cows. Although he doesn't reference gender in his analysis of the text, Jáuregui's observations on the narrator's musings certainly contribute to the overarching theme of consumption and contamination as it relates to race. He notes several moments in the text where the narrator "spares" the reader from verbal obscenities or "palabras inmundas y obscenas" [filthy and obscene words] (Echeverría as qtd. by Jáuregui 272). Jáuregui interprets this to be "el miedo a la contaminación lingüística" [fear of linguistic contamination] of the Other, or rather, the fear of racial pollution: the threat posed by "apitos salvajes" [savage appetites] (272). He continues this observation by linking Rosas's mob to a politics that occurs "en el campo del apetito, los cuerpos y la violencia irracional" [in the realm of the appetite, bodies, and irrational violence]. The biggest scandal that this text poses, according to Jáuregui, is what he calls "el desorden de los signos" [the disorder of the signs.] By having "savages" call the *unitarios* savages, Echeverría is employing a semiotics of savagery—"una semiotica del salvajismo"—to illustrate both the pollution and violence brought forth from the masses. In depicting the language of the Afro-Argentine as irrational, sensual, butcherous, and savage, the text reflects an alterity to the project of enlightenment, civilization, and progress. Thus, it is this notion of racial monstrosity that ultimately informs Echeverría's semiotics of savagery (273). Jáuregui defines Echeverría's depictions of the masses, such as the one mentioned above, as a representation of "[l]a heterogeneidad oscura y hambrienta, sin historia ni

individualidad” [dark and hungry heterogeneity without history or individuality] much like the vulture-like birds and dogs that swarm around the carcass of an animal.

By situating Echeverría’s work within the larger scope of “romanticismo rioplatense,” Jáuregui argues that the Other, as it is presented within this text, employs the discourse of ethno-teratology to articulate the divide between civilization and barbarity. With the rise of capitalism, Jáuregui sees this as a case wherein the national ego of the liberal project is representing itself as modern and its Others through the trope of the savage cannibal precisely because cannibalism represents the opposite of that ego. This opposite is defined as “el consumo irrestricto (recuérdese la molestia de Sarmiento por el desperdicio), el no-tiempo de lo primitivo (la horda, la montonera, la plebe rosista, las cuatrocientas negras); el exceso, la regresión (negación del progreso) y la aniquilación de la identidad individual (los hombres marcados como reses)” (273) [the unrestricted consumption (remember how Sarmiento was bothered by waste), the timelessness of the primitive (the masses, the heap, Rosas’s mob, the four hundred black women); excess, regression (negation of progress) and the destruction of individual identity (the people marked as cattle)].

In taking up Jáuregui’s notion of “ethno-teratology,” “the semiotics of savagery,” and the trope of the “savage cannibal,” it would be beneficial to reread his argument through the lens of gender. If the abnormalities of the masses are attributed to racialized Others, those Others are predominantly gendered as women. As I mentioned above, there are very few references to racialized men, and men are also not associated with guts. Ultimately, one must ask why a group of 400 Afro-Argentines squatting amidst entrails is made up entirely of “beastly” women? Following Jáuregui’s assumption that the liberal project is to cast itself against a primitive other, it is also casting that identity against a gendered other. There is no idealized representation of

femininity in this text because femininity does not form part of the Echeverría's vision of the national ego; rather, women are merely disgusting contaminants to the national ego. And, like the national imaginary, when it comes to women, this text is sans desire.

### **5.3 THE MEAT OF MASCULINITY**

Jáuregui does make the point that gender plays a pivotal role in the symbolic representation of savagery, arguing that women are not the only gender associated with nature in the text. Men are also presented as being animalistic, savage, and certainly brutal. But, whereas women are associated with “parts” of the animal (guts), or half-animal (Harpies), men are associated with the whole animal: bulls and tigers. Of course, these animals are a bit more honorable than a pack of wild dogs or a bunch of scavenging birds that almost always accompany the gut-obsessed women even though they do not embody femininity necessarily. Davies et al. make the point that Jáuregui does not: in “El matadero” it is women, as abject beings, who lack subjectivity; they signify “the absence of bodily containment, all that needs to be eliminated or rather disavowed from the purview of the rational elite, but against which the rational elite has to define itself” (92). For Echeverría, women are the “unwanted” choices of meat of the body-politic. They are also incapable of being neatly contained and controlled, and therefore, are not given over to be imagined as whole animals.

Men in turn, particularly “important men,” are given the best choices of meat: in a ceremonious ritual, Rosas is presented with the head of the first sacrificial slaughter. Matasiete, the narrative's chief slaughterer, is “awarded [...] the choicest joint” after he displays his “heroic masculinity” in his victorious battle with a virile bull (a bull that largely mirrors the young

*unitario*, as I shall discuss further). Wherein femininity is rejected, the narrative is largely consumptive of masculinity. Davies, et al. aptly point out that if the aim of the narrator is to ridicule and demonize the Rosas regime and its supporters, then this confrontation is “played out in terms of masculinity”: the “manly ideal” of the *unitario* associated with the Enlightenment, liberalism and modernity, and the pro-Rosas mob, linked with “pre-modern retrogression” (Mosse as qtd. by Davies et al. 4). The latter is represented by the chief slaughterer, Matasiete, who is employed presumably by the government and identified, by his clothes, as a gaucho. The authors argue that it is Matasiete’s masculinity that was largely viewed as the masculine norm during the late 1830s, the time of Rosas’s reign and also the time in which the story is written. It is through this “type” of masculinity that Federalist regime is able to maintain its authority, and to which the “dominant federalist majority subscribe” (76).

And what of the bare-chested butcher who stands as the only representation of maleness amidst the predominantly *mulata* and black women who formed a satellite mob around him? One need only compare knives to understand the implications of Matasiete’s masculinity. Whereas the smaller mobs were led by a butcher and his “cuchillo avaro”—miserly knife—perhaps failing as a butcher by leaving chunks of meat straggling behind for his scavengers, Matasiete kills with a single stroke. Rather than carrying a miserly knife, Matasiete has “su enorme daga en mano”[his enormous dagger in hand]. After battling an honorable bull and killing it with single stabbing to the throat, Matasiete rips out his knife, “mostrándola en seguida humeante y roja a los espectadores” [held the steaming red blade up to the onlookers.] This happens not once, but twice in this brief scene: “Matasiete extendió, como orgulloso, por segunda vez el brazo y el cuchillo ensangrentado y se agachó a desollarle con otros compañeros” [Once more Matasiete proudly threw up his arm and blood-stained knife, and then he and his

fellow butchers squatted down to flay the hide.] Thus, if the knife, as a phallic object, is an extension and representation of masculinity, Matasiete is not only the victor with the biggest phallus, he has the ability to penetrate and overtake this bull's body with a single stroke of the knife. If the bull and the *unitario* are symbolically linked, and they most certainly are, then this is both a foreshadowing and has serious implications on our interpretations of the scene wherein Matasiete and his followers attempt to penetrate the unitario.

By contrast, if Matasiete comes to represent the hegemonic ideal, as Davies et al. argue, then how does the figure to which he is contrasted, the *unitario*, compare? In her analysis of the *unitario*'s death, Susana Rotker holds that the young man is "incapable of resisting the violence of the offences against him" (82). By contrasting his masculinity with the Other (in her reading, Rosas's followers), his death, through its allegorical implications, represents the "impossibility of coexisting with the Other." In *Between Civilization and Barbarism*, Francine Masiello holds a similar view. She implies that "Echeverría leaves no doubt about the gendered failures of his literary figures: in the age of Rosas, when masculine triumph is reserved for the dictator, all other men will be reduced in stature and deprived of the power identified with their sex" (27-28). For Masiello, the slaughter of the bull also becomes the symbol of "masculinity defeated by the knife of Rosistas" (27). In turn, the image of the *unitario* is also "masculinity defeated" since it is likened to the bull and his "ferocious struggle for survival" also fails.

Both of these critics use the term "masculinity," but of course, the text hosts two very different forms of masculinity, if not more, as suggested by Davies, et al. As Rotker refers to "the Other" in terms of gender, she is referring to Rosas's followers (82). Davies, et al., by contrast, point out that it is the Liberal, Unitarian masculinity that is both marginalized and

oppressed. Thus, the preferred manly ideal of the narrator, they argue, “should be the liberal type; but the text belies this assumption” (77). They continue:

Certainly, the Unitarian youth is mounted on a horse (denoting status and hierarchy); he is clean, elegantly dressed, courageous, and of ‘gallarda y buen apuesta persona’. His appearance proclaims his status. As such, he fits the liberal, nationalist image of acceptable manhood; for Locke and Rousseau outward appearance was a symbol ‘of inner worth, a sign for all to see and judge’ (Mosse 27). Yet this image is fatally flawed. For the narrator, the blood-spattered, cut-throat Matasiete is the unitario’s countertype but this is clearly not the view of the mob, who hold Matasiete in great esteem and regard the Unitarian as a fop. (Davies et al. 88)

Though they recognize the marginal status of the *unitario*, Davies et al. do not *other* his masculinity. Quite the opposite, their reading insists that the two juxtaposed masculinities of the *unitario* and Matasiete are complementary. Matasiete is the “manly ideal,” and the *unitario* is the “political ideal” (88-89). The combination of “masculinities”—read as cultural and societal signs of maleness—they argue, “coalesce with maleness (a sign of nature) and are hence downgraded from the human and cultural to the level of the animal and biological” (89). They are adept to point out that, in combination, the narration and the narrator seem to be divided: the crowd cheers on Matasiete; the narrator, not so much. Thus, as a whole, and as the authors argue, there is a sort of ambiguity that presents itself from these juxtaposed opinions that counter-balance one another.

However, if these two opposing embodiments of masculinity are meant to counter-balance or even complement each other, how might this affect our understanding of the rape scene? Like Davies et al., Patricia Lapolla Swier insists that the polarization of masculinities

should be read as a sort of grotesque parody of both political and sexual dualities. On the one hand, the reader is presented with the “abject portrayal of the hypermasculine characteristics of Matasiete and the overtly passive helplessness of the Unitarian,” which she interprets as Echeverría’s presentation of “the two extremes that are unacceptable in a progressivist society” (186). Thus, the rape of the young man, she argues, is Echeverría’s attempt to “dramatize the consequences of antithetical political discourse at work. The rape is a grotesque parody of Echeverría’s own earlier call for national reconciliation rather than a marriage of the two parties” (186).

Interestingly, while Davies et al. declare that “There is no homoeroticism in this story” (93), Swier insists that the rape scene can be read as a “homoerotic relation between two men” wherein ‘El matador’ is the embodiment of the “violent, sexual abuse of the liberals by the Federalists” (187). If one is the embodiment of masculinity in the excess, the hypermasculine, the other is, according to Swier, the “powerlessly feminine subject.” She writes: “The seemingly homoerotic relation between the two men not only reenacts the gendered struggle for power, but also highlights the inability of both parties to communicate and therefore come to a compromise.” And later, “a political compromise between these opposing gendered subjects would lie somewhere between a hypermasculine and powerlessly feminine subject, thus positing the proposed male national subject for its ambiguously gendered or even androgynous portrayal” (186).

There are three fundamental problems with this reading. First, Swier equates sexual passivity in male-male relationships to effeminacy, thus conflating gender and sexuality. The much larger dilemma, however, is that Swier’s critique is written as if the rape has actually taken place. It has not; it is attempted but thwarted. Moreover, both violence and sexual abuse are not

represented by a single individual, rather, it is the mob of men as a collective, not Matasiete, that attempts to rape the *unitario*. It is also the collective whole that laugh at him, strip him of his clothes, throw him to the table, etc. Therefore, hypersexuality has nothing to do with the individual in the story, as there is not a single individual charged with committing the act. Rather, it appears as if this potential act of sexual violence is but an extension of the violence that is spliced throughout the text. Therefore, the sexual abuse, as it is represented here, can easily be read as a pathology inherent to the current national context but, because this extreme form of violence has not yet occurred, or rather, is unable to occur due to the protagonist's death. Sexual violence represents an extreme beyond the extreme that is thwarted by the *unitario*'s own body. Because either his will or an innate biological functioning chooses to die, the *unitario* cannot be said to remain in his passive role. It would seem that Echeverría has provided this character with an innate, biological resistance to penetration so much so that this resistance is precisely the cause of the *unitario*'s death. And what does this "natural" ability to ward off penetration from another male tell us about the *unitario*'s masculinity?

Bearing this in mind, one does not get the sense that the *unitario* is effeminate, or in Swier's words: a "powerlessly feminine subject." Within the text, however, the *unitario* is "read" as effeminate. Like the bull whose sexual maturity is debated by the crowd (they cannot determine whether he is a "toro" or "novillo"--a bull or a steer), the mob of men who attempt to rape the *unitario* refer to him as a "cajetilla," which translates loosely as "dandy." The *federales*' failed power to name or (re)identify the *unitario* is the key to understanding the locus of his masculine prowess, which also undermines any notion "feminine passivity."

And who has the last word in his moment of death? Even when it appears that the *federales* have gained absolute control over the *unitario*, this is clearly not the case as their



violent acts never come to culmination. Even in fashioning the *unitario's* appearance to resemble their own in the "Federalist style," the young man does not refute his political ideology and, even under extreme threats of violence, is willing to sacrifice his own life before he will deny that political allegiance. Thus, he can easily be read as a martyr. In terms of national belonging, is it not the martyr who displays the ultimate performance of heroism: the willingness to sacrifice one's self in the name of one's political allegiance?

Although Swier insists that the exchange of dialogue is passive, one need only to examine the conversation that occurs between the men and the *unitario* in order to refute this notion:

—¿Porque no traes divisa?

—Porque no quiero.

—No sabes que lo manda el Restaurador.

—La librea es para vosotros, esclavos, no para los hombres libres.

—A los libres se les hace llevar a la fuerza.

—Si, la fuerza y la violencia bestial. Esas son vuestras armas: infames. El lobo, el tigre, la pantera también son fuertes como vosotros. Deberías andar como ellos en cuatro patas.

—¿No temes que el tigre te despedace?

—Lo prefiero a que, maniatado, me arranquen como el cuervo, una a una las entrañas.

[ 'Why aren't you wearing a ribbon?

'Because I don't choose to.'

'Don't you know that the Restorer demands it?'

'Livery is for slaves like you, not for free men.'

'Free men can be forced to wear it.'

‘Yes, forced by bestial violence. That’s your weapon you scoundrels. Wolves, tigers, and panthers are also strong. The lot of you should be crawling about on all fours like them.’

‘Aren’t you the tigers will tear you to pieces?’

‘I’d rather that tan have my hands tied behind me while you pluck out my intestines one by one like a horde of crows.’]

The exchange here is anything but passive. Rather, it seems that the *unitario* has the ability to strip the men of their discursive position of power. Passivity isn’t exactly an open willingness to insult the band of men threaten to kill you. “Force” and “bestial violence,” the *unitario* points out, are the weapons that the men possess but also what makes them animals. Following this dialogue, the masculinity of the mob is portrayed as inhuman; it is bestial and irrationally violent, while in comparison the *unitario* is neither. The *unitario*’s power is two-fold: what he has that the others do not is vocal opposition instead of brutal force. It is he who has the power and agency to name the aggressor and animalize him. Animalistic masculinity is just as irrational in the narrative as the animal-like figures of women. Secondly, if rape is metonymic of a struggle, his body is not won. He maintains integrity and therefore, even in death, maintains his individuality and “masculine” impenetrability. If there is any national ideal of masculinity here, it is not the brutal, animalistic “nature” of Matasiete and his mob. It is the young *unitario* who maintains both his corporeal integrity and his own free will to die. The performance of terror, indeed the sexualization of the performance of terror, is left unfulfilled. If there is anything that this narrative makes clear, it is the following: hegemonic masculinity is barbaric, animalistic, and will not succeed in its quest for power. The masculinity of the oppressor is not represented by an individual, as a plethora of critics have argued, but rather, “esclavos” –slaves, who, like the African-descendant women, are reduced to black birds of prey: “que me arranquen como el

cuervo, una a una las entrañas” [while you pluck out my intestines one by one like a horde of crows.’] There is only one “free man” in this text: free from barbarity, but also “free” of penetration and ironically, it is the man who is tied down.

#### **5.4 DEVOURING (M)ANIMALS: NATIONAL EMBODIMENT AND MALE-MALE DESIRE**

Can “El matadero” be interpreted as a case of mistaken lack of virility (as was the case with the bull) in the form of a misappropriation of weakness on the part of federalist mob? This would be the most basic explanation as to why Echeverría chose to employ a scene of male-male (failed) rape to express the brutal, oppressive “nature” of Rosas’s Argentina. Unlike other texts that we have examined, the female body is not employed here as a conduit for contesting male honor (most often through male protectionism); male honor is protected by the male body and is also contained within that body. Thus, the desired (that which is honorable) body is male. As stated earlier, women are depicted as abject beings and associated with the unwanted, least desirable cuts of meat. And what, or rather who, represents the “trophy animal” and thus, the most desirable hunk of meat? I am referring to the bull, which is symbolically linked to *unitario*. Who gets to eat that meat? The murderous, big-knifed hunk of hypermasculinity, Matasiete, is the man who devours the best, most honored, piece of meat of his former “opponent,” the bull.

If one recalls, the bull’s identity is mistaken for a steer (a castrated bull). There is no debate as to whether the bull is, in fact, a heifer. With regard to the *unitario*, it would seem that by having the mob of men refer negatively to his allegedly feminine sexuality (‘un cajetilla,’ or ‘dandy’) sets up the narrative to repeat the same sexual misidentification that has just occurred

with the bull. And just as in the case of the bull, these expectations are superseded when the *unitario* is able to ward off any sort of perceived sexual passivity on his part. Self-preservation is left intact, but the bodily containment typically associated with masculinity gets a bit messy. The bull, in the form of his best parts is rewarded to Matasiete while his skin is ripped off by the mob. He is consumed. Similarly, the *unitario's* once clean body is bursting, quite literally, with bodily fluids, which also marks his moment of death. Although, as I have argued, the *unitario* cannot be read as a passive and therefore feminized subject, how should one read his gender with regard to the sexual undertones of the text? The *unitario's* odd ability to ejaculate bodily fluids during this climactic moment might not be as relevant had it not been written at the precise moment when the possibility of anal penetration comes to its climax. As for any claim such as the one made by Davies et al. that “there is no homoeroticism in this text,” a close reading undoubtedly debunks this theory. In defense of such claims, homoeroticism is not made explicit but if one acknowledges that the hunger for carne—meat/flesh, indeed specific parts of ‘carne’ that are oddly gendered (and racialized)—“El matadero” becomes a sexually symbolic of a homoeroticism of sorts.

If one takes a step back from this particular scene to review the narrative as a whole, the slaughteryard represents a male space wherein women are the undesired subhuman who accompany animals of prey. Men, unlike women who are symbolically affiliated with carrion, are named and symbolically linked to animals that are still alive and are integrally whole. One would think that the *unitario*, if he is supposed to represent an enlightened form of masculine ideal, would be free from animalistic associations; but it is quite the opposite. Thus far, I have established that the bull slaughtered (and consumed) by Matasiete is the symbolic prelude to the reader's introduction to the *unitario*. The bull, in turn, assumes the form of an ideal as once it is

discovered that he is in fact a bull and not a castrated steer, he is both honored and venerated by the mob as a sort of trophy animal. Moreover, for a text that has not yet concerned itself with lengthy representations of particular individuals, it is overtly significant that the narrator decisively zooms in on one particular animal, dedicating well over two pages to its description and the events that unfold around it. No other animal receives this amount of attention. Over half of the description depicts the mob's obsession (and thus the text's obsession) with the bull's sexual organs. Therefore, understanding this "sexual confusion" is a central concern within the narrative. And, as some critics inadvertently imply, this confusion with regard to gender is directly linked to a certain form of sexuality (most critics read the *unitario* as being sexually passive).

But why would the text bother itself with this gender confusion in the first place and what, if anything, does this misgendering have to do with sexuality? It is only after the death of the bull that the spectators are shown his "enormous testicles" which the text blatantly tells us are evocative signs "de su dignidad de toro" [his dignity as a bull.] Testicles, of course, confirm that he is male, but more importantly, that he should be dignified and honored. His power, "natural" male power as it is directly associated with his sexual anatomy, is underestimated through this misgendering, much like the mob refers to the *unitario* as a "cajetilla," or "dandy."

The *unitario* also hosts a "natural" biological ability to ensure that his corporeal integrity (as a "real" man) remains intact. For the bull, it is only in death and after battle that he can be recognized for his masculine prowess. He too is able to "break free" from the threats of mob-violence. He is the only "(m)animal" with the capability to break free from the confines of the Slaughteryard to run about the streets of Buenos Aires. In short, he becomes a startling contrast to the herd who are easily led to their bloody slaughter. He becomes an individual animal, as

opposed to the others, and he does so through defiance, vigor, and indeed, the same sort of bull-headed behaviors that are displayed by the *unitario* who also goes against the human “herd.”

Interestingly, when the crowd attempts to capture this “dignified” embodiment of “manimalhood,” they instead decapitate a young boy. The boy’s death might be yet another symbolic gesture, a brief sketch of social commentary as it relates to the nation’s future. In the chaos of trying to kill a venerating being, a certain future is lost—the decapitation of the boy, perhaps meant to represent the future of the nation since it has already become apparent that Echeverría is clever yet subtle in his use of corporeal aesthetics; moreover, he is the only child explicitly mentioned in the narrative. Irrational violence amidst the chaos of the masses—the boy also forms part of the mob—could be meant to symbolize the eventual future decapitation of Rosas’s regime. After all, the text associates Rosas with the “head” wherein the masses are the intestines. The boy’s body cannot survive without his head, and if national embodiment is figured as male, the present state of Argentina kills the possibility of the future as it is represented through the boy’s youth.

This is significant because, in essence, the bull becomes the embodiment of an idealistic version of masculinity in animal form much like the *unitario* might be said to embody the same. The mob treats him like they treat the bull as they trap, torture, and kill him. Similarly, the young man remains defiant against the cruel nature of the *federales*. Thus, like the bull, the young *unitario* also has his rebellious spirit put on display by openly denouncing the Federalist regime even under the threat of death. And yet, this is a rage that is marked by impotence. Much like, as Jáuregui argues, the bull’s sexual insignia is split (272) the markings of his identity are either overlooked or misidentified. Moreover, the bull, in death, is reduced to his hide, mirroring how the *unitario* is stripped of his clothing. Where the bull’s virile masculinity is

affirmed upon his death, the *unitario* is only given full agency in the moment of death (voicing his political opposition) and in effect, can be read as a national martyr. One might ask how his virility is associated with a particular political form of agency and does his death emphasize his masculinity much like the bull's masculinity is confirmed through his hectic attempts of escape and eventual death?

In support of this reading is the fact that Echeverría alludes to the image of the *unitario* and his tormentors as a mirroring of the crucifixion of Jesus: “¡Mueran! ¡Vivan!, repitieron en coro los espectadores y atándole codo con codo, entre moquetes y tirones, entre vociferaciones e injurias arrastraron al infeliz joven al banco del tormento como los sayones al Cristo” [Again the chorus of spectators roared approval and shouted for death. Binding the unfortunate young man's arms behind him, with blows and shoves, jeers and insults, they dragged him to the torture bench just as His tormentors did to Christ.] Directly after this passage, the table on which the *unitario* is laid out to die is not just a table but is given a central “place” in the room that marks the torturous deaths of others who came before him: “para dar lugar a las ejecuciones y torturas de los sayones federales del Matadero” [to make way for torture or an execution by the slaughteryard's Federalist killers.] Here, the allusion to Jesus, specifically to Jesus's body as it is laid out before his tormentors, marks an interesting construct. Could it be that the *unitario* embodies liberal nationalism's self-sacrificial masculinity in the face of a violent mob? Thus, the *unitario*, like Jesus, is a servant to a “higher cause” or rather, a “higher power” that is directly associated with the role of both reader/narrator as those who are left to “testify” to this sacrifice. If this is the case, one cannot read the *unitario* as an effeminate or weakened male as some critics readily do, but rather, quite the opposite. The *unitario's* unelected passivity in the face of sexualized violence as his performance of political passion may also serve as a right of passage

to “manhood.” Jesus too was transformed through the performance of a blood-soaked rite as a victim (yet ultimately victor) of politicized mob violence. At the level of ritual initiation vis-à-vis religious iconography could this violent death be seen not as a punishment, but an honor?

In that women are made abject throughout the text, this initiation has an explicit gendering which might also be inherent to the socio-political renderings of its meaning. In other words, the transformation from unsuspecting passerby to sacrificial lamb engaged in political agency through his torturous death is gendered male precisely because women have no part of the political: they are the irrational masses, the intestines of the body-politic. The *unitario* does not get singled out by the mob just to represent a particular socio-political identity. The only thing he is really forced to do, in terms of what he can elect by his own free will, is to put a voice to his political affiliation while declaring his opposition.

In this way, men, at least metonymically, constitute the body politic in its entirety, just as they are symbolically represented as entire animals, in contrast to their female counterparts (unwanted cuts of meat and mere parts of the body). Unlike other texts I have examined in this dissertation, women are not even regarded in “El matadero,” nor are they associated with parts of animals that would allude to their reproductive capacity. Men, on the other hand, are more associated with their ability to inflict death (no woman kills an animal or another fellow human) rather than sowing the seeds of life. Thus, masculinity and death coincide here. In terms of national (re)production as a heteronormative allegory, reproduction is impossible. The only (re)productive notion of Echeverría’s national allegory can only be seen at the intersection of male-male juxtaposition, rivalry, and desire. It is masculinity in its own right, Echeverría seems to be arguing, that must be rethought, reimagined, and/or reclaimed from the animalistic,



militarized, and “soldierly” sons of the slaughteryard, that chaos and misconduct of this specific “type” of man, must be thwarted through individual sacrifice.

And who bears witness to this sacrifice but the reader himself, who, because of this bizarre constellation of religion, politics, and gender can rightly identify with masculine suffering, both resistant to and rejective of the beastly masculinity of the federalist brutes, much like the *unitario*’s body in its own right? At the very center of it, Jesus-like and laid out on the table, the *unitario* provides testament to this sacrifice—a heroic masochism of sorts, the socially desirable suffering inflicted upon a man so powerful that he will endure that suffering in the name of his political allegiance to the Unitarian cause.

Thus, the pain endured as part of the *unitario*’s ritualistic sacrifice is not incidental but crucial to understanding his symbolic initiation into “manhood” through his resistance to the penetration both ideological and physical contaminants (read as not “manhood” but masculinity). Insofar as he is “subject” to this torturous ordeal, it would seem that he is both tested and proven worthy of his political alliance. “Weakness” would have been his denunciation of that political affiliation for the purpose of self-preservation. Through death, then, the *unitario* survives the test confirming his allegiance to the national cause. In other words, his death becomes the embodiment of political sacrifice laid out on the table.

The performance of sacrificial death is, not surprisingly, what many critics claim to be the culmination of the homoerotic underpinnings of the narrative and rightly so. Does the threat of sodomization effectively go beyond an attempt to denounce the oppressor? If we return to Davies et al.’s very brief line of argumentation that there is “no homoeroticism in this story,” we must first review the assumptions that led them to this declaration in the first place., Davies et al. reiterate the notion that as a proto-nationalist text, Echeverría’s representation of two juxtaposed

masculinities fails to be socially cohesive in their opposition to one another. They hold the view that “social cohesion is founded on normative manliness” and that the *unitario*’s death signifies the impossibility of that cohesion, since these masculinities are the exclusive hosts of the current political struggle of the nation. Thus, any sort of national ideal, or rather, national solution for Argentina cannot and is not symbolized by any sort of heterosexual matrix of desire: there is no ‘genetrix’ of “mother/matron” meant to symbolize nationalist roots or the motherland, there is no “alluring feminine object” (92). In short, the authors conclude that there is no presentation of “heterosocial desire that constitutes patri(er)otic love” (93).

In other words, the very brief declaration that there is no homoeroticism present seems to be in direct response to the authors’ lengthy and well thought-out discussion that there is no possibility for heterosocial desire with regard to the national allegory. By contrast, they dismiss the possibility of homoerotic desire in one sentence: “If there is no ideal feminine, how might the nation be signified. There is no homoeroticism in this story, either, no symbol of moral virtue exemplified by ideal, manly, classic beauty. In short, there is no nation, no solution for Argentina” (93).

Is the *unitario*’s symbolic connection to the vigorous bull not proof of an idealized form of masculine honor and virility even in death? Are the direct implications that the *unitario* body is laid out on the table much like Jesus was crucified on the cross not a symbol of moral virtue? And why is this mob of brutes wanting and willing to penetrate the *unitario* in the first place? Adrián Melo’s *Historia de la literatura gay en la Argentina* (2011) argues that Echeverría’s decision to bring the narrative to its culmination with the threat of anal rape is two-fold. On one hand, it acts as a reversal of semantics. Using various historical accountss from the same time period as evidence, Melo argues that the *unitarios* were consistently referred to as “afeminados”

or “maricones” [effeminate or fags] within popular culture. Moreover, the notion that sodomy was employed as a means to both torture and terrorize victims of Argentina’s brutal conflict was very real. Melo continues, “[l]a representación más monstruosa de la barbarie es la que muestra a los federales llamándolos sodomitas al tiempo que los federales los caracterizaban como “afeminados” o “maricones” [the most monstrous representation of barbarity is the one that portrays the Federalists as sodomites at a time when the Federalists were categorizing them as ‘effeminate’ or ‘fags’]. Melo’s observation would coincide with Jáuregui’s similar observations regarding the reversal of semantics as it pertains to “good” vs. “evil,” “barbaric,” etc.: that in fact the narrative and the masses positioning against one another in defining who best fits these terms.

The more provocative stance taken by Melo, however, is that there is a very overt eroticism as the heart of “El matadero,”—both sadomasochist and vampiric. After all, there is an indisputable “build up” to this narrative climax, which Melo refers to as “un ritmo casi sexual in crescendo.” Of course, one could say this about many narratives, however, this particular up build seems to prepare us for the final scene where a young, virile man, instead of bursting with semen, is bursting with blood, tied, face down atop the table. Melo observes that from the onset of the *federales*’s entrance into the scene, “se nos describe como en los prolegómenos de una cópula” [it is described to use like a prolonged form of intercourse]. At first, this reading may sound like an exaggeration, but, as Melo has shown, the *unitario* body is presented as if it were in a state of pre-intercourse convulsion: trembling lips, the movement of his heart, his eyes of fire, his naked neck and, with “la pechera de su camisa dejando entrever el latido violento de sus arteria y la respiración anhelante de sus pulmones” [his shirt chest hinting at the violent beating of his arteries, and his lungs panting breath].

Thus, despite any claims that this text is not homoerotic, it is difficult to argue this point should one take up a “reading” of the *unitario*’s body. Furthermore, it is difficult to not read that same body within a nationalist context, specifically seeing that he is the clear embodiment of Unitarian politics in both dress and mannerisms. The sexual threat that is posed against this body might be a means to demarcate the savagery of the *federales* through their willingness to cross sexual boundaries between men. I would add to Melo’s argument that this might also indicate why the rape is unsuccessful. If the *unitario* is meant to represent national idealism, then the *federales* cannot penetrate those imaginary borders, not even by force. Even when they appear to be “on top,” the *federales* are unable to penetrate his will even if that means that the present, what is living, will be annihilated.

Nevertheless, the very will, or perhaps the better word is “desire,” to penetrate the male body can certainly be read as a “barbarous” wish to penetrate civilization. Returning to Melo’s interpretation, —a body convulsing, trembling, awaiting this act, then bursting with blood—one could also read the scenario as civilization’s desire for barbarism. Melo reminds us that, long before the rape scene each butcher is described with a focus on their arms, bare-chests, long hair, etc. In turn, when the *unitario* is trapped by Matasiete, “el autor no deja de aclarar que lo hace con sus ‘brazos fornidos.’” La tensión sexual aparece descrita en términos de sangre en una literatura con rememoraciones vampíricas que anticipan a Bram Stoker y a Federico Garcia Lorca” [the author does not hesitate to clarify that he does it with his ‘burly arms.’ The sexual tension is described in terms of blood within a literatura that is reminiscently anticipatory of Bram Stoker and Federico Garcia Lorca] (Melo). And, let us not forget, Matasiete is also the owner of the “enormous” dagger, is clearly the most qualified to use it, and is celebrated by the

crowd in his ability “to give it to” both the bull and the *unitario*. The crowd mercilessly begs Matasiete to penetrate the *unitario* just as he had done with the bull, with a single stroke.

In the end, a narrative splattered with blood, guts, repulsive and undesirable women, zooms in three male bodies: the bull, Matasiete, and the *unitario*. Thus, the text drives us towards the theme of masculinity and masculine idolization in multiple forms: honor and transcendence, raw, unabashed and all-powerful manly strength, and finally, rationality, free will and agency. There are no women present upon this platform and any notion of male effeminacy or “weakened” masculinity is quickly thwarted through valor, masculine vigor, and the honorable adherence to free will. And, if the nation is in fact “being imagined” here, then the performance of gender (re: masculinity) tells us that there are two victors: Matasiete, the hunky (yet murderous) (m)animal embraced by the crowd, and the no-name *unitario*, hoisted up by the narrator. The *unitario* has no name because his name does not matter; rather, what matters is all that he embodies: sacrificial masculinity, the willingness to submit to martyrdom—to submit one’s body to a much larger desire for his nation, for the hope of a new fraternal order, for the desire of men for men and for the purpose of the homosocial bond that creates national belonging. And what is martyrdom but the willingness to forfeit this earthly body (the flesh), to the larger, transcendental Spirit (the nation); it is the willingness to submit to the desire for one’s nation, to the true and righteous fraternal order that is deserving of one’s willingness to submit his body to something much bigger than the self: to a desire of men for men, for men’s future together.

## 6.0 A PLACE TO CALL “HOMO”: A HISTORY IN THE FUTURE?

In 2000, Sylvia Molloy proposed a challenge to scholars to develop a more sophisticated history of Latin American nationhood with regard to gender and sexuality in her provocative article, “La flexión del género en el texto cultural latinoamericano.” She was writing specifically about the need to (re)read certain texts of the *modernismo* literary movement through the lens provided by gender studies and furthermore, to examine both gender and sexuality as a place from which to think about “homosociability” (56). What she was proposing (and most certainly does) was calling for a disruption to more “traditional” readings of canonical literature. Coincidentally, she was not necessarily concerned with a recovery project by asking who might be / is queer, but recognized the need to ask how sexuality or gender might be considered subversive in *modernista* texts in their own right, even amidst their indisputable homophobic and sexist dispositions.

Over the past two decades, through the application of gender and queer theory, however slowly, there began to emerge numerous (re)visions of traditional approaches to literary and cultural studies, many of which have radicalized our understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality in Latin American contexts. Nevertheless, the majority of these scholarly inquiries concern themselves with contemporary, late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Latin American literature and culture with few exceptions. This trend, Molloy’s work included, might largely be explained by the fact that homosexuality as a discursive category, does not emerge as such until

the turn of the century, leading to what Sylvia Malloy refers to as a the “construcción paranoica de la normal con respeto a género y sexualidades y sobre lo que no cabe dentro de esa norma, es decir sobre lo que difiere de ella” [the paranoid construction of normality with respect to gender and sexualities and about what does not fit within this norm, that is to say, about what is different from that norm]” (*Poses* 17). Nevertheless, as Malloy points out, the definition of the norm as it pertains to the hetero/homo dyad cannot precede these differences, but rather proceed them in that discursively, heterosexuality cannot be defined before homosexuality in its definitive reliance on these differences.

In his article, “Interpellation, Inversion, Identification: The Making of Sexual Diversity in Latin American Literature, 1895-1938” Daniel Balderston locates the period between 1860s to the 1930s as the precise era determinative for how sexuality was defined:

new words emerged (“homosexual” in 1867, “heterosexual” a quarter of a century later), a new sexual science developed, and out of it came psychoanalysis, the homosexual subject emerged to public view (particularly after the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895), and literary texts began to represent this new subject. (Balderston 204)

The “new subject” of which Balderston writes is in reference to the first depictions of a “male-male” sexual desire in Latin America: Adolfo Caminha’s novel, *Bom Crioulo*, published in 1895 but quickly banned due to its controversy.

Therefore, it is understandable that critics who are interested in taking up the question of sexuality and sexual identity in Latin America would congregate to this specific time period when the “Paradigm Shift,” or the so-called “Birth of the Homosexual” as it is famously modeled by Foucault, is most visible in the Latin American context. Oscar Montero’s “Modernismo and Homophobia: Darío and Rodó,” Sylvia Molloy’s “Too Wilde for Comfort,” and more recently,

Molloy's *Poses de fin de siglo: Desbordes del género en la modernidad* can serve as primary examples of how queer theorists begin to (re)think gender/sexual configurations and their impact on *fin de siglo* and early twentieth-century texts, specifically in relation to a certain visibility that accompanies the "new" subject of homosexuality. José Quiroga, in his *Tropics of Desire* (2000) writes of this time period:

In Latin America, as well as in Europe, male homosexuality in particular is historically bound to very concrete processes of social engineering and modernization. At the end of the nineteenth century, the state defined previously untaxonomized sectors, behaviors, and practices of the population as a whole in order to regulate the "shape" of the national body. In this way, the process that Foucault noted in *The History of Sexuality* also took place in Latin American societies. (13)

Conversely, just as new categorical modes or taxonomies of human sexuality are being discursively produced and therefore new "subjects" emerge, so too does the abstraction of the "national body" find itself symbolically impacted, scrutinized, and even contested by these same gender/sexual configurations. The configurations, in turn, were being conflated as either "normal" or "abnormal"—or rather, "perversions"—that which is perceived to be drastically off-track from the porous abstraction of "normality." This is what Foucault famously specified through his conceptualization of the "repressive hypothesis." How the new discourse of homosexuality emerged was in direct relation to social control.

The collection of critical essays found in *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Control in Mexico, 1901* (2003) provides various avenues from which one can understand how social control, the concept of nation, and sexuality instigated an outright (sexual) panic surrounding a police raid on a clandestine party of drag a queen in 1901. This leads the editors of *The Famous*



41 to conclude that “the modern notion of homosexuality in Mexico is born not because of a new transvestism or a new mechanism of sexual desire between men, but because there was a scandal that provoked a new discourse formulating the possibility of eroticism existing between men” (3). Conversely, in the Mexican context, the definition of the “national body,” as well as who does and does not belong within the perimeters of this imagined body, is propagandistically reliant on a “scandalous” othering with regard to both gender and sexuality of a marginal group of people: a group who already existed before their “condition” was named yet lacked a certain form of visibility.

The problem that discourse encounters with regard to categorization and sexuality is that it sexuality is usually *not* visible, and yet, many critics might assume that the emergence of the homosexual subject is the only means by which the modern reader can “categorize” the topic of homosexuality in literature (and therefore history)—or, better stated, adequately address a “history of homosexuality.” Thus, contemporary understandings of sexuality (not just homosexuality) may falsely assume that that which precedes visible homosexuality is normative heterosexuality despite the fact that the nineteenth century is precisely the moment that sexual visibility / taxonomies begin their ordering of “disorders”; natural/unnatural; pure/perverse; eventually giving way to the “sexual identities” modern day readers may seek to “recover” in the first place. To assume, then, that national identity formation which also occurs within this time frame is based upon our contemporary notions of heteronormativity is as overly assumptive as it is biased against non-normative configurations of gender and sexuality.

Before the emergence of categories like homo- and heterosexuality, I have argued that sexuality was most certainly a means of distinguishing one group of people from another, particularly in its relationship to concepts of masculinity and manhood. In turn, race, class,

social reform: all of these had profound impacts on idealized forms of masculinity as they were represented in literature—most notably, race. When one looks closely at the “logic” of subalternity, it is ever-apparent that the allegories attributed to nations and nationalism, as well as national belonging, correspond and exemplify taxonomies of both gender and sexuality that also reaffirm racial, ethnic, and political hegemony. One cannot fully comprehend gender and sexuality as it is palpable today without an in-depth understanding of socio-political histories; likewise, one cannot have an in-depth understanding of those histories, without an understanding of the gender and sexual codings that uniquely inform them.

What my literary corpus exemplifies is that the nineteenth-century taxonomies of bodily discourse correspond with the emerging and ever-shifting concept of nation, specifically if one is to determine what becomes visible in the ordering and disordering of social subjectivities writ large. How gender and sexual configurations in literature inform and render visible the national body is highly dependent on the “(dis)ordering of desire” and gender differences that reach far beyond the binaries of male/female or hetero/homosexuality. In turn, male-male desire, seemingly above all other forms of desire, is undeniably central to national identity formation, the forging of alliances/rivalries between particular groups of men, that, interestingly inform a gender hierarchy most often independent of, yet based upon, misogyny. Sorting through the intersectionality of these “other” hierarchies of gender or marginalized social groups as they represented in literature, has presented its own set of challenges as to where gender codes, sexual control, and the (re)structuring of (neo)colonial societies both emerge and diverge from one another.

Again, in moving beyond (or rather, before) the historical moment when the new visibility of the ‘homosexual’ (and by default, the ‘heterosexual’) is more easily identifiable, in

essence, one must reject these categories almost all together. Sedgwick, in turn, in her insistence that we focus on a broader notion of same-sex desire—“plural, varied, and contradictorily historical understandings whose residual—indeed, whose renewed—force seems most palpable today” (48) has, if it is not evident by now, been my means of reading the narratives of my literary corpus, none of which employ the term ‘homosexual,’ or depict what might be openly perceived as male-male (or female-female) sexual relationships. Why then, should a study predominately focused on masculinity concern itself with the invention of the hetero/homo dyad if said binary does not yet have social relevance?

If there is a current trend to illustrate how the emergence of the homosexual subject deeply impacted nation building projects of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, then there is undoubtedly a need to ask how both gender and sexuality were negotiated before homosexuality “existed” and by default, heterosexuality within the realms of discourse. Many, if not all of my literary examples rely on sexual deviance, male-male desire, gender inversion, and in some cases following what David Halperin, discussed below, refers to as “pre-categories” of homosexuality in order to drive many of their characterizations home.

Halperin is useful to my project in his insistence that our modern concept of homosexuality must be deauthorized—the same would hold true for heterosexuality as well: if there is no “historical homosexuality” therefore there is no “historical heterosexuality.” Halperin is employing the Foucauldian genealogical method in conjuncture with Sedgwick’s model of “performativity”—her insistence that multiple temporal “modes” of homosexuality blend into present-day homosexual practices / identities—in his methodological approach described in *How*

to *Do the History of Homosexuality*.<sup>20</sup> It is from these arguments that Halperin is able to develop his methodological approach whereby he argues that one should essentially “forget Foucault” in a chapter that he aptly calls “Forgetting Foucault.”

One might regard Halperin’s choice of the word “forgetting” as anything but; rather he targets what one might call the critical reification of the Foucauldian model that blinds some to what they might think to be Foucault’s original intentions in the famous: “The homosexual was now a species” passage. Halperin especially targets those who have misunderstood Foucault’s distinction between the “sodomite” and “homosexual” as that which falls between sexual acts and identities, with the former pre-modern and the latter strictly modern. He insists that sexual identities could and did exist in the pre-modern period, just that they were not a sexual orientation in the modern sense. In other words, there was not a sudden displacement of earlier definitions and identities in the middle of the 19th century, as Halperin had earlier assumed in his previous written works as he confesses, but a more complex developmental process in which earlier models are continually subsumed into later ones rather than being replaced altogether—an idea inherent to Sedgwick’s thought (Halperin 25-47).

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<sup>20</sup> Sedgwick argues that the term “modern homosexual” (as modeled by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (1984) wherein he proclaims that the modern homosexual was born in the nineteenth-century through discursive shifts), is not the only sort of same-sex desire that one could apply to the present. This leads her to provide an influential discursive critique of the category of homosexuality. Our notions of same-sex desire, she argued, should be “plural, varied, and contradictorily historical understandings whose residual—indeed, whose renewed—force seems most palpable today” (*Epistemology* 48).

In his last chapter titled, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," Halperin enumerates several "pre-homosexual" categories of male sex or gender deviance that contribute to the modern concept of homosexuality, without themselves being fully equivalent to it. They are as follows: (1) effeminacy, (2) pederasty or "active" sodomy, (3) friendship or male love, and (4) passivity or inversion (108-10). The first category, effeminacy, he argues, might be seen more as an issue of gender deviance rather than sexual deviance. Nevertheless, he points out how womanizers and adulterers were often considered soft and effeminate for most of Western history, in contrast to "true warriors," who conducted embraced a spirit of competition with their male peers (110-12). This may be yet another way that sexuality and gender become intertwined.

There are several characters throughout my literary corpus that could fit into this category. Both Zarco, the character from Altamirano's *El Zarco*, and Leôncio of *A escrava Isaura*, are depicted as effeminate and are abusers of women; both of their characters are contrasted against a "true hero." Again, both are inclined to subtle sexual violence against women and arguably against the men who serve as their protectors. Moreover, Leôncio is described as both adulterer and a pervert, and, it seems impossible to count how many times Zarco is referred to as a pervert.

Foucault argues in chapter two of *The History of Sexuality*, "The Perverse Implantation," comes to be categorized as "unnatural" through various discourses that "initiated sexual heterogeneities" (37). These implantations, Foucault argues, discursively produce "the homosexual" as a social category while simultaneously seeking to repress it. Therefore, the ways in which these two characterizations of "perversion" are represented is best understood through Foucault. Moreover, women arguably come to metonymically represent the nation and are rendered the potential "victims" of these characters. These observations alone may tell us

how these taxonomies of sexuality relate to, or more specifically, come into being as a threat to society as a whole.

Halperin's second category, pederasty, or "active" sodomy—he calls it "active" sodomy to distinguish between other forms of sodomy which were historical descriptors of masturbation, oral sex, anal sex and same-sex sexual relationships—is not extremely informative to my overall project. However, this figure, emerging through Robert Irwin's reading of *El Periquillo Sarmiento*, may be alluded to, but is never depicted out-right. Halperin's third category, however—friendship or male love—is extremely relevant to my dissertation for obvious reasons. Halperin observes:

So if the tradition of male friendship maintains a certain distance from the world of sexual difference and sexual relations, why include an account of that tradition here, in a genealogy of male homosexuality? Because the friendship tradition provided socially empowered men with an established discursive venue in which to express, without social reproach, sentiments of passionate and mutual love for one another. And such passionate, mutual love between persons of the same sex is an important component of what we now call homosexuality. So if we are to devise a complete and satisfactory genealogy of male homosexuality, we will have to find room in it for a history of male love. (121)

Halperin, however, does provide his reader with a warning sign of sorts; he argues that it is because of our "heightened sensitivity" to heterosexual masculinity and even our contemporary notions produced by psychoanalysis such as "unconscious drives" and "personality" that it is "difficult for us to avoid reading into such passionate expressions of male love as a suggestion of 'homoeroticism' at the very least, if not of 'latent homosexuality,' ...

about how to interpret same-sex emotions that do not quite square with canonical conceptions of sexual subjectivity” (120).

This observation is certainly relevant when reading *Iracema* as a modern reader may automatically conclude that the friendship existing between Poti and Martim is, for lack of a better word, quite gay. Two men who stand face-to-face while rubbing their hearts together and professing their love for one another is difficult to read today without having the gaydar alarms of our imagination hyperbolically screeching. Nevertheless, as Halperin points out, this is a common literary convention found “time and time again” where “[t]rue friends have a single mind, a single heart in two bodies” (118-119). He later observes that these sorts of merging individual identities, in fact, situate avowals of reciprocal love between male friends in an honorable, even glamorous tradition of heroic comradeship: precisely by carefully removing any hint of subordination on the part of one friend to the other and, thus, any suggestion of hierarchy, the emphasis on the fusion of two souls into one actually distances such a love from erotic passion (120).

This is an important observation because, Halperin insists, even if an egalitarian relationship is being depicted in these instances, there is still an important function to them in the production of same-sex desire. He writes, “[I]f anything, pederasty and friendship are both traditionally masculinizing, insofar as they express the male subject’s virility and imply a thoroughgoing rejection of everything that is feminine” (123). They are, in essence, expressing a desire of same-sex object choice; in other words, they are a male-male partnering. This is certainly the case in several of the male-male relationships that are presented in Lizardi’s narrative. Alencar’s *Iracema* largely concerns itself with the homosocial spaces of war, leaving the only female protagonist far behind the heroic comradeship established by Poti and Martim.

The same holds true for *El Zarco* in the case of Nicolás and Martin who are consumed in their quest to capture el Zarco.

Nevertheless, when hierarchies are present this relationship takes on a new dynamic which can be understood through the lens of friendship as male-male desire, but might also fit into Halperin's final category: passivity or inversion. There are certain times when male-male desire is almost entirely one-sided, at least in the beginning of the narrative. In other words, one can view characterizations like Poti or Peri, in Alencar's writings, in that they give up everything to become a "slave" to whiteness, as a way in which passivity may function in these narratives. In fact, I would extend Halperin's observation to the realm of the postcolonial by asking how both gender and sexual hierarchies are established through male-male desire, wherein whiteness and other configurations may operate as unmarked categories of masculinity. For example, there are various "sidekicks" present in these narratives. What can Halperin's model, when extended to a postcolonial lens, tell us about these configurations? Also, what happens when entire collectivities such as Iracema's tribe are symbolically castrated when they lose their "sacred juice"?

Finally, my project might extend Halperin's original categories to the following figures: "the dandy," the effeminate aristocrat, especially ones who possess no control over their own sexuality, the bandit (as a marginal figure that is hypersexualized and poses a threat to heterosexuality and who engages in "sinful" sexual acts), the pervert vs. the perverted (the first, informed by positivist assumptions as naturally "abnormal," while the latter is perverted often through contact with a European bohemian lifestyle), and finally, the rapist, who embodies a threat against the heteronormative). This is obviously relevant to the symbolic configuration of



La Malinche at the heart of Mexican identity, as well as the threat of male-male rape that occurs in Echeverría's "El matadero."

Conversely, there is evidence throughout my literary corpus that gender acts similarly to sexuality in that there are many shifts (something akin to Foucault's paradigm shift) in how masculinities are articulated specifically in regards to race and class. In the earlier texts such as *El Periquillo Sarmiento*, *Iracema*, and *O Guarani* (1857) one sees certain masculinities that remain connected to European ideals in the early nineteenth century; despite this Eurocentrism, there is a specific "local" configuration of masculinity that is informed by the indigenous—often in relation to how to survive the natural world in the novels engaged in writing the first meetings between the Indigenous and the European. Thus, there is a certain "other knowledge," without which white heroic warriors could not have survived that is absorbed by white male hegemonic masculinity—at least in its fictional representation. For example, new ways of doing battle, learning from the land and certain animals are consistently forged into a European masculinity. This is not the case for *El Periquillo Sarmiento* which blatantly rejects the indigenous and sees it as a contaminate of ideal masculinity (the protagonist blames, for example, the fact that he was breast fed by an indigenous woman as certain form of contamination of his personality).

In the later novels, such as *A escrava Isaura* and *El Zarco*, European masculinities that were once ideal models in other contexts are thrown into question. Zarco's false claims to aristocracy liken him to position of colonizer and threat to Mexican nationalism. Leôncio, the antagonist of *A Escrava Isaura*, is depicted as having traveled throughout Europe and to have become "a dandy" in Paris where he has learned most of his vices and perverse ways. In other words, Leôncio is a pervert because Europe has perverted him. Thus, the figure of the dandy which may have once served as symbol of modernization and civilization as it had in European

and North American contexts (further research of Brazilian masculine ideals is needed to ground my assumption) now becomes a symbol of decadence, self-indulging consumption, and corruption. Eventually this “dandified” man is enticed to ultimate self-destruction (he commits suicide) and all of his assets (the land, plantation, his slaves, and yes, Isaura) are controlled by Álvaro—the “true” gentleman.

*A Escrava Isaura* is also given over to lengthy naturalistic depictions of a black male slave whereby his physicality makes him an object of a certain scientific observation. Thus, certain physical attributes correlate to sexual and mental deficiencies. In other words, white masculinity / sexuality is susceptible to becoming perverted, whereby non-white masculinities are automatically inferior in their “sub-humanity” (the narrative informs that the slave is more like hunchback than a man). The relation between class and masculinity are (re)defined through this text as well. Ideal hegemonic masculinity, again, as embodied by the character of Álvaro is given over to certain form of aristocracy that is better able “to control” its masculinity.

*El Zarco*, however, symbolically links whiteness, effeminacy, and perversion as that which go hand-in-hand. Race and class (the indigenous and the working class) are reformulated into an idealized model for hegemonic masculinity; the heroes become—interesting through a compliance with the law—the ideal “protectors” of women and society as a whole who are vulnerable to both banditry of a material as well as a sexual “nature,” or better stated, unnatural sexuality. This is also true of *A escrava Isaura*, however the task of protectionism is in fact a (re)defined version of white masculinity that is contrasted to the white male slave owner who is “out of control” of both his sexuality as well as his monies.

Depictions like these correspond with what Robert Irwin has referred to as “the myth that heterosexuality represented an ideal in nineteenth-century” (which might be an allusion to Doris

Sommer's argument in *Foundational Fictions*) he insists that male-female desire as it is depicted in literature, "was not an ideal." Rather, Irwin argues, this form of desire between men and women "represented the most pernicious of dangers." In turn it was feared as a threat to civilizations itself. He argues:

While sex between men (or between women) lacked a name and apparently didn't challenge society with any social risk, heterosexual desire threatened all kinds of disruption. ... Heterosexual desire could contaminate racial purity, blur barriers of social class, corrupt virgins, destroy the institution of matrimony by means of adultery, incite the sin of incest, or even engender the infamy of pregnancy out of wedlock. Women had to be protected from the "dangerous [male] seducer," from the "bestial sensualism" of men, to borrow a few phrases from Altamirano in *Clemencia* (6) and *El Zarco* (20), respectively. (5)

Although Irwin does not cite Foucault here, he employs the term "heterosexual panic" to describe these processes. His examples might serve as the primary thread of those discourses that initiated heterogeneities of sexuality, or what Foucault, again, refers to as the "Perverse Implantation" (Foucault 36-51). I would, however, hesitate to employ the term "heterosexual panic," if for instance, one is to understand these as "modes" of sexuality that are in fact situated on a continuum that is neither heterosexual or homosexual in any sort of tangible way. Rather, these processes might very well be examples of Sedgwick's notion of a "residual" "plural," "varied" forms of sexuality (48).

Essentially, if one is to follow Sedgwick's idea that there is a tremendous need to move beyond "minoritizing" sexuality (loosely, to move beyond the notion that queer studies is for the benefit of queer people), one can begin to understand how the marginalized figures of sexual

deviancy have been inherent to the center all along. Or perhaps, how certain discursive categories of sexuality and gender before *both* homo- and heterosexuality become may have carried over into the “panic” surrounding homosexuality and gender deviancy as we know it today.

Finally, by definition, “queer” must be constantly engaged with the enduring effects of colonialism, the gendering of other aspects of identity, or the larger allegorical implications of gender norms as they relate to the nation-state, cultural productions, nationalism, globalization, projects of “normalization”, etc. The “queer” in terms of her subjectivity, is always something that the norm claims not to be, for the queer is always “a perversion” of the norm; all this, despite the fact that when “normality” is un-assumed it is easily recast as that which ingests, incorporates, and depends upon the very same structures of same-sex desire that it persistently rejects.

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