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Lunar Wastelands to Fertile Fields: Representations of the Landscape in Mexican Novels, Illustrations, and Film Adaptations (1899-2019)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Audrey Joy Anderson Larkin

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Lunar Wastelands to Fertile Fields: Representations of the Landscape in Mexican Novels, Illustrations, and Film Adaptations (1899-2019)

by

Audrey Joy Anderson Larkin

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Maarten van Delden, Chair

This dissertation explores the interaction between visual, cinematic, and literary landscapes by examining how this dialogue is used to both establish and question racial, gender, and national identity. Rather than being simply a detail or a decorative element, I see these visual and literary representations of the landscape as essential components of an exploration of otherness and belonging in Mexican novels, film, and visual arts. Through an analysis of the relationship between literary and visual landscapes, my project will contribute to a growing body of literature on the intersection of word and image in the Mexican landscape by scholars such as Larrucea Garritz, an area of study often overlooked by literary scholars.

The first chapter explores the relationship between the lithographs and photographs found in the 1911 edition of *Tomochic*, by Heriberto Frías, and the text. I argue that the illustrations underscore the dichotomous portrayal of the villagers and their landscapes in the novel, forcing the reader/viewer to confront opposing views of Mexico's north. In my second chapter on *Los de abajo* by Mariano Azuela, José Clemente Orozco's illustrations of the Mexican Revolution depict scenes of violence in an

inhospitable landscape while Diego Rivera's celebratory illustrations show the revolutionaries in a benign setting. The illustrations emphasize opposing elements of the novel's portrayal of the revolutionaries as alternatively civilized and barbaric, illustrating different sides of the author's framing of the revolutionaries and their landscapes. My third chapter looks at *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo and the 1967 movie adaptation directed by Carlos Velo, where I argue that the movie facilitates the audience's gaze over Susana's sexualized body rather than focusing on Susana's own imagined spaces foregrounded in the novel. In my fourth chapter on *Gringo viejo* by Carlos Fuentes, I explore how the novel depicts fluid and constantly changing landscapes, where the boundaries between the U.S. and Mexico are blurred and questioned. Yet, the film *Old Gringo*, directed by Luis Puenzo, prioritizes the English-speaking audience's somewhat stereotypical gaze over Mexico, rather than attempting to replicate the novel's approach. The last chapter on *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli investigates how the protagonist's stepson—who narrates the second half of the novel— takes pictures of people and of the landscape on a family trip to the Mexican—United States border that are included in the novel. The photographs represent a youthful way of looking at the landscape more akin to that of the migrant children, but the son is also separated from these children by situation, nationality, class, and language, raising questions about how the suffering of migrant children can be ethically represented by a more privileged subject.

The dissertation of Audrey Joy Anderson Larkin is approved.

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2022

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INTRODUCTION

I

In 1893, José María Velasco—one of Mexico's most prominent landscape painters—painted *Cañada de Metlac*, a landscape painting that celebrated the newly built railway connecting the port of Veracruz to Mexico City. In this image, a gleaming train curves around a bend in the canyon towards the viewer (see figure 1). This symbol of Porfirian modernity and progress is meticulously framed by overflowing flora from the mountains of Veracruz in the foreground, with a snowcapped Orizaba Peak in the background. The more traditional landscape painting, which showcases the flora of the region, and features a picturesque view from a place known for its natural beauty, is blended into this painting that quite literally foregrounds the engineering and economic progress represented by the train. The railroad tracks wind through a tunnel forcibly blasted from the majestic gorge, and grey smoke dissipates into the seemingly idealized grand vista. This is a landscape in a state of flux, where different ways of thinking about the environment overlap in the space of the gorge's shaded walls. Indeed, the two different focal points in the painting—the Orizaba Peak and the gleaming black train—keep the eye moving between these two contrasting elements.

Writer and politician Guillermo Prieto is also fascinated by the changes wrought by trains on the landscape. During a long train ride thirteen years earlier, he writes a poem aptly titled "El tren de vapor" (which is included in his travelogue *Viaje a los Estados Unidos*):

El intrépido gigante
Que devora las distancias;
Parece que en su carrera
Muros rompe y velos rasga,
Que extiende verdes campiñas,

Que engendra las sierras altas

…………………………….

Y así corrientes de pueblos

Se conocen y se enlazan,

Y en el seno del Progreso

Con santa efusión se abrazan

Los que en los hielos nacen

Y los que nacen en África. (521-522)

As in Velasco's painting, Prieto's written vision of a train hurtling through the landscape is more complex than it might initially seem. It celebrates progress and unity in the form of a train crossing idealized (but generic) high mountains and a verdant countryside but also seems to express unease or disquiet at this invention that "devora," "rompe," and "rasga." The train both destroys and engenders the landscape. Moreover, it is important to note that Prieto writes this poem in exile in Northern California. His landscapes are not Mexican and do not seem especially concerned with Mexican examples of progress or feats of engineering. In this vision of cosmopolitan cooperation, distinct national identities and distinct local landscapes are subsumed by progress. Indeed, the imagined embrace of the ice-dweller and African occurs in the non-space that is the "seno de progreso."

When read together, Velasco's painting and Prieto's poem raise many questions. Why do both the poet and the painter turn to representations of the landscape to explore technological and social changes? Why do they use the shared language of the landscape so differently? And what can a comparison of these visual and written landscapes reveal about attitudes towards nationality (and other forms of identity) during a period of rapid social change? These questions

are central to this dissertation, which explores the interaction between written, visual, and cinematic representations of the landscape. I take a broad view of Mexican literary and culture production, examining multimedia representations of the landscape during four sociocultural moments marked by profound social change and turmoil. These are the Porfiriato (through an illustrated edition of *Tomochic* by Heriberto Frías), the Mexican Revolution (through editions of *Los de abajo* by Mariano Azuela illustrated by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco and revisited in the 80s in *Gringo viejo* and Luis Puenzo's film adaptation), the post-revolutionary period (through *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo and the film adaptation directed by Carlos Velo) and the current humanitarian border crisis (through *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli, which includes polaroid photographs taken by the author).

In what follows, I will employ Velasco's painting and Prieto's poem to outline an interdisciplinary approach to this analysis of written and visual landscapes. I weave together three seemingly disparate threads: landscape theory, word/image studies, and postcolonial studies to better explore how complex and often contradictory visual and written landscapes are used to engage with questions of nationality, race, and gender identity. I then discuss various approaches scholars have used to explore the landscape in a specifically Mexican context and finally turn to the specific arguments of each dissertation chapter.

II

For a contemporary viewer living in a society where landscapes are often seen as commonplace and even kitsch, found in travel brochures, calendars, and doctor's offices, it is perhaps difficult to see a painting such as Velasco's or a poem such as Prieto's with fresh eyes. The conventions of these landscapes are so well established that it is easy to gloss over how they emerged and what they reveal about the societies that make them. Art historian and architect

Javier Maderuelo highlights the inherently cultural nature of landscapes, arguing that “el paisaje no tiene una existencia autónoma porque no es un lugar físico sino una construcción cultural, una serie de ideas, de sensaciones y sentimientos que surgen de la contemplación sensible del lugar” (10). He sees garden design, buildings with windows or apertures designed to showcase a certain view of the land, descriptions of agreeable natural sights in literature, and visual representations of place as manifestations of how different time periods and cultures have created landscapes. Edwin S. Casey articulates a similar idea about the landscape in his book *Representing Place*: “there is certainly unrepresented space, including large tracts of earth; but to be a landscape is to be a place already on the road to representation: at the very least, it is to be the more or less coherent embodiment of a point of view” (xv). According to this view, there is no landscape that is not a representation. That the landscape can be seen to embody ways of looking at and imagining the natural world is an idea that will be essential to my exploration of the topic.

Landscapes are particularly important in a Latin American and Mexican context; these postcolonial societies reimagine older European models in order to suit the needs of new nation-states on a different continent. As a student at the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos in Mexico City, Velasco studied landscape painting under the mentorship of Italian and Spanish landscape painters such as Eugenio Landesio. He therefore invokes a specifically European tradition of thinking and visually representing the natural world. Architect and art historian Amayo Laruccea draws on Maderuelo’s ideas, describing this specifically European tradition as one that “surge en la modernidad… aparece desde las discusiones filosóficas de la escuela de Chartres sobre lo bello en la naturaleza pasando por las idealizaciones de los lugares en la literatura arcádica del siglo XVII hasta llegar a la madurez de la escuela flamenca de pintura de paisaje, en donde éste aparece en toda su plenitud” (15). However, Velasco (and Prieto to a

lesser degree) use elements learned from this landscape tradition to create images for a young country an ocean away. In the words of Gabriela Nouzeilles, “las nuevas sociedades construyeron una iconografía de lo local, deudora de tradiciones ideológicas imperiales, que identificaba la naturaleza con el origen legítimo de las comunidades poscoloniales latinoamericana” (28). Landscape traditions initially used to establish imperial claims to overseas territory are reappropriated to support the legitimacy of new nation-states.

In a specifically Mexican context, architect Larrucea Garritz also links the development of the nation-state to representations of the landscape: “el término de la guerra de Independencia en 1821 fue el inicio de México como país pero todavía se tendría que recorrer un larguísimo camino para construir cabalmente la nación. Este trayecto tiene un momento definitorio en la valoración del paisaje como elemento esencial” (8). Landscapes therefore became a tool of nation-building for the new and changing country, to such an extent that dissenting authors such as the exiled Prieto push back against this common equation of landscapes with explicitly nationalist ideas. Moreover, landscapes such as Velasco’s not only served a powerful didactic purpose at home, but also projected ideas about Mexican independence and progress abroad. Indeed, at World’s Fairs and Paris exhibitions, Velasco’s paintings—and the international recognition they received—were a source of pride for Mexican intellectuals, who appreciated how the artist’s mastery of landscape conventions was being used to validate and celebrate an unmistakably modern Mexican landscape on the world stage. Prieto also participates in this cosmopolitan international dialogue by commenting rather dryly that California’s transportation system (which ties together the mountains and the coast) “por supuesto no h[a] llegado al

estupendo progreso de México" (49). In such a context, *Cañada de Metlac* and Prieto's landscapes of progress and change are cutting edge and inherently political.[1]

Representations of the landscape are not only used to examine the overt changes brought about by railroads and industrialization in new nation-states, but also to explore gender and race relations in these postcolonial societies. Media Cultural Studies scholar Freya Schiwy links this gendered connection between femininity and land to European colonization: "este orden geopolítico del conocimiento, sin embargo, está anclado en un imaginario sexual que también tiene su origen en el contexto de la colonización de los continentes americanos…el territorio latinoamericano ha sido pensado como femenino, tanto en términos débiles como amenazantes" (209). She goes on to trace the lineage of this feminization of the Latin American landscape, from "Amazona, figura silvestre, rebelde, indígena que tiene que ser sometida e inmovilizada" to a "territorio pasivo, inmóvil, virgen y desconocido que la fuerza masculina penetra y domina" (209). Indeed, Prieto's domineering train that shakes distant fences or Velasco's showcasing of feats of engineering seem to present these new machines in masculine terms, offset by verdant and compliant feminized landscapes.

Moreover, from the time of Spanish colonization, Indigenous bodies have been associated with the lands they inhabit and were often rendered as subservient in landscape paintings. Gabriela Nouzeilles, who focuses on Argentinian literature, draws explicit connections between natural spaces and colonized subjects:

> el espacio natural y el cuerpo del otro colonizado son el espejo en cuya superficie el sujeto imperial moderno se contempla y produce por inversión su propia imagen. Todas

[1] Scholars such as Edward J. Sullivan also analyze how landscapes are used in a Latin American context. Sullivan sees representations of the landscape as transmitting important social and political information, especially during times of profound change. He asserts that landscapes "serve not as a background, but as a principal vehicle of our understanding of these socio-political or economic transformations" (8).

> las representaciones que resultan de este esquema se asientan en una cadena de oposiciones, que se refuerzan mutuamente, donde Occidente ocupa siempre el lugar del espíritu, la razón y el orden frente a los cuerpos y las pasiones de seres confundidos con una naturaleza subhumana. (19)

In this formulation, the imperial subject—and then the new national elite—understands her own position both through her gaze directed at the "natural" and "subhuman" other and at the landscape itself. This gaze can perhaps be seen in a painting such as Velasco's where the viewing subject gazes from a distance at a detached landscape spread out seemingly for her own viewing pleasure, creating a sense of hierarchy between the viewer and the vista. Yet, Prieto's depiction of the train as allowing for an embrace between an ice-dweller and an African perhaps destabilizes this logic, as the two meet as equals in an ever-changing landscape. Hence, landscapes are not simply used to explore and interrogate obvious physical changes in the landscape. They are also used to examine the constructions of nationality, race, and gender that are projected onto the natural world, often claimed as biological fact.

These representations of the landscape not only grapple with questions of social change and identity, but also change forms, appearing in mediums as different as poetry and oil painting. In a culture where written and visual landscapes participate in the same conversations about nationality, progress, and identity, it seems risky to simply focus my analysis on written landscapes. For instance, Prieto's view of the changing landscape as collapsing the differences between countries becomes all the more striking when set against Velasco's more nationalist view of an unmistakably Mexican landscape. Indeed, it seems to me that these different mediums are meant to be read together since, as I explore above, social critiques are produced by the way any one landscape dialogues with a larger landscape tradition. I will therefore follow the

approach used by visual culture scholar W.T.J. Mitchell, who argues that "in contrast to the usual treatment of aesthetics in terms of fixed genres (sublime, beautiful, picturesque, pastoral), fixed media (literature, painting, photography) or fixed places treated as objects for visual contemplation or interpretation" he and other scholars of the landscape such as Ann Bermingham and David Bunn "examine the way landscape *circulates* as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity" (2).

The relationship between Prieto's poem and Velasco's painting is perhaps more tenuous than many of the word/image relationships I will examine in depth in the following chapters, where a novel is illustrated or turned into a film adaptation. However, my reading of the utterly independent poem and painting aptly illustrate how visual representations of the landscape are in no way subordinate to the text. Though film critic Robert Stam looks at film adaptation, rather than illustrations, his approach to word/images relations is crucial for my dissertation. Stam emphasizes the independence of the visual adaptation: "filmic adaptations…are hypertexts spun from pre-existing hypotexts which have been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization and actualization" (5). By fitting Gérard Genette's ideas about hypertexts to film adaptation, he provides a framework that both acknowledges the intimate relationship between word and image but also highlights the independence and artistic achievement of the latter, an approach that I will use in my explorations of visual and written landscapes.

Moreover, it is important to underscore the multiple layers of readings produced by these visual, cinematic, and textual landscapes. In illustrated novels, word and image are generally read together. Similarly, the film adaptations of famous novels often cater to audiences who are somewhat familiar with the novel in question, even if they have not read it themselves. In these

instances, readings are not only produced within the text, illustration, or film. Readings are also produced through the juxtaposition of the word and image. Since landscapes are inherently interdisciplinary, appearing in films, text, and visual art, they easily lend themselves to these multilayered levels of readings. For instance, a reader/viewer might simply compare one beautiful and bucolic Rivera illustration with another Rivera illustration. However, that same reader/view might also compare Rivera's gentle landscapes to Azuela's blood-filled textual landscapes. This juxtaposition of landscapes is quite striking and raises larger questions about why the Mexican Revolution is being represented so differently. These multimedia landscapes therefore force the reader/viewer to look at contentious social issues, whether that be the ethics of revolutionary violence or the treatment of mostly Indigenous unaccompanied migrant children in the Sonoran Desert through often contradictory lenses. They force the reader to question and confront different representations of nationality, gender, and race head on.

My dissertation will therefore use word/image studies, postcolonial studies, and landscape studies to better explore how different ways of seeing and understanding the landscape intersect, just as they do in the 19-century poem and painting. Often these landscapes are slightly jarring—especially when the visual or cinematic elements are read in conjunction with the text—a combination of elements and landscape traditions that do not seem to quite belong together. This unsettled collage-like quality could be read as a defect, but I see it as a powerful representational strategy. Instead of simply naturalizing social issues—inscribing them into the supposedly unchanging firmaments of mountains and gorges— the author and artists I will examine use depictions of marvelous, unnatural, and changing landscapes to explore and even disrupt contemporary social discourse. Hence, I argue that landscapes are not simply a backdrop or a dated decorative element, but rather an integral part of how generations of writers, artists,

and filmmakers engaged in a larger dialogue about questions of race, gender, and national identity.

III

The role of the landscape, especially its interdisciplinary potential, has been largely overlooked in Mexican literature. Though groundbreaking work in various fields—including urban planning, art history, architecture, and literature—has been undertaken in the last few decades focused on landscapes in Mexico, systematic interdisciplinary studies of Mexican landscapes are still few and far between.[2] Indeed, Larrucea Garritz writes that "existen muy pocos documentos teóricos integrados que reflexionen sobre el paisaje en México y que puedan orientar la construcción de un pensamiento propio" (18). This relative lack of scholarly work is especially apparent in studies that consider literary representations of the landscape. Perhaps influenced by Ángel Rama's seminal book, *La ciudad letrada*, many literary scholars have focused on the impact of urban spaces on the development of Mexican literature.[3] Influential books such as *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* may also have steered critics away from the topic of the landscape, as Carlos Fuentes (who rather ironically is one of the authors studied in this project) criticizes late nineteenth and early twentieth-century novels as being so focused on the landscape that they resemble geography more than literature. Poet and critic Octavio Paz also (quite dryly) criticizes and deemphasizes his fellow Mexican's literary landscapes, arguing that the best novels about the Mexican landscape have been written by foreigners such as Malcom Lowry and D.H. Lawrence and that "Rulfo es el único novelista mexicano que nos ha dado una imagen—no una descripción—de nuestro paisaje" (18).

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[2] See Larrucea Garritz, Fernando Núñez

[3] As critic Carlos Alonso observes, "the enduring activity of the letrado and its invariably urban context—the composite abstraction for which Rama coined the term ciudad letrada [lettered city] —served as a vast, somewhat surreptitious foundation to the cultural history of the continent" (284).

Literary scholars Claudia Carranza Vera and Juan Pascual Gay further highlight this critical view of the Mexican literary landscape. They insist that, "el paisaje en la literatura mexicana estuvo más bien, a diferencia de lo que ocurría en otros países, a merced de los sucesos políticos y o sociales, como si el tema mismo tuviera que pagar una cuota de peaje o una improbable servidumbre" (12). Though I agree that in a Mexican context, representations of the landscape are inextricably linked to political and social changes, my dissertation will explore how representations of the landscape are enriched rather than restricted by this socio-political framing. I will push against views of the landscape framed as a struggle where either nature or humankind is subordinated. However, in *Miradas y miramientos: Ensayo sobre el paisaje y la literatura mexicana*, Gay touches upon another way of thinking about the landscape in Mexican literature. He observes that, "el otro y la otredad causan pavor y es esa creciente turbación la que se advierte en la relación entre el hombre y la naturaleza" (14). While Gay focuses on the landscape as a way of primarily exploring poetry, my work will center on how different social groups are othered and/or integrated into the nation through their associations with the landscape.

Avechuco Cabrera also addresses this subject in his article, "Bárbaros en la ciudad: la ruptura de las fronteras espaciales en *Los de abajo*, de Mariano Azuela," where he traces the narrative unease about how Indigenous and rural revolutionaries invade urban elite spaces. Moreover, in an analysis of *Tomochic*, Daniel Chávez notes that the author employs: "the devices of estrangement displayed by the orientalist novels from Europe. It is not a coincidence that the target population to be reduced by the national authority is located in 'oriental' surroundings" (78). In my dissertation, I wish to expand on these critics' analyses of individual novels to explore how the landscape is strategically employed across different time periods, literary movements, and mediums to represent the "other," whether that be remote villagers in

Tomochic, indigenous revolutionaries in *Los de abajo*, women in Pedro Páramo, or unaccompanied child migrants in *Lost Children Archive*. The following five chapters will therefore investigate how visual, cinematic, and written landscapes are used to explore and unsettle contemporary discourses around questions of nationality, race, and gender.

IV

The first chapter examines Heriberto Frías's illustrated novel *Tomochic*, which provides a fictionalized account of the Tomochic rebellion, an armed confrontation between the federal army and the inhabitants of the small town of Tomochic (located in western Chihuahua) from 1891-1892 (Saborit). In the novel, Frías, who was an officer involved in this military operation, depicts Tomochic as existing both inside and outside of the nation. This landscape is described as African and Middle Eastern but is also portrayed as a typical small town in rural Mexico. Instead of trying to reconcile these opposing views, the narrative voice uses the language of absurdity, marvel, and the supernatural to allow these different representations of the land and its inhabitants space to coexist within the same narrative. Central to my argument is the idea that the novel allows for seemingly incongruent views of the north not only through textual representations, but also through the accompanying illustrations found in the 1911 edition. As critic Juan Dabove notes, these visual elements were added to this later edition, the last published during the author's lifetime and with his collaboration. (The author of the lithographs and photographs is unknown.)

Notable differences emerge when comparing the lithographs and photographs. The lithographs appear in the late costumbrista style popular at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, a style associated with the creation of national identity (Pérez Salas 5). These prints depict the Tomochitecos and the town as typically Mexican (which is coded as

criollo). However, the photographs show the same people with stereotypically Indigenous features set against wild landscapes. These photographs evoke a supposedly "scientific" tradition where western science fixes its gaze on the racial other prevalent during the Porfiriato period.

Through an examination of text and image, I argue that instead of attempting to simplify the ways the center views the north by either depicting the Tomochitecos and their landscapes as foreign and other or Mexican and familiar, this illustrated novel makes space for both interpretations. Indeed, the multimedia novel seems to embrace this paradoxical gaze, creating landscapes outside the bounds of naturalist discourse where these contradictions can be expanded upon rather than minimized. The reader/viewer is therefore forced to make space for these irreconcilable narratives that question the center/periphery and civilization/ barbarism binaries prevalent in late nineteenth-century discourse.

The second chapter focuses on the overlooked role of the landscape in *Los de abajo* by Mariano Azuela and in the illustrations made by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. In the text, the Battle of Zacatecas is situated on a mountain compared to a bloodthirsty Aztec ruler and the revolutionaries trace the footsteps of their Indigenous ancestors over the plains. These majestic and yet violent landscapes draw on primitivist ideas about Indigenous peoples as both noble and barbaric. What is the purpose of these disquieting primitivist landscapes? I argue that these landscapes create space for the novel to express a deep ambivalence about the revolutionary project, where the cruel and yet noble past wells up during this period of violent upheaval.

Illustrations of *Los de abajo* by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco further complicate this already multifaceted representation of the landscape. Rivera's illustrations present heroic revolutionaries in tamed and comforting landscapes, whereas Orozco's images

depict bleak landscapes replete with brutal violence. Drawn a decade after the novel was written, in a period where the post-revolutionary government attempted to legitimize its rule through positive depictions of the revolution, these illustrations seem to reinforce (in the case of Rivera) or refute (in the case of Orozco) the official government view. However, analyzing text and illustrations together reveals how the landscape creates a critical discursive space that allows for different —and even contradictory— views of the Mexican Revolution, forcing the reader/viewer to interrogate any single representation of the conflict.

The third chapter explores landscapes in *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo and the 1967 film adaptation directed by Carlos Velo. In the text, the main female character, Susana San Juan, imagines her body situated in the immensity of distant beaches and watery landscapes. However, in other moments Susana positions her body within the confines of a coffin, cave, and bed. What does this imagining of the female body in terms of both vast and confined physical spaces reveal about the novel's exploration of gender? I argue that Susana asserts bodily autonomy by articulating and imagining wide-open spaces while physically confined to coffin and bed, creating alternative fantastic spaces that center on the experience of the female body. But at the same time, her association with the landscape also renders her helpless; like the landscape, her female body is exploited by her father and Pedro Páramo. She is therefore caught between her imagined landscapes and her connection to the land in the eyes of the men around her, between her desire and her body as an object of desire. Hence, Susana's imagined landscapes and body imagined as landscape illustrate the creative possibilities but also the limitations apparent in the association between womanhood and land.

The 1967 film adaptation diverges from my textual interpretation. Here, Susana's imagined landscapes are given little attention, while spaces associated with her sexual

exploitation are made more obvious. For instance, in the film adaptation, her father sexually abuses her in the mines, a scene merely alluded to in the book. And while the camera zooms in on her reclined bedridden body, where she murmurs about faraway landscapes, these shots implicitly prioritize her body as an object of sexual desire over the distant beaches where she projects her own sexual desire onto the idealized form of an imagined male lover. By examining both film and novel, I better explore the way landscapes both free and constrain Susana, allowing her to transcend her circumstances and yet brutally tying her into a cycle of confinement and exploitation.

The fourth chapter explores *Gringo viejo* and the Hollywood film adaptation. In this chapter, I once again turn my attention to the northern Mexican landscapes explored in *Tomochic*. Many critics have read Carlos Fuentes's 1985 novel *Gringo viejo* as creating stereotypical divisions between Mexico and its northern neighbor. However, an analysis of the representations of the landscape in the novel reveals a more nuanced approach to questions of nationality and identity. Drawing heavily from references to Westerns and other popular Hollywood films, Fuentes's novel creates a series of purposefully strange landscapes. Exotic jungle landscapes often associated with Mexico—and more generally Latin America—in U.S. film invade Washington, D.C. The Hollywood Western idea of the U.S. frontier is displaced to the U.S-Mexico border, and even the desert is over overlayed by images of the ocean that it once was. These fluid and constantly changing landscapes therefore challenge essentialist ideas about U.S and Mexican national identity.

Old Gringo, the 1989 movie adaptation of *Gringo viejo* directed by the Argentine director Luis Puenzo, takes a different approach. In the Hollywood film version, I see the landscape as reinforcing an imported and stereotypical sense of "Mexicanness" —replete with adobe houses

and mostly silent peasants—at odds with the fluid and changing landscapes apparent in the novel. Here, the landscape highlights differences between the two countries, as is vividly revealed by the camera zooming in on various characters crossing the border over a large bridge (with flags on the U.S. side to further distinguish nationality), instead of zooming out to reveal a landscape that looks the same on each side of the border. Adapted for an English-speaking audience, the desert landscape becomes a space that reinscribes notions of difference and otherness, even as it seemingly praises Mexico by depicting its "colorful" landscapes and people. If Fuentes's novel images the complexities of the U.S gaze over Mexican deserts and in turn casts a Mexican gaze over the swampland that is Washington, D.C., the movie simplifies this point of view by seeing Mexico through Hollywood eyes.

The final chapter further opens up my analysis to consider a depiction of the U.S. landscape, specifically the southwest, written in English. In *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli, the unnamed adult narrator takes a road trip with her family from New York to the United States-Mexico border to create sound recordings of the humanitarian border crisis for a radio program. The first section of the novel is narrated from the adult journalist's perspective, where she questions the ethics of her project, which focuses on the traumas of unaccompanied migrant children, while her marriage slowly starts to dissolve amidst the changing U.S. landscape. During the trip, she encourages her own children to create their own "archives," including her stepson's polaroid photographs. These photographs are included at the end of the book after the second section, which is narrated by the stepson. In this second section he relates how he and his half-sister, tired of the marital discord and eager for some parental attention, wander away from their parents in search of the migrant children and end up becoming "lost children"—at least in a certain sense—themselves.

What do these photographs supposedly created by a 10-year-old American child contribute to a book about the plight of migrant children? I argue that by framing the landscape in terms of distance and mediation—the wife sees the landscapes through books and music about the areas they pass through, and the stepson takes pictures so that his little sister will remember the trip—the narrative voice focuses not on the landscape itself, but rather on its observers. Hence, the landscape serves as a way to explore the ethics (and limits) of representation at play in the narrator's project to write about the experiences of unaccompanied child migrants from a privileged perspective.

CHAPTER ONE

Incongruous Landscapes: Written and Visual Representations of the North in *Tomochic* by Heriberto Frías

I

In 1892, the small northern town of Tomochic in the Sierra Tarahumara held off 1,500 federal troops for ten days. What events led to this dramatic armed confrontation? Historians differ on the details, but most agree that the Tomochitecos took up arms to defend themselves against an abusive government. A local official forced the townspeople to work his lands at low pay and then conscripted the dissenters into the army. Meanwhile, another official removed religious objects from the town's church and the parish priest banned the veneration of the Santa de Cabora. Incensed by this government and ecclesiastical overreach, the townspeople threatened to take up arms. Local officials then called on the army to quell the rebellion, provoking the very armed resistance that they had feared (Illades Aguiar 59-60). The Tomochitecos twice successfully defended their town against 500 troops before 1,500 federal troops were sent in to finish the job. This larger force killed most of Tomochic's three hundred inhabitants and destroyed the town (Bethell 93).

According to the government, the army had to intervene for the good of the nation. However, according to accounts from the few remaining survivors and their descendants, the townspeople had no choice but to defend their town, religion, and rights against an oppressive government which overstepped its authority. Hence, this rebellion poses fundamental questions about which groups represent the nation and have the right to take up arms when their interests are threatened. These are questions as relevant in the late nineteenth century as they are today. Were the Tomochitecos ordinary Mexican townspeople who had no choice but to take up arms

against government abuse? Or were they ignorant and fanatical outsiders who had to be killed by the civilizing national government? Heriberto Frías's novel *Tomochic*, which provides a fictionalized account of the brutal events from the semi-autobiographical point of view of a minor army official involved in the conflict, explores both possibilities. The novel is curiously ambivalent, presenting Tomochic and the Sierra Tarahumara mountains as both a typical Mexican space and the home of barbaric foreigners living in a second Mecca.

This seemingly irreconcilable view of the Tomochitectos as foreign and familiar is particularly apparent in depictions of the landscape they inhabit. This landscape is described both as an African desert and as an agrarian valley populated by criollos, as a barren moonscape and as a beautiful mountain vale that promises solace and healing. Though landscapes have often been read as reinforcing hegemonic ideas about nationality and civilization (Mitchell, Schama), I see these landscapes as a destabilizing element that highlights the center's contradictory view of the north as existing both inside and outside of the nation. Notably, the novel allows for seemingly incongruent views of the northern peoples and landscape not only through textual representations, but also through the understudied accompanying illustrations found in the 1911 edition. Striking differences emerge when looking at the accompanying ethnographic photographs and lithographs. The lithographs depict the inhabitants of Tomochic and the town itself as a typically Mexican (coded as criollo) place while the photographs show the northern inhabitants with stereotypically Indigenous features, presented against nondescript, wild backgrounds. By examining both text and images, I posit that instead of attempting to simplify the ways the center views the north by either representing the villagers and their landscape as foreign and other or Mexican and familiar, this novel allows both interpretations to exist within the same narrative structure. The novel embraces this paradoxical gaze, creating a space outside

the bounds of realist discourse where these contradictions can be expanded upon rather than minimized. Thus, the novel's gaze at the northernmost territory reinforces the idea of the nation as a whole, but also calls into question the very idea of the nation.

II

Serrano Settlers in a Changing North

Contemporary newspaper articles about the Tomochic Rebellion reflect the complex and often contradictory ways of viewing the north echoed in Frías's novel. The *Periódico Oficial Chihuahua* compared the last remaining rebel holdout to an "ámbito de infierno" while the *Tiempo de México* headlined its coverage of the conflict as "La guerra del fin del mundo. Sangre y fuego en Tomóchic" (cited in Illades Aguiar 93). I see this latter headline as implicitly situating the town outside of the nation, in an almost mythical realm of apocalyptic blood and fire, a notion at odds with the fact that the story could be promptly reported through telegraph and that the government had to intervene to restore "national order." Even the idea of Tomochic as a hellish place—while perhaps simply a war trope—suggests that the town exists in a different sort of space than the rest of Mexico. However, the dissident press pushed back against this attempt to other the Tomochitecos and their cause. Lillian Illades Aguiar writes that "*El Diario del Hogar* decía que el pueblo de Tomóchic, luchando en defensa de sus derechos había sido 'atropellado por un gobierno poco amante del pueblo'" (84). This more populist positioning of the Tomochitecos as part of the "pueblo" who were simply defending their rights situates them as fellow countrymen (and women) rather than fanatical and ignorant outsiders. Hence, *Tomochic* can be read as part of a larger contemporary debate about these rebels from a small mountain town, a debate that reflects concerns about how these people fit into the Mexican nation-state.

When analyzing these newspaper articles in the context of *Tomochic*, critics appear to focus on the official government position. Critic Jesús Vargas Valdez underscores how newspaper reports highlighted the rebels' supposed fanaticism and isolation: "en las noticias que publicó la prensa nacional de la época, se hace referencia a una gran guerra provocada por el fanatismo religioso y a un grupo de serranos aislados en las montañas y perdidos totalmente en la ignorancia" (12). Saborit sees this negative representation of Tomochic as stemming from the official government position, "el pueblo de fanáticos que inventó la autoridad porfíria en esa parte de Chihuahua" (12). However, this criticism seemingly ignores papers like the *Diario del hogar* which draws upon the language of the pueblo and their rights to position the Tomochitecos as part of the nation and entitled to its protection. I see *Tomochic* as incorporating these two contradictory ways of seeing the Tomochitecos as either representative of the pueblo fighting for its rights, or as a group of isolated and ignorant townspeople in a place that does not fit into the modern Porfirian nation.

These inconsistent views about northern Mexico reflect larger socio-cultural changes that altered the way the capital looked at northern Mexico. Well into the nineteenth century, constant incursions on the northern border by Indigenous groups seeking to reclaim their lands had resulted in weak and limited federal control over the Northern frontier. However, under Porfirio Díaz, the federal government was able to consolidate power over this region. Illades Aguiar details how:

> la región serrana, escenario de la rebelión estudiada, dejó de ser una tierra políticamente anónima cuando al concluir la guerra contra los apaches en 1886 se facilitó el desarrollo económico en la actividad minera, ganadera, en la explotación forestal, y el fin de la construcción del ferrocarril del Noroeste en 1890, y con ello la expansión del gobierno

> central mediante jefes políticos y caciques que actuaban bajo el amparo de gobernadores para mantener la tranquilidad en sus respectivos distritos. (15)

New alliances between the national and regional government, which responded to a changing political and social situation, thus had a stake in reimagining these small settler communities as barriers to—rather than agents of—a modern nation-state.

Anthropologist Ana María Alonso specifically writes about the ways that the portrayal of these northern towns changed when the government was able to exert greater control over the region. She explains that:

> the one-time agents of 'civilization,' the militarized serrano peasants, subsequently became redefined by the state as the new barbarians in need of order and mastery. Not only did the corporate land grants and the relative political autonomy of the serrano communities come under attack, but also these specialists in violence became the object of technologies of order and power designed to 'reduce' what was now construed as the wild and socially threatening masculinity of serrano men. (7)

I see *Tomochic* as occupying a grey area that complicates this notion that the militarized serrano peasants, such as the Tomochitecos, shifted seemingly overnight from "agents of 'civilization'" to "new barbarians." *Tomochic* seems to embrace—rather than to suppress—a contradictory view. The novel certainly does not fit into a neat narrative where socio-political changes prompt a complete and unreflective turnaround in the way the north is portrayed.

Literary critic D. Toner also notes this shift in the representation of the Tomochitecos. She writes that Frías's, "portrait of the mutual destruction of, and mutual misunderstanding between, the people of Tomóchic, once renowned as heroic defenders of the national borders against tribal Indians, and the federal soldiers, charged with the responsibility of protecting the

nation… criticizes the political balance between national, regional, and local interests" (180). As Toner observes, Frías clearly criticizes the national government and at times sides with the townspeople's desire for increased local autonomy. Yet perhaps Frías's criticism goes beyond simply objecting to the balance of power between local and federal authorities. This depiction of "mutual destruction" and "mutual misunderstanding" speaks to a crisis in the very notion of the nation, where both sides are depicted as representing the worthy interests of the nation and as a threat to the nation itself. Instead of depicting a shift from one viewpoint to another (the civilizers to barbarians narrative seen above), the novel manages to critically present these different views next to each other. In this way, the novel highlights these utterly incompatible ways of looking at the north instead of suppressing them, forcing the reader to make space for contradictory views of the north and the nation.

Moreover, it is important to note that not only was the government trying to consolidate its control over the north, but different influential factions of the government —with divergent ideas about the nation—were also vying for influence. Historian Leslie Bethell details the tension during this time period between regional elites, the army, and the científicos over the issues of federal control, foreign capital, and regional autonomy. He writes that:

> the attitude of the new ruling class seemed schizophrenic to many observers. On some issues they would be completely subservient to foreign interests, and on others they would manifest unexpected surges of nationalism. This national ruling class and the predominant role of the *científicos* within it led to strong divisions among Mexico's elite. Regional elites frequently opposed their pre-eminence and were supported in their attitude by the one other group which considered itself to be 'national' in character, the army. (105)

Different influential groups claimed to be 'national' in character and formed unlikely alliances. To see this conflict as one between local, regional, and federal interests ignores the alliances between different groups and also the ideological inconsistencies that, for instance, allowed the científicos to advocate for increased federal power and display nationalistic tendencies while also making major concessions to foreign capital. Hence, I read *Tomochic* as reflecting fundamental dilemmas around the issue of nation-building in the late nineteenth century, rather than simply reflecting a change in balance between federal and regional power.

How does the landscape specifically become a vehicle used by Frías to explore these contradictory views about nationhood, civilization, and progress? In his book, *Landscape and Memory*, historian Simon Schama observes that: "so many of our modern concerns—empire, nation, freedom, enterprise, and dictatorship—have invoked topography to give their ruling ideas a natural form" (17). The very "naturalness" of the landscape serves as a way to legitimize "modern concerns" such as the nation. There are undoubtably moments in *Tomochic* that neatly fit into Schama's argument about the role of landscape. However, I am also interested in moments where the landscape is rendered unnatural, whether through comparisons to extraterrestrial bodies and nightmarish dreams, or through illustrations that show the same setting in completely different ways. I argue that these unnatural landscapes allow the author to challenge the "natural form" of ruling ideas.

Michell also considers how landscapes are used for ideological purposes. He argues that "landscape as a cultural medium thus has a double role with respect to something like ideology: it naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness as sight and site" (*Landscape*

and Power 2). This notion of the landscape as situating the beholder within a certain way of looking will be an important idea as I analyze representations of the landscape in *Tomochic* and in the accompanying illustrations. Yet, by presenting different and contradictory ways of looking at the north, I see *Tomochic* and the accompanying illustrations as resisting this "determinate relation" between the beholder and the landscape.

Neither Schama nor Mitchell directly address representations of the landscape in a Latin American or Mexican setting. However, Larrucea Garritz points out that the connection between landscape and country has been tied together in the Spanish language since the 1700s; in a dictionary definition from 1708, *paisaje* is defined as "pedazo de país en la pintura" (20). Gabriella Nouzeilles also explores how the new Latin American countries appropriated these older Spanish traditions after achieving independence (28). In this way, nature—and within this larger category landscapes— served as a form of political legitimization for these new nation-states. In nineteenth-century Mexico, landscapes played a particularly important role. Larrucea Garritz writes that, "México cómo nación independiente se construyó y se sostiene con diversos puntales, entre ellos, de vital importancia al menos durante el periodo decimonónico, estuvo la idea de paisaje mexicano. Se estableció aquí una idea de doble consecuencia, ya que el paisaje sostiene también la idea del país" (20). The supposition of a semiotic relationship between country and landscape, each one reinforcing the other, comes under scrutiny in *Tomochic.* Nonetheless, this quote succinctly summarizes the essential role that depictions of the landscape played in creating the idea of Mexico as a nation-state, as well as the equally important role of the nation-state in creating a Mexican landscape. Given this association between country and landscape, perhaps it is no coincidence that Frías uses the landscape to explore—and even criticize—ideas about nation-building.

III

Photography, Lithography, and the Illustrated Novel

This exploration of nation-building is not simply expressed through text. Though *Tomochic* is generally read as a realist novel, it is notable that costumbrista visual images were intertwined with literary production. Art historian Mey-Yen Moriuchi states that costumbrismo's "multiple formats, whether literary periodicals, novels, lithographs, paintings, or photographs, informed, reflected, and shaped one another. The very concept of costumbrismo is intertextual, as it relies on correspondences of similarity and difference between one visual image or written text and the next" (7). Hence, it is important to situate the illustrations in a larger cultural context where image and text were meant to be read together, where meaning was created through the interaction between word and image. Moreover, costumbrista landscapes were not simply confined to a romantic tradition: "costumbrismo became very popular in the nineteenth century, sharing affinities with both romanticism and realism" (4). Thus, I read the costumbrista illustrations—especially the landscapes— as an important way of conveying notions of nationality and progress, rather than as a decorative afterthought.

Costumbrista landscapes were used to situate subjects in their appropriate settings, tying characters to different social spheres. Moriuchi elaborates on how artists such as the German Carl "Carlos" Nebel and the local Mexican artist Sanromán de Haghenbeck used landscapes in their costumbrista images of Mexico to better situate their figures in a larger social context. Nebel depicted backgrounds that "often contain specific, recognizable buildings and landscape features. Thus, the viewer's attention is drawn not only to the individual figures but to the whole scene of group interaction and social behavior" (40). *Tortilleras* is a particularly striking example of how Nebel uses the landscape to situate his subjects in a rural, exoticized setting (see figure

2). Juliana Sanromán de Haghenbeck used landscapes in paintings such as *Sala de música* (see figure 3) to both emphasize her technical skill and to situate her middle-class subjects in a suitably elegant scene: "the parlor is decorated luxuriously, with long silk drapes covering the window and an ornate mirror, silver sconces, crystal glassware, and several gilt-framed paintings adorning the walls. A pastoral landscape and body of water can be seen through the window in the distance" (106). This chapter positions the illustrated landscapes in *Tomochic* within this larger costumbrista tradition, which assumes that a person's setting and surroundings reveal the sort of social sphere that they belong to. Curiously, the pastoral lithographs found in Tomochic and even the domestic scenes situate the Tomochitecos not as the racialized others of the photographs that will be examined below, but as more familiar types such as the young and desirable woman.

Costumbrista landscapes, with their clear social messaging, were also used to articulate notions of mexicanidad. In her book *Costumbrismo y litografía en México: un nuevo modo de ver*, art historian María Esther Pérez Salas states that:

> el costumbrismo litográfico en México no fue resultado de un acontecimiento aislado, sino que participó en un movimiento artístico y cultural más amplio, a la vez que político, en virtud de que los personajes que se consideraban típicos tenían una estrecha relación con la naciente concepción de lo mexicano. El tratamiento de los tipos populares fue más allá de una mera intención descriptiva y decorativa. (12)

Though commonly associated with the romantic movement, scholars such as Pérez Salas also see elements of costumbrismo in a broader context. Pérez Salas argues that "the characteristics of nineteenth-century costumbrismo—nationalist ideology, the construction of social, racial, gender, and national identities, typecasting through recurring portrayals of racial and social

types—were foundational and persisted into the twentieth century" (5-6). I read lithographs of Julia, the protagonist's love interest, as part of this visual tradition, where she is depicted in dress and domestic settings that align with notions of idealized Mexican womanhood.

However, these later *costumbrista* artists also struggled with an issue at the heart of the novel's portrayal of Julia. Literary critic Jefferson Rea Spell astutely notes how towards the end of the nineteenth century, certain *costumbrista* works became increasingly critical of the "colorful" people they were focused on depicting (308). This tension between celebrating the regional and unusual—such as the Tomochitecos—and erasing their differences in the name of progress can be seen in the way Julia is visually depicted as typically Mexican in the lithographs; "the distinctive is merged in the conventional" (308). Moreover, this process reveals a central paradox in late nineteenth-century notions of the nation, where what was seen as making Mexico Mexico, the Indigenous population, strong regional traditions, and unique popular customs, were viewed as hindering the very nation-building process that relied on their image.

This tension between the "local and primitive" and the forces of modernization is especially apparent in the ethnographic photographs that also appear in the 1911 edition of *Tomochic*. This ethnographic approach to photography was primarily employed by foreigners engaged in often pseudoscientific explorations in Mexico. In these photographs, the landscape is used to frame the Indigenous subjects, often in a way that emphasized their poverty and their other perceived "faults." For instance, in *Fuga mexicana: un recorrido por la fotografía en México*, Olivier Debroise observes that Homer Scott, "ofrece una idea de la miseria en que viven los campesinos mexicanos que se puede comparar con la corta serie de imágenes de William Henry Jackson tomadas en el pueblo de El Abra. Scott parece deleitarse en subrayar el polvo circundante, las condiciones de vida, sin describir, como lo hacían los viajeros letrados…las

clemencias del clima, la exuberancia de la vegetación" (119). These images seem to be the antithesis of Mexican nation-building; foreigners look at a racialized other situated in a bleak and supposedly uncivilized landscape (see figure 4).

Other ethnographic photographic projects use Indigenous individuals to frame the landscape itself, creating images with a picturesque character. Debroise notes that Léon Diguet, a French natural scientist, took photographs that almost always feature people: "aun cuando solo pretende mostrar un cactus, Diguet se toma la molestia de incluir a un indígena en la imagen. Se trata, obviamente, de resaltar la escala de plantas…la muestra botánica se convierte entonces en imagen pintoresca (no faltan ahí, los campesinos en trajes típicos, los pescadores de tiburón con el pantalón raído)" (116) (see figure 5). The tension between the supposed "scientific" character of the photographs and their stylized picturesque nature is perhaps partially explained by their display in museums, photography books, or illustrated magazines for the Mexican bourgeoise that were meant to educate, but also entertain (Mraz 422). Thus, these Indigenous peoples are inextricable from their landscapes. Both become a spectacle for the consumer of these images, a compatriot—or even foreigner—who is placed at great remove from these scenes.

How then do these photographs feed into the idea of a Mexican nation? John Mraz argues that "Mexico must be one of the countries most photographed by foreigners, and their imagery has been incorporated into visual constructions of mexicanidad." He goes on to claim that the photograph, along with the railroad, were key elements used by Porfirio Díaz to create the image of a modern Mexico:

> the railroad and the photograph were among the main protagonists of nineteenth-century technology and central actors in the new narrative promoting a modern nation. Integrating Mexico into a country by overcoming a geography that made internal

> communication laborious and expensive, the railroad was also the most important backdrop for the propaganda. Moreover, the railroad made it possible to take cameras into areas formerly inaccessible. The promotional campaign carried out by the Porfirian government was an intense effort to attract foreign investment and to foment tourism. (420-421)

However, the types of photographs explored above—as well as the images that appear in *Tomochic*— seemingly refute this notion that photography could create the image of a modern Mexican nation by showing images of supposed "backwardness" through a modern medium.

This very issue created tension in late nineteeth-century Mexico. Mraz explains that, "images depicting misery were unacceptable to the Porfirian regime as a representation of Mexico. When the official newspaper, *El Imparcial*, reported on the arrest of C. B. Waite in 1901—a photographer who worked in the ethnographic tradition explored above— the text criticized 'travelers who look for the most ridiculous, the most degenerate, and the most miserable in Mexico, exhibiting us in a state of barbarity'" (466). This newspaper article can be easily read as having racial undertones, as the most "degenerate" and "barbarous" in Mexico, according to racist positivist doctrine prevalent during the Porfiriato, were Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this lack of differentiation between "us" and the "other" seems to reflect a similar semantic problem in *Tomochic*, where the Tomochitecos are quintessentially Mexican but also barbarians in a foreign landscape. I am interested in this tension between the ethnographic photographs as depicting an "other" in an exotic landscape to be seen from a comfortable middle-class living room, and the notion that these images showed something unsavory and representative of Mexico as a whole. Perhaps by including ethnographic photographs in the 1911 edition of *Tomochic*, the book forces the reader/viewer to sit with this unresolved tension.

IV

Word/Image Debates

How do all these different landscapes, the ethnographic photographs, the costumbrista lithographs and the textual representations, work together—or in opposition—to articulate larger ideas about Mexican nation building? I will now turn to several key theorists who examine the relationship between word and image in order to better analyze how this interdisciplinary dialogue between word and image appears in the context of the 1911 edition of *Tomochic*. In his book *Picture Theory*, W.T.J. Mitchell notes that the distinction between word and image poses challenges: "books have incorporated images into their pages since time immemorial…this doesn't mean that there is no difference between the media, or between words and images: only that the differences are much more complex than they might seem at first glance" (3-4). Faced with this seemingly difficult theoretical problem, Mitchell turns to history and society for answers. He argues that:

> if we were to understand the text-image relation as a social and historical one, characterized by the complexities and conflicts that plague the relations of individuals, groups, nations, classes, genders, and cultures, our study might be freed from this craving for unity…and might, in the process, be in a better position to move toward some sort of coherence. (*Iconology* 40-41)

In *Picture Theory*, he goes a step further and traces this word/image debate to questions of power and representation in different socio-cultural contexts, analyzing nineteenth-century slave narratives and the role of television in the Gulf War. My analysis of *Tomochic* will adopt this framework to consider the specific political and cultural context in which the illustrations and text interact, though in a Mexican context not considered by Mitchell.

Martin Heusser explores the interaction between visual and literary landscapes in nineteenth-century American literature, a context that although different from the one I am studying, offers some valuable observations on the interaction of word, image, and text in a neighboring society that was also engaged in a massive nation-building project. In *On Verbal/Visual Representation*, Heusser argues that:

> One of the main reasons for [James Fenimore] Cooper's success as an author is his predilection for visual description. His vivid pictorial landscapes answered a pronounced need for visual geographical information. Paintings, etchings, drawings and photographs of the American landscape played a cardinal role in the conceptualization of the nascent nation. The public image of what America was—and what it was going to be once the frontier came to a halt—depended, among other things, on the individual's ability to visualize the geography of the country. (156)

This idea that visual and written landscapes are united by the reader/viewer's need to visualize the country will be central to my consideration of image and text. I am also interested in the notion that visual and written landscapes respond to a need to conceptualize a nation that is in the process of becoming.

Heusser also explores the way these landscapes across media both promise, but also question, a shared visual reality. He writes that:

> landscapes are particularly suitable for Cooper's purposes because, like photographs, they seem concerned primarily with the rendition of an easily verifiable reality, thus apparently fulfilling primarily mimetic duties. But…from the moment they began to form a genre of their own, theorists insisted on their essential artificiality…This attitude

> continues straight down to Emerson who insists that "in landscapes the painter should give a suggestion of a fairer creation than we know." (156)

Here, Heusser sees this tension between artificiality and a "visual reality" as consistent across these different mediums. I see *Tomochic* as engaging in a similar dialogue, where the artificiality or unnaturalness of the landscape across different media contrasts with passages focused on the need to make the nation visible—and legible— through the landscape.

Finally, in a Mexican context, Laruccea Amaya Garritz takes a different approach that focuses not on the similarities Heusser notes between visual and written landscapes, but rather on the differences between these two media. In her study of landscapes and nation-building in nineteenth-century Mexico, *Pais y paisaje: dos invenciones del siglo XIX mexicano*, she sees literature— specifically poetry—as presenting a different relationship with the landscape. She posits that:

> la poesía se presenta como la posibilidad, que al menos existió como anhelo, de una relación diferente con la naturaleza. Se ilustra a través de una sugerente frase de Vasconcelos:…
>
> 'he pensado en alguna religión nueva que alguna vez soñé predicar; la religión del paisaje, la devoción de la belleza exterior, limpia y grandiosa, sin interpretaciones y deformaciones; como lenguaje directo de la gracia divina.' (24)

I am interested in this notion that literature might represent a different and more individual way of looking and emotionally connecting to the landscape. Indeed, passages in *Tomochic* employ the same exalted, romantic sentiment—the protagonist is an aspiring poet—that is missing in the illustrations. Miguel might praise the high peaks and majesty of the mountains, but the illustrations present a less sublime point of view (though plenty of sublime visual representations

of the landscape can be found in romantic art). Perhaps this perceived difference between media is the result of the protagonist's relationship to the landscape being highlighted in the novel, whereas the illustrations create the illusion of no intermediary between the viewer and the image. Hence, while Heusser points to the many ways word and image work hand in hand, Garritz's work serves as a reminder that it is impossible—and indeed inadvisable—to conflate the two different media.

V

Nightmarish Written Landscapes

I will now turn to close readings of the novel and the accompanying images, using the theoretical frameworks explored above. Firstly, I will examine a scene that highlights the seemingly incongruent ways that different characters see the northern landscape. The reflective and poetic Miguel Mercado, the protagonist, sees the landscape in a way that incurs the ridicule of his comrades:

> El joven subteniente iba absorto ante la belleza de paisajes nunca vistos. Infinitas veces tuvo que ser reprendido por adelantarse á su puesto, pues solía abandonar la brida del caballo…contemplaba atónito el ondular obscuro de los barrancos, de cuyo fondo emergían hálitos de nieve; y se extasiaba al ver surgir, entre los peñascos y los ramajes, el cielo violáceo. El encanto de aquella Naturaleza potente, bravía y severa, tonificaba sus nervios enfermos.
>
> —¡Esto es inmensamente bello!—murmuraba, de vez en cuando.
>
> Y los camaradas que le oían hablar solo y levantar los brazos, extático y maravillado, se reían. (94)

The young second lieutenant interacts with the landscape in the affective manner explored by Garritz above. This language of the sublime, "comtemplaba atónito," "se extasiaba" "tonificaba sus nervios enfermos" speaks to a profound emotional and spiritual communion between the protagonist and the Sierra Tarahumara. Instead of being presented as a hellish space populated by barbaric people, the mountains are presented as a place of beauty and healing.

Yet, Miguel's ecstatic view of the landscape is utterly incompatible with his job as a soldier. He is reprimanded and laughed at for seeing this landscape as a sublime and spiritual place, signaling a profound rift in the way different characters can "see" the mountains around them. Perhaps Miguel's antics are a little ridiculous, but I read this passage as highlighting a larger problem with the soldiers sent into a foreign landscape they refuse to connect with or appreciate, where this land that promises healing and beauty becomes the site of nightmarish violence and death. Thus, the soldiers' laughter at their unsoldierly comrade hints at a greater tragedy.

The narrative voice further depicts the suffering that arises from the incompatibility between the army and the land through a series of descriptions that compare Chihuahua to Mexico City. As they trudge through the Chihuahuan desert on their way to the mountains, the narrative voice wryly comments: "Y había que ver a aquellos oficiales, que en los pasillos de Palacio y en las banquetas de Plateros, siempre abrochada la levita, acicalados y pulcros…había que verlos, por el árido y duro sendero, empolvados y sucios, maltrechos, ennegrecidos por el sol, ridículamente a caballo" (25). The repetition of the phrase "y había que ver a aquellos oficiales," suggests that the sight of Mexican army officials moving through this inhospitable and "barbaric" terrain is so shocking that the reader must see it for herself to believe it. Moreover, the fact that the officers are "ridículamente a caballo" evokes a feeling of the absurd. This mismatch

between the army of Mexico City and the desert of Chihuahua goes against homogenizing ideas about the nation: here absurdity and difference are highlighted over national unity.[4]

This surprise and even sense of marvel at being in a place so different, and yet still part of the nation, is made more explicit when Miguel tries to wrap his mind around his sudden change in fortune. While dining on the poor rations that the bandit Bernardo gives him in a dirty shack in the Sierra Madre, Miguel positions himself as lost outside the borders of his familiar world. His removal to Chihuahua is phrased in terms of regret and absence: "pensó en…su salida del Colegio Militar para ser un oscuro subteniente que algunos días más tarde estaría en algún punto perdido en los desiertos de Chihuahua a quinientas leguas de México!... ¡Qué vida la suya!..." (70). This passage posits the idea of Chihuahua as a lost, uncharted place far from the center of the country. To fall from the role of student at the Military Academy in Mexico City to officer in the northern desert is portrayed as an incongruous reversal of fortune. The distance between the two places is almost inconceivable, only able to be articulated through the exclamation "¡Qué vida la suya!" His difficulty in imagining one day being a student in Mexico City, and a few days later, being stuck in the desert-mountains of the Sierra Madre, subtly challenges his idea of Mexico as a cohesive whole. It seems as if he were in a foreign country. Yet, the very fact that this dramatic transition is possible could also be read as a testament to the power of the center. In this passage, there is no conceptual framework or reasonable discourse that unifies these two places or contradictory thoughts; instead, Miguel articulates this transition in terms of inconsistency and even marvel.

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[4] Aníbal González also observes that *Tomochic* must be analyzed in a more nuanced manner: "a currently-fashionable view which proposes that both the novel and journalism in Spanish America during the nineteenth century were instruments in the task of nation-building must be greatly nuanced or, in specific cases, questioned altogether" (46).

The political implications of this representation of the incongruity between Mexico City and the hinterlands is explored in a description that uneasily ties Porfirio Díaz to the campaign being waged in the North. The narrative voice observes:

> Y en verdad que era inútil la presencia de aquel jefe frente a Tomochic. El telégrafo funcionando hasta la capital de la republica permitiría al mismo general Díaz ordenar desde su gabinete las operaciones de la pequeña campaña.
>
> —Estas cosas las sabe hacer bien el mismo Presidente de la República, mientras toma su chocolate en Chapultepec. (33)

The representation of the president sitting in Chapultepec drinking hot chocolate appears to echo the plush situation of the officers in the palace analyzed above. This almost decadent setting—one imagines Díaz comfortably sitting down and leisurely sipping his chocolate—is implicitly contrasted with the hardships that the soldiers suffer in the north. These two landscapes are connected via technology and a centralized government linking the center to the north, yet even the telegraph and president cannot breach the gap between the comforts of Mexico City and the campaign going on in the north. This tense relationship where the center exerts control, yet is also incapable of understanding the north, is further reinforced through moments where generals in Mexico City and the capital of Chihuahua give orders that show a poor understanding of the on-the-ground campaign. Their power over the north is incontestable, but at the same time they display limited knowledge of the territory. The two different parts of the country are tied together and yet also unequivocally separate.

A series of comparisons that liken the northern landscape first to exoticized territories and then to extraterrestrial and supernatural spaces also uses the language of marvel and contradiction, though the comparison to the center remains implicit. During an account of a war

against the nomadic Apaches, the narrative voice characterizes the landscape as African. This evocation makes the north into a strange and exotic place that sits uneasily within the bounds of the nation: “las jornadas interminables, a través del desierto, bajo un sol africano” (103). Africa and Mexico paradoxically exist in the same physical space, undermining notions of national homogeneity. Yet, by comparing the north to Africa, the author also draws on racist ideas about Africans prevalent during the Porfiriato to establish a sense of hierarchy between the more “civilized” center and the northern badlands. Hence, even as the novel highlights fissures in a nationalistic narrative, by implicitly privileging the central landscape and othering the north, the narrative voice also extends a homogenizing gaze over the territory. The fact that these contradictory discourses exist in the same passage illustrates the fluidity inherent in this description of the landscape.

The Tomochitecos and their town is also compared to Mecca, another exoticized and (in a Catholic society) heretical place. The narrative voice describes how the town is ignored by the nation and subsequently turns to medieval superstition:

> Aquel pueblo perdido en la República, ignorado y obscuro, fue abandonado, por su aparente insignificancia, por el Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua y por el eclesiástico… De repente sopla caliente ráfaga de fanatismo religioso y el nombre de la Santa de Cabora es pronunciado con veneración, y sus milagros narrados de mil maneras, con una exageración medioeval.
>
> La Santa de Cabora!
>
> Los viajeros que de Sonora pasaban por Tomochic, contaron maravillas; y los mismos tomochitecos, que con sus recuas se dirigían á aquel Estado, volvían como de una venerada Meca. (51)

The narrative voice depicts Tomochic as abandoned by the nation and left in obscurity and ignorance. Left seemingly to fend for itself, it degenerates into dark age superstition and becomes a sort of Mecca, an alternative center to replace the nation that cast it off.[5] Interestingly, this rather paternalistic account places the blame not on the Tomochitecos but rather on the nation for not fulfilling its obligation to "enlighten" and take care of its own people. Hence, the passage suggests that this false religious center—this medieval place characterized by blasphemy and superstition—was fashioned through the nation's own negligence. The nation created this "other" Mecca by ignoring part of its own territory. The Tomochitecos and their land are both part of the nation, but also reveal the flaws that tear the nation apart.

The narrative voice then shifts from describing the land as foreign (but still terrestrial) to likening Chihuahua to the moon. The narrator describes the soldiers' painstaking march over the mountains as if they were confronting that most alien and inhospitable of places: "Y se continuó la marcha. El sol empezó a calentar y el cansancio hizo cojear a algunos soldados, a causa de que el terreno se hacía asperísimo y se marchaba de nuevo en la piedra. Y no había ya ni un solo árbol; era una desolación de paisaje lunar" (111). The land is so bleak that it cannot be described in national or even terrestrial terms; rather it becomes an imagined lunar landscape. Again, this description of the interaction between the army and the landscape highlights the discrepancy between a northern Mexican landscape that is represented in terms of the otherworldly and the tired soldiers, who must report back to Mexico City and continue to trudge northward in the

[5] Daniel Chavez argues that "the ideological unit of 'civilización y/o barbarie' is also the organizing principle of the text, as in *Facundo*, and in both cases parallel to the devices of estrangement displayed by the orientalist novels from Europe. It is not a coincidence that the target population to be reduced by the national authority is located in "oriental" surroundings" (78). I draw upon this key observation of the town's "oriental" surroundings. However, by also exploring moments where the land and people are described as typically Mexican, I question this reading of the north as inherently "other."

name of the nation. In a sense, surrealism and realism exist side by side. The landscape is both the moon and a part of the nation so tangible that it makes the soldiers limp.

When the soldiers are ambushed in the mountains around Tomochic, the narrative voice depicts the landscape in even more otherworldly terms. The place can only be understood through the language of the supernatural:

> Se empezó a disparar en todas direcciones, como si súbita demencia hubierase apoderado de aquellos hombres, combatiendo contra enemigos invisibles en la Selva-Fantasma. ¡Ah! lo que más angustiaba en aquella terrible situación—más que la atroz incertidumbre del enemigo respecto a su posición, fuerza y número—era la falta de dirección, de orientación y de órdenes superiores. (121)

That the landscape is described as a "selva-fantasma" positions this space in the realm of the nightmarish and uncanny. The land is both ghostly and a jungle, conveying a double sense of estrangement, first from the urban landscape of Mexico City and secondly from the realm of logic and human habitation. This senseless, utterly foreign landscape becomes lethal rather than simply absurd or inhospitable. Logic and orders stemming from the command back in Mexico City break down; the troops are seized by a madness that leads to the loss of life. This passage also underscores how the army —representatives of national order—is possessed by the same "demencia" that characterizes the local inhabitants, illustrating how the binaries between center/periphery and civilization/barbarism fall apart in this place that undermines logical thought.

This mysterious and otherworldly depiction of the landscape is also apparent later in the novel, when the narrative voice describes how the soldiers creep into the valley where the Tomochitecos have barricaded themselves in their stronghold. The townspeople are described as

the enemy that, "seguía silencioso en su exigua fortaleza, cuya masa delineábase confusamente en las tinieblas bajo un zenit frío en que derretía su blanco hielo de luz un gajo de luna…y el trozo de luna iluminando el horizonte con lívida claridad, envolvía el paisaje en un velo de cruel pesadilla" (244-5). It is notable that this quote plays with illumination and darkness; the fortress "delineábase confusamente en las tinieblas" while moonlight casts a cruel and nightmarish cloud over the landscape. This almost gothic landscape hides even as it reveals, refusing to shed light on the Tomochitecos while lingering with unsettling detail over the landscape that they inhabit. However, even the illuminated sections do not reveal clearly; the moonlight renders the scene nightmarish and cruel, a place outside the bounds of realist discourse. This passage depicts the Tomochitecos and their valley using the language of dreams and gothic horror; the soldiers cannot make sense of the place in any other terms.

In descriptions where the villagers are linked to the land they inhabit, a sense of contradiction, spectacle, and marvel also prevails. Like in the passages above—where the Tomochitecos are generally missing or hiding in the landscapes—these descriptions shift in tone as the novel progresses. The narrative voice first paints the locals as misguided mystics isolated (but still part of) the nation: "Aquel puñado de fieros hijos de las montañas estaba poseído de una frenética demencia mística. Un vértigo confuso de libertad, un anhelo de poderío en aquellas almas ignorantes, sopla bárbaro impulso sobre la tribu aislada extrañamente de la vida nacional" (56). The inhabitants of Tomochic are intimately linked to their land; they are the descendants of the mountains. Indeed, their confused mysticism and barbarous impulses blow through them almost as though it were wind through the mountains, suggesting a connection between the landscape and their convoluted thoughts. Furthermore, their isolation from "la vida nacional" is

presented as strange, again highlighting the sense of incongruity that these people can at once be part of the nation and also an isolated and supposedly "barbaric tribe."

The narrative voice then underscores how these people who are so apparently different are also quite similar to the elite who will presumably read the novel in Mexico City. This point of view is made clear when the narrator laments the "guerra horrenda de mexicanos contra mexicanos" (273) and refers to the conflict as "aquella triste guerra contra mexicanos heroicos, buenos y leales" (212). Moreover, what is so startling and even horrible about the inhabitants of this distant mountain landscape is that they are so different, and yet racially similar: "Y era lo más extraño que no constituían una tribu bárbara. No eran indígenas, sino criollos…¡Tomochic daba a la República Mexicana el raro espectáculo de una villa que se había vuelto loca…con locura peligrosa!" (57). They become a spectacle and marvel for the Mexican Republic not because they represent an uprising of a racially distinct "other," but rather because they are a group of criollos that (according to commonly held racist nineteeth-century thought) behave almost as if they were a completely different and "inferior" group. Their madness is all the more dangerous as they exist in this in-between space where they are both criollos and a barbarous tribe, Mexicans and foreigners. In this way, they completely circumvent the binaries of civilization/barbarism and center/periphery. The narrative voice replaces these stable binaries with the performative language of surprise and spectacle, exploring rather than eliminating the contradictions inherent in this strange sight.

This contradictory view is perhaps best encapsulated in Miguel's lament to the fallen Tomochitecos towards the end of the novel. In an inspired and lengthy monologue, he eulogizes the town and its inhabitants:

> ¡Oh! Flamígera extinción de los aduares de la fanática tribu de montañeses, soberbios en su ignorancia tremenda y salvaje, hijos bravíos de las sierras…¡Oh bárbaro y épico Tomochic! ¡Oh fenecido pueblo de halcones serranos, de jóvenes águilas solitarias, encastilladas en los baluartes altísimos de las fragosas montañas…..tu inaudita pujanza, tu delirante y pueril ensueño de absurda libertad salvaje en el imperio inmenso de las selvas y de los montes, tu increíble cisma, tu soberbio 'Papa Máximo,' tu 'Cruz de Tomochic,' tu sangre y la sangre generosa, hermana, que harás derramar hasta que muera el último de los tuyos. (224)

Here, the Tomochitecos are presented as figures out of an epic, as José Juan Tablada notes in the introduction to the 1911 edition, or even presented with language reminiscent of the racist doctrine of the day that saw Indigenous peoples as "noble savages." They are also repeatedly linked to the mountainous terrain; it becomes difficult to know whether to attribute their "absurda libertad salvaje" to the landscape or to the people themselves. However, these peoples who—to say the least— are utterly exceptional, are also linked to the nation through the image of the "sangre generosa, hermana" which seems to allude to the characterization of the conflict mentioned above as "mexicanos contra mexicanos."[6]

This sublime language appears to echo the first quote that I analyzed, where Miguel feels an intense emotional connection to the landscape that is not shared by the other soldiers. Towards the end of the novel, it seems that this romantic language that emphasized beauty and healing turns on itself; the majestic mountains produce dangerous eagle-Tomochitecos with

[6] Juan Dabove also explores this double representation of the inhabitants of Tomochic. He observes that "a lo largo de toda la obra los tomochitecos son representados de manera dual, difícilmente reconciliable. Por un lado son abyectos: bandidos (Cf. Pedro Chaparro y Bernardo), canibáles (Cf. el capitulo VII, "La 'ración' del ogro"), dementes (57), incestuosos (47). Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo son sublimes: héroes sin tacha, paladines, caballerescos patriarcas de una moral e industria intachable" (286-288).

absurd ideas about liberty rather than fellow Mexicans who can heal a jaded urban soldier. In this way, the majesty of the mountains—and the people—are celebrated but at the same time deformed; in their death throes they are absurd and animalistic, savage and spectacular. Moreover, quite unsettlingly, the Tomochitecos and the soldiers are siblings only in death, a very dark view of the potential for national unity. The protagonist's views of the Tomochitecos and their lands is therefore quite different from his initial celebration of the northern mountains; the language of marvel now has a nightmarish tint, though the contradictions between the Tomochitecos as brothers and foreigners remains.

VI

Feminized Landscapes and Fractured Relationships

This increasingly pessimistic view of the potential for national unity, as well as a landscape that shifts from the marvelous to the horrendous, is further articulated through the love story between Miguel and Julia, a young Tomochiteca. As women are inextricably linked to the land in Western tradition, landscape and romance were often conflated. This is the case in *Tomochic*, where Julia is repeatedly likened to the mountainous landscape. How does a teenager in a remote landscape come to symbolize the possibilities and the challenges of the Mexican nation? I will now turn to Doris Sommer's foundational book, *Foundational Fictions*, to explore this connection between romance, the nation, and the land.

Doris Sommer argues that romance was used as a tool of nation-building in nineteenth-century Latin America. She writes that: "erotic passion was less the socially corrosive excess that was the subject to discipline in some model novels from Europe, and more the opportunity (rhetorical and otherwise) to bind together heterodox constituencies; competing regions, economic interests, races, religions" (14). Indeed, in *Tomochic* a heterosexual relationship is

used to bring together two opposing groups, the cosmopolitan soldier from Mexico City, Miguel, and Julia, a tomochiteca who participates in the uprising against the federal government. However, in many of these foundational fictions (as is the case in *Tomochic*) the lovers face insurmountable obstacles that force the reader, as well as the lovers, to imagine the more perfect nation where their romance could be possible. Sommer explains that "every obstacle that the lovers encounter heightens more than their mutual desire to (be a) couple…it also highlights their/our love for the possible nation in which the affair could be consummated" (48). Even a novel like *Tomochic*, where the heroine tragically dies before she can get married, can be thought of as sort of foundational romance. Here, the reader is left to imagine the nation in which these warring factions, Julia the Tomochiteca and Miguel the federal soldier, could have lived in peace.

Nonetheless, critics such as Toner point to the uncommonly bleak vision of the future (for the protagonist and the nation) found in *Tomochic.* She argues that: "this reconciliation and union never materialize because Julia is mortally wounded during the final battle between the townspeople and the federal army, and dies in Miguel's arms, leaving the latter to dolefully ponder a life of solitude" (175). In this way, *Tomochic* offers a grim sort of foundational fiction, where the better qualities of the nation never materialize. Joshua Lund takes Toner's argument even further:

> Frías produces a different kind of foundational narrative, one that emphasizes national disarticulation over reconciliation, and one that is ultimately more faithful to Ernest Renan's maxim: Frías will *ask us to remember* the national crime that has been forgotten, and then at once *assert its necessity* for the process of nation-building. This kind of *foundational disarticulation*, then, allegorizes the nation as profoundly fractured. (176)

I am interested in this idea of *Tomochic* as engaged in a different sort of national project where the nation-building—and the "romance"—is violent and unsettling.

In this discussion of romance and the nation however, I need to take up another important thread, that of the landscape. I will now return to this concept and examine how landscapes can deepen an understanding of the failed relationship between Julia and Miguel and how this falling out is used to articulate larger ideas about the Mexican nation. Julia is the only Tomochiteca associated with both "civilized" and "barbaric" spaces. She is praised as "aquel lirio de la Sierra" (62) even as the narrative voice laments her unfortunate birth among barbarians: "¡Ah! Aquella criatura de precoz inteligencia, natural vivacidad y sensibilidad exquisita, no debía haber nacido en aquel ambiente de locura hostil en que agitaba un pueblo semisalvaje del que no tenía sino el supremo heroísmo y el raro valor de saber soportar dignamente la adversidad, el triste heroísmo de saber morir..." (138). Like the landscape she embodies, her relationship with Miguel gestures towards potential reconciliation and healing, but in the end, she is condemned to an early death. This sense of failed unity and unfulfilled promise is further emphasized by her age. She is only fourteen. Even the novel—while sexualizing her explicitly— notes that she is a child, "su curiosidad infantil," "niña aún," an utterly inappropriate, and indeed for our own time period, unconscionable, juxtaposition (60). [7]

Julia's gendered sexual abuse further links her to the landscape. As mentioned in the introduction, Schiwy argues Latin American landscapes have been linked to women since the colonial era. These feminized landscapes are presented either as a subject that must be tamed by civilizing (and male) forces or as a passive territory that is penetrated and dominated by male

[7] Even for the time, Julia is very young. Most heroines in foundational fictions tended to be in their late teens or early twenties. The exception may be the María of the eponymous novel. She is only fifteen, but her father (quite reasonably) deems her too young to marry.

force (209). Through rather jarring phrases such as “la pobrecita entregándose pasiva y triste” (48) and “carne mancillada noche a noche” (61) used to describe how her uncle sexually abuses her, Julia appears to fall into the latter category. However, her association with the wild and rugged landscape and the peoples who inhabit it illustrates how she also embodies the figure of the amazon. After all, she fights to the death for her town, and in the scene in which Miguel enters into her house in the middle of the night she is depicted as a “ágil y lucida, capaz de esquivarlo…[Miguel] apeló a la ternura, como un lazo, para cazarla” (87).

Though there are moments where Miguel’s behavior is exempted by the narrative voice and his relationship to Julia is described in more flattering and idealized terms, it is notable that their single sexual encounter—which unlike many of the foundational romances comes before they are married, in the middle of the narrative—is not consensual.[8] Miguel recounts how he raped Julia: “recordó la locura que lo empujara, temerariamente, á la guarida del ogro, á robarle su ración; a violentar, él también a la podre Julia” (90). A better married future never materializes, and the foundational myth is reduced to a drunk soldier who sexually assaults a young girl in a ramshackle shack in the mountains. Hence, this scene of the woman/landscape being sexually assaulted to create a “civilized” agrarian nation emphasizes the inherent violence of the nation-building project; Julia and Miguel’s relationship is irreparably fractured and unsettled even as they plan a future together. In this way, Toner’s ideas about foundational disarticulation and a fractured nation can be seen through the figure of this teenager who becomes a symbol of the land itself and illustrates both the unrealized potential and also the inherent violence of the nation-building project.

[8] The non-consensual nature of this scene has seemingly ignored by literary critics, which strikes me as a notable omission.

VII

Contradictory Lithographs and Photographs

Visual representations of the landscape and its inhabitants further emphasize this contradictory view apparent in the text. These images take the slippage seen in the textual analysis, moments where the landscape cannot be represented through naturalistic discourse and becomes strange, otherworldly and even nightmarish, to the extreme. Though the images can be read as revealing telling attitudes towards the northern landscape and inhabitants, the juxtaposition of these images refuses to signify clearly. Here, the sense of incongruity and marvel is produced not by the images themselves, but rather by the reader/viewer contemplating their strange opposition. It is also important to note that like representations of the landscape in the novel, the visual landscapes found in the 1911 edition have received little scholarly attention. Indeed, the only mention of the illustrations that I found was in a footnote in Dabove's aforementioned article where he writes that the contrast between the photographs and the lithographs create "una ambigüedad donde encuentra verosimilitud el obstinado intento de indianizar el conflicto" (368). By situating these images in a larger social and cultural context, where nineteenth-century photographs and lithographs were part of a larger conversation about national identity, I wish to expand Dabove's analysis to consider the ways that these landscapes worked with or against the text to create a more nuanced view of Tomochic and its inhabitants.

The photograph of two rebels echoes the text's description of the townspeople as a barbarous tribe isolated from the center (see figure 6). The sense that they are a spectacle to be looked at is highlighted through several different visual strategies. Firstly, the use of documentary style photography inscribes the image within an ethnographic tradition prevalent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These images of racial minorities were

presented under pseudo-scientific guises to a generally urban public (Gwyneira). This larger context reinforces the idea that the center—in which the viewer finds herself— is gazing upon the othered north. The fact that the reader gazes upon these impassive figures that stare off into the distance reinforces the sense of unequal power relations implicit in this type of image; the viewer does not have to confront the gaze of the other. Moreover, the bodies are carefully presented in a three-quarters perspective that allows the viewer great access to their body and distinctive attire, reinforcing the notion that the figures are presented as a spectacle for the viewer to contemplate.

The composition, where the two figures in the foreground and middle-ground visually mirror the single tree in the background, illustrates the way these people are seamlessly integrated into the barren landscape. The balanced composition and the figure's passive stances also suggest that they pose little threat to the center. Unlike representations in the text that underscore their military prowess and depict the land as a threatening place, this image allows the viewer to look at the locals with more remove and detachment.

The second photograph included in the 1911 edition of the novel presents a similar view of the Tomochitecos and their landscape (see figure 7). Here, a shirtless dark-skinned man gazes at the camera against a stark landscape framed by distant trees. Again, his bare body is angled towards the viewer against a perfectly framed landscape, visually likening him to the land. As Dabove notes, the fact that these images are included in sections that do not directly address the inhabitants of Tomochic as barbarous, and are included without captions, furthers this sense of distance between viewer and image. It is as if the viewer were a sort of Porfirio Díaz, comfortably ensconced in the leisure and safety of her own presumably civilized surroundings. This image reinforces the sense of spectacle and otherness found in the text while emphasizing

the viewer's distance from the scene. Moreover, in a text where the faces of the Tomochitecos are often unsettlingly hidden, these images allow the viewer to visualize part of the national landscape. The images promise a "scientific" legibility and remove that is absent from the textual descriptions.

The final photograph comes before the chapter titled "Evocación: la campaña contra los Apaches," which perhaps unsurprising goes on to describe the militant settlers' military campaigns against the Apaches (see figure 8). Though the photograph is somewhat blurred and difficult to make out, it appears to represent the aqueduct of Chihuahua or another impressive feat of engineering spanning the length of the image. Whatever the case may be, it is notable that the Indigenous people have disappeared. They have seemingly been replaced by this symbol of colonial Mexico. Hence, the built landscape serves as a visual shorthand to represent a changed landscape; the people represented in the photographs examined above are implicitly erased from this image. This final photograph further reinforces this notion that the ethnographic images serve to "other" the Tomochitecos and their landscapes, denying them access to this colonial Spanish heritage and perhaps to the nation that replaced it. Moreover, by including a distinct architectural feature not included in the text itself, this image situates the battle between the army and the Tomochitecos in a larger colonial context.

The lithographs, of which there are many more examples in the 1911 edition, present a different picture of the Tomochitecos and their landscapes. This representational shift is especially visible in the figure of Julia. Notably, all the ethnographic photographs depict unnamed men whose relationship to the text is very tenuous; these men do not always appear in sections of the book specifically about the male Tomochitecos. The lithographs, however, give the viewer a sense of who these people are as named individuals through captions and by

situating the image close to corresponding text. Pictures of Julia, for instance, appear close to written scenes where she is present. This clearer correspondence between the lithographs and the text therefore situates these images—and the characters and landscapes they represent—in a more legible context. They are not decontextualized like the men in the ethnographic photographs, and the viewer/reader has a better sense of who they are as individuals and fellow Mexicans.

The lithograph depicting Julia uses dramatically different strategies of visual representation that create a sense of closeness and commonality with the main figure, rather than a sense of distance and estrangement (see figure 9). As is mentioned above, this image is a lithograph, which in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mexico was associated with the *costumbrista* style and the creation of national types. It is set in a presumably domestic setting, perhaps domesticating this "other" within the bounds not only of the house, but also of the nation-state. The figure leans forward and her skirt falls out of the delineated background, breaching the distance between viewer and subject. She also appears to look out of the frame, meeting the viewer's gaze. The figure's features and attire further link her to costumbrista images of a national type, rather than the image of the racialized other depicted above. Her two braids, patterned shawl, apron, and full skirt, as well as her facial features, allow Dabove to assert that these images "representan a los tomochitecos como mestizos o criollos, indudablemente 'occidentales'" (368). I would go a step further and argue that she is depicted as a typical Mexican woman.

Another more ambitious lithograph portrays not only Julia but also the whole village of Tomochic as more "typically" Mexican (see figure 10). This depiction of the landscape centers on a representation of the village church, set between unobtrusive mountains in the background

and prostrate figures that blend into the earth in the foreground. The adobe church appears to be built in a Mexican colonial style found in small towns across the nation, highlighting this space as both physically but also culturally Mexican. In addition, the foregrounding of this civilized center of religious and civic life represents the town, and by extension its inhabitants, as upstanding members of the nation. However, this almost idealized sense of small-town Mexican order is problematized by the smoke coming out of the church and the deceased figures lying in the foreground. The epigraph that accompanies the lithograph quotes a disquieting passage of the text: "y lo terrible de aquello era que la mayor parte de las mujeres de Tomochic estaban refugiadas allí" (234). Hence, this image appears to reinforce the view explored above in the text, where this picture becomes horrendous and terrible not because the inhabitants are depicted as a racial other, but because it depicts the tragedy of Mexicans fighting and killing Mexicans.

This visual shift is also apparent in lithographs that focus on the landscape. In a lithograph that appears more than once in the novel, the landscape is depicted as a bucolic place that could seemingly be anywhere, a fact that perhaps explains its appearance in different sections of the novel (see figure 11). Here, several trees in the foreground recede into a landscape of rolling hills partially covered with vegetation. The lack of identifying details in both the terrain and the vegetation give the scene a sort of universality. In addition, the cropped trees and hills on the right give the viewer the sense of enclosure. Instead of looking out at an easily recognizable landscape with identifiable features, the viewer seems to look down into a little hollow; the image does not give the viewer much sense of the lay of the land. Hence, this insular depiction of rolling hills and stands of trees seems to be a more generic stand-in for the Mexican landscape, where the specific features of the Sierra Tarahumara give way to a scenic and

impossible to place picture of rural peace. These landscapes appear to have no textual equivalent; the rather extreme written landscapes are softened and tamed.

This same trend is also apparent in another image of the landscape that also appears at different points in the 1911 edition. Though this image clearly represents the mountains and a small valley with arable land that the viewer assumes is Tomochic, the whole scene is rendered in a visual shorthand that again withholds identifying details (see figure 12). However, it is worth noting that the landscape is broken up into three sections, the mountain from which the viewer presumably enjoys a privileged vantage point, the agrarian valley, and the forested mountains stretching as far as the eye can see. The "civilized" farmed landscape is dwarfed by the forested mountains. Even in this more generalized visual representation of the land, there is a sense that the natural world could overwhelm the fields that are so fragilely delineated, illustrating the tenuous nature of this positioning of the Tomochitecos as small farmers in a typical Mexican town.

This sense of interrupted bucolic peace is more poignantly addressed in another illustration, where cannons are set into the hillside, against the backdrop of a stand of trees (see figure 13). In this image, the soldiers who presumably fire the cannon are hidden; only the weapons are visible. In this way, the viewer is positioned as a Tomochiteco, looking up the hillside towards these smokey machines of war. The smoke from the cannons visually echoes the clouds in the background. The jarring brutality of the arms against this peaceful backdrop seems to evoke the horrors of a civil war, further positioning the Tomochitecos as fellow Mexicans whose peaceful existence is shattered by cannons creeping down the hillside.

Finally, I will analyze the last landscape presented in the book, which rather jarringly shifts from these more generic rural scenes to the specificity of the capital. This dramatic change

of scene seems to signal the primacy of the center. Like the final photograph depicting the aqueduct, the northern people (and even landscape) disappear, to be replaced this time with an image of Chapultepec (see figure 14). In this image, Chapultepec is depicted from below; the viewer looks up at this impressive—and even menacing— structure that sits atop a steep and seemingly impenetrable hillside. Though the narrator evokes Chapultepec as the only hope for the struggling nation and morally compromised army, this image seems less redemptive. In a way, the Tomochitecos and their unusual landscape disappear entirely into this national symbol, perhaps reflecting a larger trend where regional difference is erased by these costumbrista images, just as the Tomochitecos in the book are wiped out by the national army.

A detailed reading of both lithographs and photographs therefore reveal opposing views of the Tomochitecos. In the photographs, their difference is so great that they are replaced by colonial symbols, while in the lithographs they blend through visual convention into the Mexican population, a visual strategy that also makes them invisible. However, though the Tomochitecos are in a sense erased even as they are photographed and drawn, the photograph and lithograph cannot be read in harmony. They reinforce opposite views of the rebels, one showing them as others outside the bounds of the nation, and the other presenting them as typically Mexican. As a viewer confronting these irreconcilable images, we are implicated in this sense of incongruity and illogic, forced to stare directly at these contradictory ways of looking at the north that withhold as much as they reveal.

VIII

By analyzing both image and text, a better picture of the complex and contradictory nation imagined in *Tomochic* emerges. Instead of attempting to simplify the ways the center views the north by either representing the villagers and their landscape as foreign and other or

Mexican and familiar, the photographic, lithographic, and written landscapes allow both interpretations to exist within the same narrative structure. Indeed, the illustrated novel embraces this paradoxical gaze. As both reader and viewer, we are forced to make space for these irreconcilable narratives that challenge the rigid binaries of center/periphery and civilization/ barbarism that inform so much of nineteenth-century national discourse. What we are left with is a sense of a nation alive with contradictions, a place that at its best is described in terms of spectacle and marvel, and at its worst becomes an indecipherable nightmare.

CHAPTER TWO

Revolutionary Landscapes in *Los de abajo* and in Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco's Illustrations

I

How can an event on the scale of the Mexican Revolution be remembered and represented? Though the Tomochic Rebellion examined in chapter one is often seen as a precursor to the Mexican Revolution, it is difficult to compare a relatively small rural uprising with a revolution that overthrew Porfirio Díaz's government and resulted in the deaths of more than a million people ("War is Hazardous" 894). However, it is notable that Mariano Azuela's seminal novel of the revolution, *Los de abajo*—as well as the illustrations of the novel produced by José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera— turn to representations of the landscape in order to make sense of another tumultuous chapter of Mexican history. The brutal Battle of Zacatecas takes place on a mountain likened to an arrogant Aztec king, the revolutionaries gallop over the plains as if these soldiers were ancient nomads, and mountains are described as foreboding African faces. I argue that Azuela articulates an ambiguous view of the Mexican Revolution through representations of the landscape by employing early twentieth-century primitivist ideas that inaccurately characterize Indigenous peoples as both "barbaric" and noble and that view Mexican history in terms of a struggle between an Indigenous past and modernity.[9] The landscape, where the supposedly noble and barbaric past manifests itself in the present, is used to express a profound ambivalence about the revolution and the revolutionaries, who are rendered as more and less than human.

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[9] See Itzel Rodríguez Mortellaro's incisive criticism of mexican primitivism in *La mirada mirada: transculturalidad e imaginarios del México revolucionario, 1910- 1945*

Like Heriberto Frías, Azuela wrote his conflicted take on military life soon after witnessing said violence himself, as a military doctor rather than as a second lieutenant. Further following in the footsteps of writers such as Frías, Azuela then fled to south Texas, where the first edition of his book was published in 1915. The novel was "re-discovered" in the mid-1920s, when the post-revolutionary government was invested in a project of celebrating the Revolution to cement its own authority and *Los de abajo* (perhaps ironically) became part of this post-revolutionary discourse. Illustrations of *Los de abajo* by famed artists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco therefore respond to a different political moment, promoting—or pushing against—the post-revolutionary government's vision of the revolution. Though also influenced by Avant-garde primitivism and under an ostensible obligation to illustrate the text, these landscapes are strikingly different from Azuela's textual descriptions. In Orozco's illustrations, stark and brutal landscapes accentuate scenes of senseless violence inflicted on peasants. These illustrations, which were published alongside the first English translation in 1929, portray the Mexican Revolution as destructive and barbaric and push back against official post-revolutionary rhetoric. On the other hand, in Rivera's illustrations the tamed and rounded landscape supports the revolutionaries and frames their heroic deeds. These depictions of the landscape— which were drawn for a planned 1930 edition of the novel by Editorial Cultura that was never published (the images would later appear in *El arte moderno en México*, *El arte moderno y contemporáneo de México*, and finally in Fondo de Cultura Económica's 2012 commemorative edition of *Los de abajo*)— allows the revolution to be presented as righteous and redemptive.

Though these illustrations have been largely overlooked by scholars, analyzing text and illustrations together reveals how the landscape creates a discursive space that allows for a dialogue between these three important voices. Xavier Moyssén, one of the few critics who

briefly considers both Rivera and Orozco's illustrations of *Los de abajo*, succinctly sums up the importance of all three artists to post-Revolutionary culture: "los tres contribuyeron, a su manera, a la definición de un ciclo significativo de la cultura mexicana, posterior a la 'revolución' iniciada en 1910" (59). These illustrators emphasize different sides of the savage/noble, destructive/redemptive binaries set up by the textual landscape —perhaps tipping the editions they illustrate towards their own views of the revolution—but undoubtedly forcing the reader/viewer to question any single perspective. Hence, through the common language of landscapes and primitivism, these three artists interrogate—and come to very different conclusions—about where the Mexican Revolution falls in terms of civilization and barbarism, past and future, destruction and redemption.

II

Primitivism and the Mexican Revolution

Critics have been hesitant to associate *Los de abajo* with Avant-garde primitivist ideas of the early twentieth-century, although these ideas are commonly associated with Rivera and Orozco's artistic output. Though many scholars emphasize Azuela's status as a relative literary outsider from the provinces at the time that *Los de abajo* was first published, Azuela was undoubtedly aware of and influenced by the European Avant-garde and primitivist ideas. His more experimental Avant-garde phase is often see as posterior to his writing of *Los de abajo*: "La trilogía de novelas 'vanguardistas' comenzó en 1923 con *La Malhora* (1923), a la que siguió *El desquite* (1925) y *La luciérnaga* (1932, aunque escrita desde 1927)" (Torres de la Rosa 47). However, the fragmentary narrative style of *Los de abajo* has been read in terms of its association with the Avant-garde. For instance, in an analysis of Azuela's early literary work, Sergio Lopez Mena asserts that, "Los rasgos simbólicos y el carácter fragmentario de varias de

sus obras muestran a un escritor sensible a las nuevas corrientes de la literatura" (91) while Luis Leal insists that by the time of the publication of *Andrés Pérez, maderista* in 1911, Azuela "abandona las técnicas narrativas finiseculares que había utilizado anteriormente, lo mismo que las formas que prevalecían en la novela hispanoamericana en general" (861). Maryse Bertrand de Muñoz goes one step further and compares the structure of *Los de abajo* to Hemingway's modernist novels (237). Hence, though it is difficult to determine exactly what Avant-garde literature Azuela had read by the time he wrote *Los de abajo*, he undoubtedly had some exposure to such literary and cultural trends.

Perhaps the overlooking of primitivism in *Los de abajo* has to do with the fact that this movement is often associated with European artistic production. Scholars such as Kelley Swarthout create a distinction between European primitivists and what she calls Latin American progressive vitalists, reasoning that the latter's "return to their roots represented a quest to recuperate an emotive, spontaneous way of being, quite distinct from that of their European counterparts" (21). Erik Camayd-Freixas on the other hand, acknowledges that, "in recent years, the discourse of primitivism has begun to receive renewed international attention, but inquiry has been scant and overdue with respect to Latin American" (11). Instead of seeing Latin American primitivism as a different movement than that of its European counterparts, he explores the ways this discourse had different social and political implications in a Latin American context.

How do Latin American artists and intellectuals appropriate a European way of looking at the non-European world? According to Camayd-Freixas, "Latin American primitivism includes a tenor distinct from that of its metropolitan counterpart. It posits itself as the returning gaze of the colonized, a reappropriation of identity that lays claim to the rhizomorphous continuity of multiple cultural origins" (14). In the context of *Los de abajo*, the African and Aztec faces seen

in the outlines of the mountains can be viewed as an inquiry into the multiple cultures seen as "primitive" by the criollo elite. Hence, this primitivism is one that turns not from Europe to non-European cultures, but rather to a constructed notion of the national past as the source of the primitive. As nationhood and landscape go hand-in-hand in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Mexican thought, it is perhaps no surprise that these primitivist ideas are expressed through representations of the landscape.

Camayd-Freixas also makes the important point that Latin American primitivism was not simply a European movement blindly replicated in a new context. He sees this movement as a resurgence rather than an importation:

> far from being a new import, modern primitivism in Latin America is, then, mutatis mutandis, a resurgence, a broad reevaluation of culture, prompted by several factors: an overdue reaction against positivism, a rise in nationalist sentiments after the Mexican revolution…a rise of ethnology and humanistic anthropology; major archeological discoveries in the Americas; and, certainly, the influence of artistic primitivism as propelled by the European Avant-garde. (17)

For the purposes of this chapter, primitivism in a Latin American context will be seen as a movement that is certainly influenced by the European Avant-garde but is overwhelmingly shaped by important social and cultural shifts intrinsic to Latin America.

Camayd-Freixas then cites the two artists this chapter will be analyzing, Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, to illustrate how primitivism was used in a Latin American (and specifically Mexican) context. He argues that: "modern artistic primitivism in Latin America soon became independent of its European sources. Diego Rivera, who started as a cubist in Paris, returned home after the Mexican Revolution to celebrate the national past in murals inspired by

pre-Columbian art. Among Mexican muralists, José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949) mixed primitive traditions with modern expressionism" (18). Yet, though these two artists both used primitivistic artistic currents in different ways from their European counterparts, they did not share the same artistic vision with respect to primitivism, as is apparent in their illustrations and their larger body of work.

These different interpretations of primitivism stemmed from opposite views on indigenismo. In the words of Kelley Swarthout, "Rivera created a new iconography that linked the idealized figure of the indigenistas to use the constructive achievements of the ancient Mexicans to inspire pride in the cultural heritage of Mexico and persuade their countrymen to have confidence in themselves and their future" (75). This celebration and appropriation of the Indigenous past—at the expense of a full acknowledgement of the Indigenous present—differs drastically from Orozco's approach. Orozco "rejected any possible role for indigenismo in his notion of a Mexican nationalist art. Mestizaje, not indigenismo, was the essence of mexicanidad. He believed the Indigenous experience to be reflective of limited local and regional concerns and therefore not representative of the national experience" (76). Hence, these two artists drew from different "primitivisms" in their search for apt representations of the post-Revolutionary nation. These differences are reflected in the more "universal" depictions of the human experience found in Orozco's illustrations and in Rivera's conscious incorporation of celebratory images from Mexico's past and emphasis on typically Mexican attire and landscape.

In a Mexican literary context, Roger Bartra sees a search for mythical origins, what he terms a "paradise lost" as stemming from a specifically Mexican strain of primitivism. He identifies the search for origins in the so-called primitive Indigenous past as a response to the forces of modernity, including the Mexican Revolution:

> the wound is still open that the revolutionary shrapnel of modern society, guided by the symbols of future and progress, inflicted on the rural, indigenous past….Thus, the Mexicans resulting from the immense tragedy begun with the Conquest and ending with the Revolution are imaginary and mythical inhabitants of a violated limbo. (29)

Though Bartra references the work of José Revueltas and Carlos Fuentes, not Azuela, this sense of the rural, Indigenous past living in an uneasy, broken relationship to modernity is apparent in *Los de abajo*, and most specifically in representations of the landscape with spectral Aztec and African features. Moreover, this idea of Mexicans inhabiting a "mythic and imaginary" in-between space between the lost "primitive" past and modernity is echoed in Azuela's novel, where he uses a mythic landscape full of fantastic faces and imaginary beasts to illustrate a Mexico where Indigenous antiquity and Western modernity all coexist in a limbo-like state.

Bartra then analyzes how this search for primitive origins in a Mexican context is an especially complex and contradictory endeavor. He writes about how:

> the reconstruction of a mythical rural past faces the real horror of industrial society. Clearly we are witnessing here the well-known Jungian archetype of Janus: the opposition of past and future, of what is behind and what is ahead. This polarity permeates Western thought; but when it is developed in the limited situation of situations of "Third World" societies, the polarity acquires a strange and nebulous form that even, at times, borders on the realm of madness. (29)

The "strange and nebulous" form that mountains in the shape of African and Aztec heads take and the depiction of mountain ranges as large lizards signaling an ominous future can perhaps be tied to this Western polarity between past and future that takes on additional significance (and madness) in a Mexican context.

Just as it is impossible to discuss the landscape without exploring ideas about race and the modern nation state, it is also impossible to discuss Mexican primitivism, especially in *Los de abajo,* without exploring these same ideas. Latin American primitivist discourse, as briefly mentioned above in my discussion of Rivera and Orozco, was linked to Indigenous and African cultures. In the case of Mexico, and as seen in *Los de abajo* and Rivera's work, this problematically led to an association of the primitive primarily with Indigenous peoples. Bartra writes that: "there is a search for that barbaric Other which we carry within us as our ancestor, our father; it fertilizes the natural mother country, the land, but at the same time stains it with primordial savagery" (Bartra 33). This racialized primitivist duality between nobility and savagery, the modern (mestizo) citizen and the ancestral "other," as well as the clear connection of Indigenous groups with the land, is seen clearly in the landscapes of *Los de abajo*. And it is no coincidence that as Bartra describes this discourse, he himself uses imagery firmly rooted in the landscape. It is also important to note that this noble/savage divide occurs within the context of the nation and the Mexican people; the "other" is a father who sits too close for comfort.

When Azuela points to the "primitive" roots of Mexico's history and landscape, he does not merely represent Indigenous, particularly Aztec, peoples. He also incorporates Africans rarely seen in Rivera's and Orozco's work. The rediscovery of the colossal Olmec heads in the mid-1800s propelled the rediscoverer José Melgar, as well as intellectuals such as Manuel Orozco y Berra, to claim that there was pre-Columbian contact between Africa and Mexico. Perhaps the African heads mentioned in *Los de abajo* are an echo of this theory, which was still postulated in the early twentieth century (Ramsay 12). Moreover, during this time period Afro-Mexicans, though still marginalized, were made more visible in literary culture. Critics Ben Vinson and Bobby Vaughn note that due to the publication of books featuring Afro-Mexican

protagonists by writers such as Riva Palacios and studies by politician and historian Manuel Martínez Gracida, "en vísperas de la Revolución mexicana, los afromexicanos comenzaron a ganar un pequeño pero perceptible espacio de reconocimiento en las historias de México" (38). These writings are very place-specific, focusing on coastal Oaxaca and other states where there are sizable Afro-Mexican populations. Thus, like Indigenous groups, the literary intelligentsia assigned Afro-Mexicans to provincial and mainly rural spaces seen as backward and barbarous.

Without the lens of primitivism, a discussion of race and class representation in the novel falls into two seemingly contradictory groups. On the one hand, Max Parra analyzes how the character of Solis, the disillusioned intellectual sometimes seen as Azuela's mouthpiece, sees that:

> el campesino mexicano padece por motivos raciales de una propensión innata a la violencia. Carente de los ideales que pudieran mitigar este mal hereditario, queda condenado a destruir la labor positiva de la Revolución…sujeto a un impulso ciego éste se dirige hacia la autodestrucción, y, por consiguiente, se condena a continuar en una posición social de subalternidad. (13)

This characterization plays into the idea of the Indigenous peasant as stuck in an unbreakable cycle of violence from which escape is impossible, echoing the ideas Bartra explores above about the impossibility of returning to a "lost paradise" or fully engaging in modernity. The discomfort with such a point of view is apparent when Jorge Ruffinelli explains how, "lo que muchos molestaba como tábano [en *Los de abajo*] era el hecho de que la revolución popular, de 'los de abajo', apareciese en la novel como el epítome de la barbarie" (248).

On the other hand, scholars such as Margie McCrary and Michael Myers see the same figure, the Indigenous peasant in a rural landscape, as portrayed in a sympathetic and celebratory light at odds with the interpretations given above. They explain how:

> Azuela shows the revolutionaries, under the leadership of their pure-blooded Aztec, separating themselves from years of servitude and oppression. He connects this freedom to the earth itself, the land that is free of ownership in a large sense, and suggests that these men, the full-blooded Aztec identity embodied in Demetrio, belong to this land…They can forget their degrading lives as peasants and find a sense of pride as they gallop across the rightful lands of their ancestors. (36)

Here, the Indigenous peasant character is seen as being celebrated and glorified by Azuela as a proud and righteous revolutionary reclaiming his ancestral land. Rather than seeing either McCrary and Myers or Rufinelli and Parra as offering more insightful views about the portrayal of the revolution and the revolutionaries, I see the duality in the depiction of Demetrio and his men as stemming from the noble/savage divide and a sense of history as a struggle between the Indigenous past and the modern nation characteristic of primitivist thought.

My argument will go further, arguing that instead of creating a contrast between the majestic natural world and cruel human actions, both barbarism and nobility are inscribed into the landscape itself. Indeed, these depictions of the landscape create a space where the revolution's heroism and brutality can be explored in a more nuanced manner. Furthermore, by incorporating an analysis of the illustrations by Rivera and Orozco, where the influence of primitivism is more widely explored, the larger cultural context in which Azuela explores ideas about Mexico's Indigenous and even African past in the context of the Mexican Revolution becomes more apparent.

Finally, while this chapter examines an Indigenous and African presence in the landscape which is influenced by primitivist discourse, I do not wish to replicate a primitivist discourse that refuses to see Demetrio, the protagonist, as an Indigenous person in the flesh. Nor do I wish to portray African and Indigenous peoples as primitive. Instead, I am concerned with how this novel and illustrations both expose and erase the presence of Indigenous and African populations by locating traces of their experience in the revolutionary landscape. Indeed, I see this exposure and erasure of Indigenous and African peoples as an important aspect of the novel's ambivalence about the Mexican Revolution, where the binaries of past and future, civilization and savagery, destruction and redemption offer an incomplete, but telling, picture of the revolutionaries and the landscapes they are associated with.

III

Azuela's Landscapes

This primitivist discourse seems to influence Azuela's ambivalent view of the revolution. In his book *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, Carlos Fuentes underscores the significant role that ambiguity plays in *Los de abajo* and other novels of the Mexican Revolution as opposed to its literary predecessors: "el pueblo en marcha de Azuela, Guzmán y Muñoz rompe, quizás a pesar de sus autores, la ficción del populismo romántico, la fatalidad de la naturaleza impenetrable y el arquetipo del cacique bananero, para revelarlos como realidades transitorias y estáticas…introducen una nota original en la novela hispanoamericana: introducen la ambigüedad" (15). Fuentes argues that instead of depicting the landscape merely in terms of nationhood and fatality (a point of view that I refute in my first chapter), these new novels incorporate a sense of ambivalence into previously didactic spaces. This reading of the novel of

the Mexican Revolution as ambiguous is central to my argument. I examine the novel's ambiguity in the specific context of landscape omitted by Fuente's analysis.

Fuentes is not the only critic to focus his analysis of *Los de abajo* on questions other than the landscape. Curiously, the landscape in *Los de abajo* has been felt most deeply in its absence. The 1938 theatre adaptation of the novel was roundly criticized by Rafael Solana because of the omission of this powerful element: "[le] falta la identificación dolorosa y estrecha con el paisaje, uno de los más poderosos aciertos del novelista, que en el teatro ha tenido que recortar su pluma y prescindir de este apoyo y esta fuerza" (qtd. in Ruffinelli 242). Outside of this negative theatre review, the role of the landscape in the novel (and accompanying illustrations) has been little analyzed.

However, the significance of the landscape is underscored in the book's first pages. After being forced to flee his house, Demetrio separates from his family. In this context, the first image of the mountains is one of loss: "Ya a la puerta se apartaron en opuesta dirección. La luna poblaba de sombras vagas la montaña. En cada risco y en cada chaparro, Demetrio seguía mirando la silueta dolorida de una mujer con su niño en los brazos" (4). The landscape is embodied; he sees the bent shape of his fleeing wife in all the stunted trees and crags. This archetypal image of the woman with the child in her arms—it is no coincidence that the wife and child are nameless and virtually anonymous—suggests images of Madonna and child. Therefore, from the very beginning of the novel, the landscape is depicted as a shadowy space that

embodies archetypes. The landscape assumes an oneiric, ominous quality, where Demetrio sees each shrub as a Madonna-like figure.[10]

A few pages later, the narrative voice paints a tranquil scene where the sleeping protagonist melds into the natural world, cementing the connection between Demetrio and the land while not completely erasing a sense of the landscape as portentous and otherworldly. The landscape protects the fleeing protagonist: "y llegó al fondo del barranco cuando comenzaba a clarear el alba. Se tiró entre las piedras y se quedó dormido. El río se arrastraba cantando en diminutas cascadas; los pajarillos piaban escondidos en los pitahayos, y las chicharras monorrítmicas llenaban de misterio la soledad de la montaña" (5). Like the birds hidden in the plants, Demetrio hides himself in the rocks and falls asleep. He becomes part of the natural order, nestled among the birds, cicadas, and the singing river in a space Baker describes as peaceful and "almost pastoral" (49).

However, even in this rather idealized view of the landscape, where the birds and river sing at dawn, Demetrio and the animals remain hidden from an unarticulated danger, while the cicada's cries are linked to an image of the mountains as mysterious and lonesome. The mono-rhythmic quality of the cicadas marks a tedious linear progression of time but exists outside of linear time, in an ageless space where all moments are mysteriously undifferentiated and timeless. In this way, the author creates a sublime atmosphere—where beauty is mixed with a foreshadowing of fear and the Juchipila canyon exists both in linear time and outside of linear

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[10] In his article "Patterns of Myth in 'Los de Abajo,'" D. Bradley also articulates the ways that myth and realism are intertwined in *Los de abajo*, though he does not focus on the ways the landscape is used as a central mythic and symbolic space. He argues that:

> It may be objected at this point that a realistic novel like *Los de abajo* deals not with symbolic or mythical characters…It is, in fact, Azuela's achievement that he succeeds in creating characters and plot that are so convincingly true to life that Los de abajo has been described as a work of photographic realism, while at the same time imbuing the work with resonances whose secret powers even his severest critics have felt themselves impelled to admire (95).

time— at odds with the register found in other sections of the novel. Yet, if the communion of the Indigenous peasant protagonist with the landscape is seen as representing a return to origins, the depiction of Demetrio asleep in the natural world reveals the narrator's deep ambivalence about an original landscape described in incomprehensible and vaguely foreboding terms.

In the following paragraph, Demetrio becomes an ant struggling against the canyon's unforgiving slope, blurring the divide between the human and the natural world. Though in his article "Animal Imagery and Structural Unity in Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*" Timothy Murad characterizes this moment simply as "a characterization connoting persistence and perseverance," this depiction allows Azuela to raise more complex questions (217). Is Demetrio reduced to less than human status through this comparison, or is he elevated through his integration into this harsh landscape? The novel is ambiguous, as exemplified by the following passage: "Demetrio despertó sobresaltado, vadeó el río y tomó la vertiente opuesta del cañón. Como hormiga arriera ascendió la crestería, crispadas las manos en las peñas y ramazones, crispadas las plantas sobre las guijas de la vereda" (5). The author likens Demetrio to an army ant climbing up the canyon wall, rendered small in this vast landscape. The repetition of the verb "crispar" to convey the protagonist's painful climb and the way the plants cling to the rock face suggests a shared sense of survival between ant, person, and plants in a harsh and even painful environment. Demetrio is just another small creature clinging to the canyon walls. On the other hand, by being integrated so fully to this grand and forbidding landscape, perhaps he is also represented as a literally elevated part of the natural world. This character is reduced to an ant, but also depicted as part of an imposing terrain; he is less than human and more than human at the same time.

This elevation and yet also dehumanization through associations with the landscape continues on a larger scale when Demetrio ascends the other side of the canyon to meet with his men. In this scene, the landscape takes on majestic but also barbaric qualities, a clear example of primitivist thought:

> Cuando escaló la cumbre, el sol bañaba la altiplanicie en un lago de oro. Hacia la barranca se veían rocas enormes rebanadas; prominencias erizadas como fantásticas cabezas africanas; los pitahayos como dedos anquilosados de coloso; árboles tendidos hacia el fondo del abismo. Y en la aridez de las peñas y de las ramas secas, albeaban las frescas rosas de San Juan como una blanca ofrenda al astro que comenzaba a deslizar sus hilos de oro de roca en roca. (6)

Words such as "cumbre," "lago de oro," and "albeaban las frescas rosas" evoke a sense of elevation, hope, and beauty. Against such an evocative and expressive backdrop, Demetrio is cast as an almost mythic hero as he blows his horn and summons his men. Menton, for example likens Demetrio in this moment to "un nuevo Roldán" (1006).[11]

Yet, the description of the "prominencias erizadas como fantásticas cabezas africanas" ties the Juchipila Canyon to the "barbarous." In this fantastic landscape, where African heads rise in the mountains, humanity's deep and supposedly primal past juts into the present, to the Mexican Revolution. That the pitahayo plants become the aged fingers of the colossus further links this aged and fantastic formation to a specifically Mexican present. The fact that the roses offered up to the sun invoke pre-Christian sacrificial practices, but also purity and renewal in a

[11] Seymour Menton astutely notes the strong connection between Demetrio and the land in his essay about the novel's structuring myths. He observes that: "Demetrio, tanto por su nombre como por su papel en la sociedad, representa al hombre de la tierra, al hombre de maíz. Según la mitología griega, Demeter era la diosa del grano. Demetrio se dinstingue de sus compañeros por ser el único que expresa su meta en términos de labrar la tierra" (ct. in Sklodowska 28).

Christian context, reflects the ambivalence inherent in the depiction of this mythic land. The landscape allows unresolved anxieties about race, barbarism and pre-Christian practices to play out on the rock face, even as the novel celebrates Demetrio's revolutionary beginning.[12]

It is no coincidence that in the next paragraph, the narrative voice explicitly mentions Demetrio's "labios gruesos," which brings to mind the stereotypical image of the African face, as well as a stereotypical depiction of the protagonist's Indigenous features (6). The description of Demetrio's men a mere page later as "muchos hombres de pechos y piernas desnudos, oscuros y repulidos como viejos bronces" also echoes the African colossus described in the mountain, as this image conjures up darkness (oscuros), a barbaric state (pechos y piernas desnudos) and a connection with antiquity (como viejos bronces) (6). In a sense, the men are a "repulido" or repolished version of these fantastic figures discerned in the land itself, mirroring what Bartra characterizes as the commonplace in Mexican primitivism to think that "Mexicans resulting from the coming of history are archaic souls whose tragic relationship with the modern age obliges them to reproduce their primitivism permanently" (29). The revolutionaries become superhuman but also subhuman through their repeated links to grand and yet othered and unsettling figures from what is imagined as a deep and barbarous past. The non-linear view of time that allows the men to be old bronze statues and modern revolutionaries suggests that they are part of a deep and unburied history condemned to play out in the present. This landscape thus gives the author a mythic, non-linear space to articulate a profound sense of incongruity about the nobility and savagery inherent in the revolutionary project and the men who fight in it.

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[12] Literary critic Pascale Baker most astutely notices the noble/savage divide, though she sees this divide as prefiguring novels of the land rather than situating this discourse in a primitivist context. She describes how: "*Los de abajo*, perhaps unknowingly, also re-engages the civilization versus barbarism polemic… [the novel] betrays Azuela's unwitting admiration for the barbaric or primitive, despite his apparent distaste for it and desire for progress and order" (42).

A later scene where Demetrio and his men charge up La Bufa during the Battle of Zacatecas also evokes a non-western face integrated into the landscape in order to explore the complexities of the Mexican Revolution. As Luis Cervantes and Solis seek refuge during the battle in the safest place they can find, they look out at the conflict raging around them: "de lo alto del cerro se veía un costado de La Bufa, con su crestón, como testa empenachada de altivo rey azteca. La vertiente, de seiscientos metros, estaba cubierta de muertos, con los cabellos enmarañados, manchadas las ropas de tierra y de sangre" (80). This pre-Columbian figure echoes the description of the African face analyzed above. By employing the pervasive primitivist trope of the noble "altivo" and yet also "savage" Aztec king, the author is able to use this double-sided image of the pre-Columbian past to express ambivalence about the revolution best articulated by Solis's comment "—¡Qué hermosa es la revolución, aun en su misma barbarie!" (80). The beauty and majesty of this statue/hill/revolution is inextricably intertwined with bloodshed and unchecked violence, challenging the notion of scholars such as Mansour, who see the presence of Aztec figures as "un punto de referencia idealizado, que se da en el paisaje y en los personajes masculinos" (309). Through this calculated insertion of the figure of the plumed Aztec king into the landscape covered in blood, the author creates a physical space where the revolution can be both beautiful and utterly devastating.

The landscape as a fantastic and mythic space is further articulated at the end of the novel. Demetrio and his men turn back to the protagonist's native mountains:

> el paisaje se aclara, el sol asoma en una faja escarlata sobre la diafanidad del cielo. Vanse destacando las cordilleras como monstruos alagartados, de angulosa vertebradura; cerros que parecen testas de colosales ídolos aztecas, caras de gigantes, muecas pavorosas y

> grotescas, que ora hacen sonreír, ora dejan un vago terror, algo como presentimiento de misterio. (155)

In this description, monstrous animal imagery blurs into descriptions of the mountains with Aztec faces that echo the passages analyzed above. However, here the mythic past becomes more animalistic and grotesque. Demetrio comes back to mountains that now resemble giant lizards more than the figure of his wife carrying his child, perhaps revealing a growing alienation between Demetrio and the mountains he was so tied to at the beginning of the novel, or the revolution's own apparent degradation. This animalistic landscape defies understanding as it provokes laughter and horror, a powerful metaphor for the Mexican Revolution.

As the narrative voice becomes more critical of the Mexican Revolution and of the revolutionaries, this Indigenous "echo" apparent in the landscape is also viewed through a more critical lens. This supposedly more cleareyed view of the Aztecs in the mountains is depicted as a premonition, shifting the temporal association of the mountains and indigeneity with the past. Now, these reptilian and Aztec forms point towards an unsettling future, perhaps the natural result of the instances detailed above. The non-western past cannot be completely relegated to the realm of mountains and myth and now threatens to undermine the future of the revolution. This idea mirrors a primitivist idea that Bartra also explores: "backwardness and underdevelopment have come to be seen as manifestations of a perennial static infancy" (5). The "barbaric" —but also majestic—past replicates itself in the present and perhaps even in the future.

This notion of the characters as unable to break out of a "perennial static infancy" supposedly tied to their race is more clearly seen a few pages later, when the narrative voice tries

to explain why these men keep fighting. Their urge to continue armed combat is described as a vestige of their ancient nomadic spirit:

> los soldados cantan, ríen y charlan locamente. En su alma rebulle el alma de las viejas tribus nómadas. Nada importa saber adónde van y de dónde vienen; lo necesario es caminar, caminar siempre, no estacionarse jamás; ser dueños del valle, de las planicies, de la sierra y de todo lo que la vista abarca. Árboles, cactus y helechos, todo aparece acabado de lavar. Las rocas, que muestran su ocre como el orín las viejas armaduras, vierten gruesas gotas de agua transparente. (138)

In this quote, the soldiers are tied to the deep past associated with rocks likened to ancient armor and the movement of ancient tribes. The men's restlessness apparently stems not from political or tactical decisions, but rather from their connection to "el alma de las viejas tribus." Implicit natural or racial forces propel these warriors forward. Though Baker sees this scene as revealing how "Azuela appears to hark back longingly to a time past, long before the revolution and the abuses of Porfiriato," I see the portrayal of these aimless riders as more complex and ambivalent (49). In a sense, the revolutionaries are doomed to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors by literally tracing the migratory patterns of these ancient nomads; the landscape thus chains them to the "barbaric" past even as it gives them a sense of freedom in the present. Still, against this ancient tribal landscape the reader cannot help but note signs of newness: "arboles, cactus y helechos, todo aparece acabado de lavar." However, even the newly cleaned and fresh plains are simply a thin layer over a larger subsurface. Fresh water may glaze the surface but serves only to highlight the old rock underneath. Again, the old and the new, the barbaric and the noble uneasily exist in the same space.

From the plain, Demetrio and his men return to the familiar Juchipila canyon depicted in the novel's opening pages. This homecoming reveals a changed landscape: "asomó Juchipila a lo lejos, blanca y bañada de sol, en medio del frondaje, al pie de un cerro elevado y soberbio, plegado como turbante. Algunos soldados, mirando las torrecillas de Juchipila, suspiraron con tristeza. Su marcha por los cañones era ahora la marcha de un ciego sin lazarillo; se sentía ya la amargura del éxodo" (131). The initial depiction of the landscape echoes the way the canyon is described at the beginning of the novel as a sunlit space surrounded by vegetation and tall hills. Yet now, instead of being linked to "primitive" native figures, the hill leading up to the canyon is compared to a turbaned head, an exoticized and even Orientalized image.[13] This sense of difference is further accentuated by the fact that the men march into the hills as "un ciego sin lazarillo." The landscape intimately tied to the revolutionaries is now depicted in terms of estrangement and otherness. The landscape and revolutionaries are caught off balance in a familiar canyon that now seems foreign.

In the final pages, the sense of alienation between Demetrio and the landscape is articulated in greater detail. After all, he dies in an ambush in the very canyon that marked the start of his illustrious revolutionary career; one could argue that the land turns against him and his men. At the same time, the parallels between the final death scene and the scene where Demetrio sleeps at the bottom of the canyon open up a more nuanced reading: "El humo de la fusilería no acaba de extinguirse. Las cigarras entonan su canto imperturbable y misterioso; las

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[13] Max Parra also argues that the revolutionaries are disconnected from their land during the course of the revolution, producing a sense of rupture and alienation in the novel that prefigures migratory patterns in the post-Revolutionary period. He explains how: "en este nuevo orden la experiencia del desarraigo geográfico, es decir, la ruptura de la relación más o menos estable entre territorio e identidad, con todas sus implicaciones económicas, además de anímicas y culturales, será la norma y no la excepción a la regla para los habitantes del mundo rural" ("Geografía y procesos culturales," 9).

palomas cantan con dulzura en las rinconadas de las rocas; ramonean apaciblemente las vacas" (159). Bloodshed and bucolic cows, the infinite voice of the cicadas and the chirp of small hidden birds all exist within the confined space of the canyon. Like the cicada song that is "imperturbable y misterioso," the landscape itself allows these different and seemingly incongruous elements to exist side by side. This representation of the canyon refuses to signal how the reader should view Demetrio's death and the unraveling of the revolution by situating his body within a space just outside the bounds of realist representation that is violent and placid, imperturbable yet shaken by gunshots.

The final paragraph underscores the use of the landscape to create uncanny space where the revolutionaries—represented through the figure of Demetrio— are both destroyed and redeemed, elevated and dehumanized. Even as Demetrio takes his last breaths, "la sierra está de gala; sobre sus cúspides inaccesibles cae la niebla albísima como un crespón de nieve sobre la cabeza de una novia. Y al pie de una resquebrajadura enorme y suntuosa, como pórtico de vieja catedral, Demetrio Macías, con los ojos fijos para siempre, sigue apuntando con el cañón de su fusil…" (160). Demetrio in death echoes the image of the roses offered up at dawn to the sun; he is subsumed into the landscape and in a sense loses his humanity. The phrase "cómo portico de vieja catedral" invokes a return to the monumental spaces associated with the landscape in the above passages. The ambiguity in the passage—at first glance it is difficult to tell if Demetrio or the "resquebrajadura" is referred to as an old cathedral—further highlights the intimate and inextricable connection between Demetrio and the landscape. This confusion also raises the question of whether the man or the landscape is likened to the sacred. Even the word "cañón" that refers to the barrel of the gun, but is also the same word for canyon, shows this blending of the human device and revolutionary struggle (this time against Carranza, not the federales) and

the landscape itself. Thus, Demetrio appears to drift into the sort of unchanging and timeless space associated with the ancient heads and the unending cries of the cicadas; again, he is more and less than human.

The words and phrases that connote purity and youth through the personification of the mountaintop as a bride suggest that Demetrio's death—and by extension the revolutionary struggle—regenerates the land. However, an equally plausible reading would be that Demetrio's death exists in cruel contrast to this pure and beautiful landscape that he—and the revolutionaries— cannot reach. Bradley clearly articulates this discrepancy when he cites W.A.R Richardson: "'Demetrio dies, having achieved nothing, precisely in the Juchipila canyon where he sets out, thus symbolizing the futility of the birth, life, death cycle of human existence on a personal level. The victim-king motif, culminating in the references to Christ, suggests rather that Azuela had in mind what he was later to describe as 'la secular idea…de que el hombre que quiera ganarse ha de perderse'" (104). Whereas Bradley and Richardson align their arguments with one reading of Demetrio's death, I argue that this landscape laden with myth and symbolism allows for the articulation of an inherently ambiguous relationship between destruction and regeneration, barbarism and civilization. An examination of the pervasive sense of ambiguity facilitated by these wild spaces throughout the novel allows the final passage to be read in the same terms.

IV

Contentious Illustrators

What happens to this interpretation of the landscape conveying a profound sense of ambiguity if we analyze not only text but also image? This chapter will now shift from a textual to a visual analysis of Orozco and Rivera's illustrations of *Los de abajo* in order to address this

question. As mentioned above, the conflicting messages between text and illustration in *Los de abajo* are not simply due to the addition of another strong voice to the text. Historical and socio-political factors—more than a decade separated the creation of text and images— accentuate these inherent differences. The first serialized and print edition of the novel published in El Paso, Texas in 1915 and 1916 were not illustrated. Following the infamous polemic about virile Mexican literature —or the lack thereof— in 1924, in response to Julio Jiménez Rueda's article, "El afeminamiento en la literatura mexicana," the Mexican cultural elite rediscovered *Los de abajo.* As Stanley L. Robe chronicles, "a tangible consequence of the controversy of 1924-1925 was a flurry of new editions of *Los de abajo*" (74). It is in this new cultural context, where *Los de abajo* gains new recognition by the literary intelligentsia and is seen as *the* novel of the Mexican Revolution, that Orozco and Rivera agree to illustrate the novel.

To better explore the sociocultural context in which these illustrations are produced, I will first briefly trace Rivera and Orozco's treatment of landscapes and will then examine the specific circumstances that led Rivera and Orozco to illustrate the novel. I will finally analyze the illustrations themselves, in order to show how these artists respond to different sides of the past/present, civilization/barbarism, destruction/redemption binaries that Azuela sets up through his representations of the landscape. The reader is thus presented with seemingly irreconcilable landscapes that serve to articulate contradictory views. Ironically, Rivera and Orozco's more didactic and direct illustrations of the Revolution destabilize a coherent or authoritative view of the Mexican Revolution when set against Azuela's ambivalent landscapes.

The landscape was an important theme after the Mexican Revolution in the work of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, among other influential painters. Though neither artist was strictly a landscape painter, they both experimented with landscape painting. After all, both

were taught and influenced by Mexico's influential landscape painter Gerardo Murillo Coronado, known as Dr. Atl. Orozco's landscapes echo the stark, bleak spaces that are apparent in his illustrations of *Los de abajo* (see figure 15):

> Orozco painted several landscapes, among which we can mention *Paisaje con picos* and *Paisaje metafísico*, both from 1948. The first is a ghostly painting made with few colors. The reduced space is filled with sharp, knife-like shapes intertwined with curved forms that remind us of aggressive vines. The second one is a large pyroxylin painted in black, white, and grays. Only a low horizon line can be seen, and a high, cloudy sky spreading a dark, menacing mantle. (Rubiano 28).

The same sense of menace, as well as the use of aggressive vegetation and knife-like shapes can also be seen in Orozco's illustrations, where the landscape contributes to a dark and brutal view of the Mexican Revolution.

Rivera's landscapes are quite different. His most famous landscape is from his cubist phase, when he was a student in Paris, though the subject matter is distinctly Mexican (see figure 16). Germán Rubiano describes this landscape, *Paisaje zapatista*: "an armed figure built with cubist planes, alluding to someone wearing a sombrero and sarape, is holding a rifle while he stands against a truly naturalistic mountainous landscape" (28). This celebration of the peasant revolutionary figure in a pleasant naturalistic landscape is also apparent in his illustrations of *Los de abajo* (though all traces of cubism have vanished). Rivera's landscape is explicitly political and celebrates Zapatista fighters while Orozco presents brooding mountains and plains that express a more critical (and general) view of the land. These more idiosyncratic landscapes reveal the ways that a new generation of artists use the landscape to express a wide range of messages, from the creation of an ominous atmosphere to the celebration of Zapata.

As preeminent Mexican muralists, Orozco and Rivera were also tasked with representing the Mexican Revolution in comprehensible and accessible terms that could be readily understood by the post-Revolutionary masses. Pascale Baker details how the post-revolutionary government legitimized its power and attempted to appeal to the masses by presenting a view of the Mexican Revolution that celebrated the role of the peasant class:

> government-commissioned muralists such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco bolstered this cultural nationalism with idealized visions of the revolutionary peasantry. Despite the fact that Azuela's novel was sometimes labelled a reactionary work, and one which the Mexican state was quite happy to use to its own advantage, Azuela's version is quite distinct from this official version. (54)

Though clearly the audience for the murals is different from that of the novel, the illustrations can be seen as adhering to Baker's characterization, at least so far as Rivera's images are concerned. As will be explored below, Orozco's more pessimistic view of the revolution might be seen as diverging from this "government-commissioned" view, especially as these images were published in the United States, rather than Mexico, in the book's first English translation.

As a result of the "re-discovery" of *Los de abajo* in the 20s, the novel was translated into English by Brentano's in 1929 by Enrique Munguía, a Mexican diplomat stationed in Washington D.C. Anita Brenner, an influential Mexican American intellectual, specifically asked Azuela to allow Orozco to illustrate the translation. Her request is preserved in a letter she wrote to the novelist: "José Clemente Orozco ha hecho dibujos, 'Horrores' los llamamos, de las cosas que son exactamente el momento emocional de *Los de abajo*. Debería de ilustrar su obra. Son los únicos con la fuerza debida" (qtd. in Avechucho Cabrera 35). Azuela approved and Orozco, who was in New York City at the time, was then commissioned to illustrate this translation. However,

Orozco did not express undue enthusiasm about the commission. A letter written to his wife reveals his attitude: "Otro éxito. Van a editar aquí la novela mexicana 'Los de abajo', traducida al inglés. Quieren que yo haga las ilustraciones. Las haré si la fatiga me lo permite, créeme que ya estoy verdaderamente rendido y con más ganas de irme a mi casa que de ocuparme de arte" (qtd. in Avechuco Cabrera 37). Strangely, Rivera was at first commissioned to illustrate the translation. Orozco was originally only tasked with illustrating the cover and the dust-jacket, as another one of his letter reveals: "estuvo aquí Enrique Murguía, abogado en la Embajada de México, si no lo conoces te enviaré una carta de presentación, joven, bebedor, ex dieguista, traductor al inglés de *Los de abajo* de Azuela. Diego hará las ilustraciones y yo el jaquet y el sombrero; lo editará Brentano" (qtd. in Moyssén 59). The reasons for this sudden change are unclear.

In any case, the fact that Orozco ended up illustrating the English translation for a U.S. edition of the novel influences the way both text and image are read. Though Anna Indych writes about a series of images called "horrors" that Orozco created around the same time period, rather than addressing the illustrations, similarities between these two projects make her observations relevant in the context of the latter. She explores how a U.S. stay changed Orozco's artistic output, noting that the work he produced in this country was destined "for an audience north of the border far removed from the political realities of the post-revolutionary era" (159). Indych also argues that "in an era when the revolution needed to be legitimized then, Orozco's critique could only be developed in small-scale drawings meant for export, not in the public murals of Mexico City" (158). Given the relatively close ties between artists and intellectuals in both countries, Orozco's subsequent struggles to secure government funding in Mexico, and very public murals that depict the Mexican Revolution in unflattering terms, I do not see Orozco's

New York City work in quite the black and white manner that Indych describes. Nonetheless, the different cultural context and relative distance from Mexico City undoubtedly informed his illustrations of *Los de abajo*.

Orozco's illustrations for *Los de abajo* were influenced not only by the context in which they were produced, but also by Orozco's personal views about the Mexican Revolution, which he explored in other contemporaneous works. As mentioned above, many of Orozco's illustrations for *Los de abajo* are remarkably like a series of drawings that he completed around the same time called "Horrores". Avechuco Cabrera explains that:

> Es cierto que los dibujos fueron hechos por Orozco exclusivamente con el objetivo de ilustrar la novela (es decir, sería impreciso hablar de convergencia, estrictamente hablando), pero habría que discutir hasta qué punto la lectura de *Los de abajo* condicionó la propuesta del pintor mexicano. Como he señalado a lo largo de este apartado, algunas ilustraciones son reelaboraciones de motivos recurrentes en la obra previa de José Clemente Orozco, aunque no por ello resultan ajenas al universo novelístico. (37)

It would be futile to analyze the images simply in comparison to the text. The artist's own visual and ideological concerns came into play when he sat down to illustrate the English translation.

Orozco, who had supported Carranza rather than Villa, had an unambiguously negative view of the Mexican Revolution. In an interview given during his stay in New York City, he insists that:

> En la tragedia de la guerra, importan poco el tiempo y el lugar. En México, los revolucionarios vestían de huarache y sombrero, cuando los tenían. Los antiguos guerreros griegos llevaban cascos de blanca cimera y sandalias clásicas. Pero en ambas

> épocas el sufrimiento fue igual […] Dondequiera que se presente, el desperdicio de juventud es igualmente insensato. La crueldad, la brutalidad, la estupidez, son las mismas en todos los países y en todas las épocas. (qtd. in Reed 44)

This view of the Mexican Revolution, which emphasizes its brutality and downplays its social and historical context, is echoed in Azuela's novel, which also addresses the cruelty and barbarism of the revolutionaries. Yet, the sense of a struggle between past and present, between savagery and nobility is glaringly absent. In Orozco's analysis, wars are all "igualmente insensato" and barbarous. These ideas are articulated in the series "Horrores" referred to above, which Orozco finished right before working on the illustrations. Avechuco Cabrera graphically categorizes this series as "una lucha armada desprovista de todo componente esperanzador o por lo menos paliativo: en los dibujos tétricos, esos rostros hórridos deformados por el odio, el vicio o la bestialidad…para José Clemente Orozco, según sus propias palabras, el movimiento armado había supuesto 'sainete, drama y barbarie'" (34).

The themes addressed in "horrores" very much echo Orozco's illustrations of *Los de abajo*, perhaps more so than Orozco's reading of the novel itself. For instance, one image from the horrores series, titled "The Rape," uses violent imagery and a stark visual style in a mode reminiscent of the illustrations found in *Los de abajo*. Similarly, in the first illustration that I will analyze the fighting figures almost fall off the page due to the dramatic foreshortening (see figure 17). The land itself becomes an unstable place that hinders the figure's balance. The strong diagonal lines in the crest of the hill, tree, and ridges further suggest an unstable and shifting landscape. Fighting figures are virtually indistinguishable from the ground they collapse into; the federal's knife pierces the peasant figure like the spiny landscape that recedes into the background. Thorns and knives in the upper left corner of the illustration also merge. Moreover,

the bent and veiled heads of the figures in the upper left corner are virtually indistinguishable from the landscape itself, a motif also apparent in the foreground, where bent and agonizing corpses blend into the twisted landscape. The connection between figures and the landscape is also apparent in the novel. Yet the tension found in the text between a landscape that elevates the characters and a landscape that dehumanizes them is absent from the illustration, where the landscape pierces the prostrate peasant figure just like the federal. Here, the landscape simply highlights a scene of primal barbarism and violence. However, this barbarism is not explicitly tied to race or to specific ideas about a Mexican past. Most of the figures are faceless and their racial identity is not emphasized. The landscape could be anywhere; it serves as a sort of allegorical role rather than as a specific representation of the central Mexican landscape. What is so striking about the image is its sense of immediacy and placelessness.

The claustrophobic framing of the landscape further contributes to the sense of the revolution as a destructive space from which there is no escape. The peasant—who is about to be stabbed in the heart—is placed in a setting where he cannot avoid a violent death. Canyon walls jut up on both sides of the lithograph and a twisted tree that looks as if it is about to fall over blocks any possible escape from this brutal bloodshed. Orozco's fatalistic view of the Mexican Revolution that emphasizes barbarity and brutality —particularly in terms of peasant suffering— is viscerally articulated through this nightmarish landscape. It is impossible to read this landscape in the ambiguous terms that the author sets out, where the brutal landscape scenes are balanced by images of the land as a source of regeneration and beauty. When faced with both image and text, this merciless scene of human suffering is particularly jarring in the context of the novel's more ambivalent view of the revolution and the revolutionaries. There is an

unresolved contrast between image and text that forces the reader to see the Mexican Revolution in two different, irreconcilable ways.

Another of Orozco's illustrations featured later in the novel conveys a similarly pessimistic attitude about the revolution (see figure 18). In this image, a naked dark-skinned man is hung from a tree beneath three dying figures. Again, the steep ground appears unable to support the prostrate figures. The diagonal lines that make up their bodies visually echo the contour of the distant mountains, linking the figures to the unstable landscape. The most harrowing aspect of an already ruthless scene, the hanging corpse, is also visually tied to the landscape. His dark body visually mirrors the tree from which he is hung. Even the texture of his skin matches the texture of the tree trunk. Notably, there is no actual aggressor; the dead and dying are left with only the landscape (and viewer) as witness.

This image also appears to go beyond the specific context of the Mexican Revolution to serve as a more general condemnation of human depravity and violence. As Avechuco Cabrera writes, "para el pintor, no es que la Revolución se haya pervertido en el trayecto y la violencia desproporcionada sea evidencia de ello…no se escudriñan las causas de la guerra, sino que son, simple y llanamente, 'un terrible enjuiciamiento de la raza humana'"(44). This visceral and highly emotive portrayal of brutality conveys a critical vision of the revolution (and of humanity in general). The specifics of the revolution as seen by Azuela, tied to an Indigenous primitive past at once noble and barbarous, are stripped away. All the viewer is left with is a seemingly timeless condemnation of human nature. When juxtaposed with the text, this image is all the more striking for its portrayal of senseless violence where the landscape offers no sign of life, redemption, or national characteristics.

In the final Orozco illustration that I will analyze, the landscape again serves as a site of death and loss, albeit in a less visceral way (see figure 19). In this image, three cloaked figures and a child bend down in front of a tree on which a cross is painted. The similar contour of the mountains and the ground, as well as the tree, visually link this illustration not so much to the text, but rather to the illustration analyzed above. Hence, the illustrations can be read as referencing each other as well as the text they illustrate. In this lithograph, the stooped bodies also mirror the mountains behind them, visually linking the figures to the landscape they inhabit. The figure's kneeling position and the cross on the tree suggests a scene of mourning, where the desolate landscape—especially the leafless tree— stands in for the missing bodies of those killed during the revolution. In the first indication of hope seen in Orozco's images, a child sits at the bottom of the lithograph next to a small budding plant. Yet, the child and plant seem overwhelmed by the stark landscape and cloaked figures.

Even this final image suggests that Orozco's landscapes are used to frame the Mexican Revolution in negative terms that emphasize brutality, loss, and destruction which are at odds with Azuela's textual representation. Though Indych argues that Orozco depicts "a standard middle-class viewpoint of the revolution, a mixture of disdainful despair and morbid fascination with the sheer carnage of the civil war—a viewpoint shared by intellectuals such as his friend Mariano Azuela," a more detailed analysis of image and text shows how writer and artist use representations of the landscape to voice very different ideas about the Mexican Revolution (159). The landscape literally provides space for these different viewpoints to exist side by side, though the juxtaposition of text and image forces the reader/viewer to wrestle with how to interpret these irreconcilable views of land and revolution. The coupling of image and text therefore raises more questions than ready answers.

The divide between text and image is even more pronounced in the material circumstances surrounding Rivera's illustrations. Rivera first started working on illustrations for the English translation of *Los de abajo* in 1929, though Orozco took over the project. However, his illustrations were also going to be published in a 1930 edition of the novel published in Mexico: "hacia 1930 la Editorial Cultura prepara una edición de la célebre obra de Mariano Azuela, misma que iba a salir ilustrada con dibujos de Rivera fechados el año anterior; la empresa no llegó a realizarse, mas los originales del ya famoso artista quedaron en poder de Agustín Chávez, fundador de la editorial" (Moyssén 59). When this edition of the novel fell through, the illustrations were printed independently of the text in two art books, *El arte moderno en México*, (Robredo-Porrúa, 1937) y *El arte moderno y contemporáneo de México*, (UNAM, 1952) (Moyssén 59). The images only appeared alongside the novel in a 2012 commemorative edition of *Los de abajo* published by Fondo de Cultura Económica in Mexico. Therefore, for most of the history of the images, they were read independently of the text and framed in terms of their artistic value rather than their illustrative power.

As explored above, these were not Rivera's first depictions of the Mexican Revolution. Juan J. Rojas explains how Rivera, due to his position as one of Mexico's most influential artists, constantly revisited the topic of the Revolution: "for the better part of the twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution served as a constant referent in Mexico's artistic production. Painters, novelists, and poets such as Diego Rivera, Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz were often engaged in a process of renegotiating its symbolic value" (109). These illustrations were part of an ongoing symbolic project, where artists were called upon to make sense of the Revolution in an ever-changing political context. To better understand Rivera's vision of the Mexican Revolution, it is also useful to compare his paintings with Orozco's. According to Bertram Wolfe's succinct

analysis: "if Rivera has painted what the Revolution should be, what it should have become if it were to realize the visions of its Flores Magóns and Zapatas, Orozco has painted what the Revolution (often) had been…Negative criticism of the Mexican Revolution is contained in Rivera's work too, but it is subordinated to an emphasis on dreams of fulfillment" (qtd. in Craven 127). This celebratory view of the Revolution is apparent in Rivera's murals for the Secretariat of Public Education (painted from 1923-28). Arlynn Sánchez Silva notes how in this ambitious mural project he, "exalta la lucha revolucionaria y el sufrimiento de los oprimido" (5).

Considering this larger body of work, it is no surprise that Rivera's illustrations diverge from the text and from Orozco's illustrations by presenting the Mexican Revolution in an overwhelmingly positive light. Rivera's celebratory view is especially apparent in an illustration that depicts Demetrio summoning his men, a scene I analyze above in terms of its textual significance. In this visual reimagining, Demetrio is depicted as a monumental figure as he blows into a horn and assembles his men (see figure 20). Instead of being portrayed as stark and desolate, the landscape (where even the cactuses are rounded and inviting) creates a gentler and more positive atmosphere. The balanced composition, created in large part by the even distribution of rocks and foliage neatly framed by the three mountains, further contributes to the overall sense of harmony and rightness. In contrast to Orozco's foreshortening, which creates a sense of instability, here the viewer looks out over the landscape from Demetrio's towering perspective. This privileged vantage point thus gives the viewer a sense of stability and mastery over the scene. The viewer must also identify with Demetrio, as both viewer and protagonist survey the same landscape populated with revolutionaries. In this way, the landscape is used to create an ordered and rounded space that highlights the worthy and redemptive purposes of the revolutionaries and even creates a sense of identification between the viewer and the figures. The

ambivalence inherent in Azuela's vision of African mountains along with majestic views and heroic figures is effectively erased in this tamed and visually pleasing image.

Moreover, unlike Orozco's stark scenes, the landscape is used to highlight the Mexicanness of the land and people. From the revolutionary's footwear and dress to the cactuses that visually echo their hats, Rivera creates an image that draws upon markers of national identity and flora at odds with the bleak and timeless landscapes presented by Orozco. Though the bold lines and simplified figures suggest a "primitive" style, there are no direct allusions to indigeneity or Africans in this illustration. Demetrio's face is turned away and the simplified figures of the men defy any racial identification. However, this unequivocally Mexican landscape gives the figures a sense of specificity and national pride missing from Orozco's representations and only partially apparent in Azuela's more ambiguous writing.

Even Rivera's illustration of the first battle in Juchipila canyon portrays the inherent violence of the Mexican Revolution in a more flattering light (see figure 21). As in the illustration analyzed earlier, this viewer looks out at the canyon from the revolutionaries' point of view, creating a sense of visual identification between the viewer and Demetrio's small band of fighters. The balanced composition noted by Moyssén again produces a more stable scene, where even in the middle of a battle, there is a sense of overall balance. The squat cactuses and rounded rocks found above also make an appearance in this illustration, further framing the landscape in a more positive and less threatening light. This is not untamed wilderness either; there is a clear path that the soldiers take down to the riverbed, in contrast with Orozco's scenes and the textual depiction. Unlike Orozco's canyon space, the revolutionaries are clearly supported rather than stifled by the landscape. The rocks in the bottom right corner shelter

Demetrio and his men, a stark contrast from the piercing rocks and claustrophobic composition found in Orozco's depiction.

Though the content of the image is brutal —soldiers falling to their deaths—the violence is mitigated by the pleasing depiction of the canyon walls and the small scale of the faceless soldiers. Even in death these falling figures seem almost playful and cartoonish, lessening the emotional impact of witnessing the violent ambush. The fact that Rivera chose to illustrate this scene right before the thick of the action also diminishes the viewer's potential questioning of even the most righteous of killings, a choice at odds with Orozco's images, where the viewer must look at scenes of death and dying head on. Moreover, though Demetrio's followers are depicted in the attire and weaponry commonly seen in images of fighters in the Mexican Revolution, the federales lack any distinguishing features or even a uniform. The Mexicanness (and humanity) of the revolutionaries is highlighted while their enemies are depicted as unindividualized figures made small by the scale of the landscape. This sympathetic view of the markedly Mexican revolutionaries framed in a beautiful and unintimidating landscape is therefore at odds both with the ambivalent depiction of the Revolution seen in the text and with Orozco's condemnation of violence and brutality.

The final Rivera image that I will analyze also presents the revolutionaries and their landscapes in an overwhelmingly positive way. In this image, Demetrio is seen scaling the canyon wall, looking back at his house which has been set on fire (see figure 22). As in the other Rivera images I have analyzed, his gaze is visually conflated with the viewer's gaze, creating a sense of identification with the protagonist. In addition, instead of crawling ant-like up the rock face, he rests for a moment on stairs set into the canyon wall in a more typically human pose. Neither Demetrio nor the landscape are presented as barbaric wild entities nor explicitly linked

with an Indigenous past. The only source of violence and barbarism comes from the unseen soldiers who set his house on fire. Though the injustice of this violent act is implicit, Demetrio is hardly depicted as helpless victim. He looks at ease, the dominant figure in this landscape of high peaks and plowed fields. In this way, Rivera uses the landscape to pay homage to the revolutionaries and their noble cause. These are not barbarians or even noble yet savage warriors, but rather simple faceless farmers looking down on orderly fields. This view is seemingly irreconcilable with Azuela's description of Demetrio as an ant both dehumanized and elevated by the canyon walls and Orozco's depiction of human depravation. The conflicting landscapes apparent in the text and Orozco's and Rivera's illustrations force the reader/viewer to try to make sense of different ways of seeing the revolution through representations of the landscape ranging from the bucolic to the majestic to the nightmarish.

V

Through the creation of landscape where barbarism and nobility, destruction and redemption, past and future all fit in the space of a canyon, the author and illustrators articulate the complexities and often irreconcilable truths of the Mexican Revolution. As Moyssén succinctly observes, "fortuna grande fue para Mariano Azuela el haber contado con la presencia de dos grandes intérpretes para ilustrar *Los de abajo*" (59). The multiple landscapes and accompanying perspectives in the text are brought into a contentious and lively dialogue with Orozco's and Rivera's overlooked illustrations. These contrasting voices destabilize any coherent vision of the Revolution, revealing the thin ground any single portrayal of this tumultuous time period stands on. Though it is tempting to favor an authoritative reading over one that focuses on ambiguity and uncertainty, by dwelling in an uncertain terrain, the novel's

and illustrations' anxieties about history, race, and the revolutionary project are brought to the foreground.

CHAPTER THREE

Unreal Landscapes: Representations of Comala in *Pedro Páramo* and Carlos Velo's film adaptation

I

Though film in Mexico predates the revolution, the Mexican film industry greatly expanded during the postrevolutionary period. Especially during the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema from the 1930s to 1950s, but even in the 1960s, films were often an important nation-building tool (Ramérez Pimienta). Moreover, films were often used to create more regressive images of womanhood during a period of changing gender norms, where women were entering the workforce in record numbers (Velázquez-Zvierkova). This chapter will examine how this new medium is used to reimagine questions of national and gender identity in a post-revolutionary context, and how novels are influenced by, or react against, these cinematic narratives. I will specifically explore the complex relationship between *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo, which was itself influenced by film, and the film adaptation directed by Carlos Velo. I argue that by examining the film and the novel's different approaches to and representations of landscapes, a more nuanced picture of how this seminal novel and the understudied film adaptation address questions of gender and nationality emerges.

Published in 1955, *Pedro Páramo* the novel reimages the regional novels of the past decades, transforming more traditional subject matter centered on the rural landscape through modernist literary devices and incisive social critique of post-revolutionary Mexico. The novel centers on Comala—a fictional small town emptied of people— and the surrounding wastelands that were once lush fields. The story of the land's shift from productive farmland to a seeming desert is inextricably intertwined the story of the ruthless local cacique, Pedro Páramo. Notably,

Rulfo frames the landscape as a sort of performance, something that is constructed, reinterpreted, and invented by different characters. For instance, when Pedro Páramo masturbates to images of his love interest Susana San Juan from the unromantic space of the outhouse, he pictures her against verdant spring fields. She in turn imagines fantastic and sensual seascapes where she can escape from her confined life in Comala. By framing the landscape in terms of performance and desire, I see Rulfo as refusing to naturalize this society's relationship with the land, especially through the female characters' subjective and imagined landscapes. The nationalistic—and often deeply gendered—equation of rural landscapes with Mexico as a nation is therefore criticized and denaturalized.

Perhaps a little ironically, given the criticism of the nation apparent in the novel, the 1967 film adaptation of *Pedro Páramo* of the same name was positioned as a way to revitalize a national film industry in crisis after decades of preeminence. Directed by the exiled republican Spanish filmmaker Carlos Velo, funded by Manuel Barbachano Ponce, a key player in Mexican independent film circles, and with a screenplay written by Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez, the film was met with high expectations and failed rather spectacularly.[14] Instead of focusing on the negative reviews of the film, however, I am interested in examining how representations of the landscape are used to explore the same issues of gender and nation apparent in the text, an often-overlooked aspect of the film.

The film was intended to preserve Rulfo's criticism of patriarchal power in a film medium that, especially during the Golden Age of Mexican film, was often associated with nationalism, patriarchy, and more conservative social values. Velo stated that he made the film "porque no podía mater a Franco y si mataba a Pedro Páramo me realizaba en parte, en fin, un

[14] See Román Gubern and López Aranda, who discuss the film's reception in greater detail.

poco mis abuelos caciques, un poco la imagen paterna que todos llevamos dentro, el pueblo lo mata al final de la película, eso es importante" (qtd. in Fernandez 169). However, I see the film as diluting the novel's critique, especially when it comes to representations of women and the landscape. The subversive and subjective quality of Susana's imagined landscapes in the novel are conventionalized through the film, especially when the camera facilitates the audience's gaze over Susana's sexualized body rather than focusing on her own imagined spaces. The film therefore seems to naturalize the connection between the female protagonist and the nation/land, rather than recreating Rulfo's more unexpected and destabilizing landscapes.

This chapter will first examine different approaches to film adaptation by critics such as Kamilla Elliot, Robert Stam, and Ilana Dann Luna to better explore the ways that aesthetics, adaptation, and identity are enmeshed in the question of how a modernist novel and its film adaptation represent rural Jalisco. I then analyze the ways that Rulfo's novel was itself influenced by film, especially the Golden Age films that provided a vision of patriarchy and nationalism that Rulfo appears to criticize in his novel. I next turn to theories about film landscapes, which—often being actual stage sets—seem to heighten Rulfo's idea about the landscape as performance, and yet due to their "realism" might also serve to naturalize this element. Finally, I analyze passages of the film and text that center on feminized landscapes in order to examine how the film and novel engage in a larger dialogue about questions of gender and nationality.

II

Adapting Pedro Páramo

What is the relationship between a film adaptation and a text? And what does this relationship reveal about questions of national and gender identity? To answer these questions, I

will first turn to Kamilla Elliot and Robert Stam's approaches to film adaptation. I then examine the ways that film adaptations in a Latin American and Mexican context are historically tied to nation-building projects and serve to reinforce (or challenge) gender norms. In this way, I aim to bring together three seemingly different threads: film adaptation, gender, and national identity.

Film critics such as Elliot warn of the potential pitfalls that come when comparing a literary work to its film adaptation. In her study of the novel/film debate, she laments the ways that "film has been regularly subjected to scholarly methods derived from literature and linguistics. Not only do such methods tend to occlude the nonlinguistic elements of film and to shackle 'meaning' to linguistic models, but such methods are also all but guaranteed to conclude that novels present 'better' than films" (114). Though I note the film's negative reception, I do not wish to conflate this critical reaction with judgements about the inherent superiority of a novel over its film adaptation. I also do not want to imply that film is inherently more conservative or regressive. (Luis Buñel's Mexican films, to cite just one example, would refute that point of view). Moreover, it is important to be aware of the danger of conflating these two very different mediums.

To create a more flexible way of looking at film adaptation, Stam draws on Gérard Genette's notion of a hypertext, as is mentioned in my introduction. Genette sees hypertexts as works such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* that alter, expand, or modernize an earlier text, in this case *The Odyssey* (which he terms the hypotext). By adapting Genette's ideas about hypertexts to film adaptation, he is able to move away from an approach that treats the film as a more or less accurate translation of the novel. Though this textual approach might be criticized by Elliot, this theoretical framework still self-consciously refuses to conflate literature and film:

> we can still speak of successful or unsuccessful adaptations, but this time oriented not by inchoate notions of 'fidelity' but rather by attention to specific dialogical responses, to 'readings' and 'critiques' and 'interpretations' and 'rewritings' of source novels, in analyses which always take into account the inevitable gaps and transformations in the passage across very different media and materials of expression. (5)

Stam therefore sees film adaptations as a reworking or reinterpretation of a novel in a very different medium, rather than as a bad copy of the original. This approach to the thorny question of film adaptation will serve as a framework for my own analysis, where I examine the representational strategies chosen by the filmmakers to create the film adaptation of *Pedro Páramo*.

Though Stam does not address a Mexican cultural context, his scholarship about film adaptation will also serve as a framework to better examine how this complex interplay between film and literature is tied to social hierarchies. Stam briefly outlines some of the questions that guide his study of film adaptation:

> throughout, we will be concerned with these interlinked issues of social and aesthetic hierarchies, of generic as well as social stratifications. Does a novel or its adaptation push society toward a more egalitarian condition by critiquing social inequities based on axes of stratification such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, or does it simply assume (or even glorify) these inequalities and hierarchies as natural and God-given?... In what language and style is the representation framed, and what are the social connotations of those styles and languages? (6)

This chapter will attempt to address these broad questions by specifically considering the ways that both film and novel represent the landscape. As I have argued in previous chapters, I see the landscape as being especially tied to questions of representation, nationality and gender. By examining the representation of Comala and the surrounding environs in both novel and film adaptation, I wish to explore how adaptation, identity, and aesthetics are all intertwined.

Indeed, critic Paulo Antonio Paranaguá argues that this relationship between film, literature, and identity was especially strong in a Latin American social context. He notes that the power of these adaptations of literature to film rested on:

> su cualidad de identificación con una cultural nacional más de una vez…los cineastas en búsqueda de lenguajes propios se identifican con obras literarias que reflejan las peculiaridades y del sentir y el obrar de sus países de origen. En estos casos, el cine asume el objeto literario como una simbiosis apropiada para representar el carácter de una cultura, un pueblo. (211)

This point of view is further articulated by Álvaro Cadavid, who argues that "la literatura y el cine son en nuestro medio formas de afianzamiento y construcción de la identidad" (16). He points out that especially in a media market oversaturated with Hollywood films, the adaptation of prestigious national novels to the big screen can be seen as an assertation of an independent cultural identity (13).

Indeed, the Mexican film industry of the 1960s saw *Pedro Páramo* as a way of reinvigorating an industry in crisis. Douglas Weatherford explains that:

> al principio de la década de 1960 la llamada Época de Oro quedaba ya en el pasado y el cine mexicano vivía en crisis. Varias iniciativas de estos años se concibieron como proyectos de calidad que podrían reanimar la industria nacional. Dos de ellas se basaban

> en novelas del joven y talentoso escritor jalisciense Juan Rulfo *Pedro Páramo* (1966, dirección de Carlos Velo) y *El gallo de oro* (1964, dirección de Roberto Gavaldón). Las exageradas esperanzas puestas en estos dos filmes—especialmente en *Pedro Páramo*—provocaron una decepción más pronunciada porque los resultados parecían no haber igualado la calidad de las fuentes en que se habían inspirado. (10-11)

With the Mexican film industry in crisis, critics looked to literature to "reanimate" a tired industry. Literary innovation would lead to cinematic innovation, and to the subsequent restoration of a faltering national film industry. In this way, the perceived cultural prestige of Rulfo's demanding novel was sought during a time period where the influence of Mexican film both at home and abroad was waning. Hence, the film adaptation itself was presented with nationalistic undertones, as a celebration of innovation in both Mexican literature and film.

Ilana Dann Luna also analyses how Mexican film adaptations address questions of nationality, though she situates this within a study centered on gender. In her book *Adapting Gender: Mexican Feminisms From Literature to Film*, she asks:

> Could a shift in genre act to question the normativity of gender in the nationally envisioned subject? I began to consider the subversive potential of adaptation and how such dialogic processes, the interaction between a source text and its reiterations(s), between authors and at times across generations, could be capable of constructing alternate subjectivities that could act as contestations to previously established, reiterated, and regulated stereotypes of the gendered self in the Mexican setting. That is, I began to understand that through repetition and widespread dissemination, mass media had been historically aided in the formulation of gendered roles and representations, and by that toke, it could be argued that it can offer the same possibility for reversing or

deconstructing such insidiously coded behaviors in subsequent generations through conscious acts of *repetitive rebellion*. (17-18)

Dann Luna acknowledges how mass media and film have been used to widely disseminate restrictive ideas about the Mexican woman and her role in the nation. However, she sees film adaptation as potentially subverting, rather than reinforcing, questions of gender and national identity. I am especially interested in her notion of repetitive rebellion. The act of reinterpreting and restating seems to lend power not only to the original critique, but also to the adaptation, which might magnify the text's messages. Given this potentially subversive power of film adaptations, it is especially notable that the adaptation of Pedro Páramo seems to reinforce, rather than reverse or deconstruct, gender stereotypes that the novel critiques.

It is also worth noting that relatively little work on film adaptation has been done in a Latin American and especially Mexican context. Vicente Serrano Muñoz explains how: "la asumida marginalidad de su objeto de estudio (aquella tradicionalmente despreciada quimera entre cine y literatura), junto a las barreras idiomáticas y la disimilitud de intereses teóricos en América Latina, explican en gran medida la relativamente escasa recepción de esta subdisciplina entre los circuitos académicos regionales (63). In Mexico specifically, Dann Luna writes that "there have been relatively few studies that meditate on adaptation in the Mexican setting—that is, on Mexican authors being adapted by Mexican filmmakers or even on the practice of adaptation in Mexico or by Mexican filmmakers" (29). However, she also notes the importance of Mexican film adaptations in the process of disseminating and reiterating social values: "adaptation…allows for a mediated reflection on culturally relevant issues of national identity" (31). This point of view is shared by Adriana Sandoval, who in her book *De la literatura al cine: versions filmicas de novelas mexicanas* notes that messages about national identity could be

spread through film to a much wider audience (11). Sandoval's book only analyzes films up to the 1950s, however, while Luna looks at the film adaptations of female authors from the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, few texts (other than Weatherford's and Gómez's works, which will be explored below) explore the film adaptation of Pedro Páramo in detail. Thus, my examination of *Pedro Páramo* and the film adaptation will contribute to a small but growing number of studies of Mexican film adaptation.

III

Juan Rulfo and Film

In a culture where text and film exist side by side, novels such as Rulfo's dialogue with contemporary cinema. Though Juan Rulfo's connection to photography is often highlighted, he was also an avid filmgoer. Indeed, Douglas Weatherford argues that the striking visual images associated with Rulfo's literary output may have been influenced not only by photography— Rulfo was a talented amateur— but also by film. He posits that: "la tendencia visual de la ficción de Rulfo, sin embargo, puede haberse inspirado en otro medio artístico visual que le fascinaba: el cine. En efecto, Rulfo era, como sugiere su viuda, 'un espectador consumado del cine'" (11). Carlos Velo also observes that *Pedro Páramo* is a strikingly cinematic novel. He attributes this quality to Rulfo's interest in film: "[*Pedro Páramo*] es muy cinematográfica, además, porque Juan tiene una gran influencia del cine. Descubrí que cuando Pedro Páramo habla de la tierra se hace un homenaje al principio de *Lo que el viento se llevó*, cuando el padre de la chica le dice: 'la tierra es lo único que vale'" (qtd. in Gómez 63)

Critic Alberto Vital Díaz also positions *Pedro Páramo* as a reaction to film, though he looks closer to home, analyzing the way that Rulfo's novel can be read as a response to Golden Age Mexican film. He argues that "en el marco de las tensiones entre el cine y la literatura

(forcejeo y colaboración), la obra de Rulfo podría verse como un virtual campo de batalla donde al mismo tiempo se aprovecha recursos generales del cine como el montaje y la disolvencia y de modo implícito se criticaron decisiones que el cine mexicano estaba tomando con respecto a la...condición mexicana y latinoamericana" (10). Vital attributes some of the novel's modernist techniques to film. However, he also explores how the novel creates a more critical and less nationalistic portrait of the Mexican experience, a view that was more difficult to achieve in an expensive medium such as film, which relied on institutional support and therefore tended to promote an ideology that film critic Ana López characterizes as "[the] three master narratives of Mexican society: religion, nationalism, and modernization" (150). In this way, both Rulfo's novel and the Golden Age films can be seen as responding (progressively or regressively) to a Mexico that was rapidly urbanizing and where social norms were in the process of changing.

Díaz's arguments about the influence of film in *Pedro Páramo* echo film critic Corrigan's exploration of the relationship between film and modernist novels.[15] Corrigan sees the "popular realism" found in commercial films as a catalyst for modernist subjectivity:

> while filmmakers like Griffith were perfecting a classical style associated with the historical objectivity of the nineteenth-century novel, writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and other novelists were experimenting with perspectives aimed to subvert notions of narrative objectivity. Indeed, in some cases, these literary experiments may have been conscious reactions to film's popular realism. (23)

The film critic notes how narrative objectivity is subverted in modernist novels, perhaps in reaction to popular film, a tendency that Díaz highlights in the case of *Pedro Páramo*. Yet

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[15] Like critics such as Deborah Cohn and Ivan Kenney, I think that *Pedro Páramo*, though written in the 1950s, can be considered as part of this larger literary movement. At the very least, the novel employs many modernist techniques. Cohn observes "modernist techniques such as polyphonic narration, limited perspective, the subjectivization of experience, and the refusal to resolve ambiguities" in *Pedro Páramo* (71).

Corrigan goes on to analyze how modernist works by authors such as Hart Crane, Gertrude Stein, and John Dos Passos borrowed the innovative techniques found in film in order to create fragmentary and imagistic novels. He writes that, "the direction of the exchange between film and literature often shifts during this period… [the above writers] experimented with the metaphors and rhetoric of cinema to challenge the limitations of literary language, recasting in language, for instance, film's panoramic visual movements, its fragmentary montages of images" (29). Corrigan therefore delineates a fluid relationship between film and modernist literature, where writers write against, but also incorporate cinematic elements into their experimental works.

Elliot makes a similar point in her book *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, where she opens up the time period to explore how "Keith Cohen, Claude-Edmonde Magny, and Seymour Chatman all argue compellingly that twentieth-century novelists adopt cinematic techniques, like ellipsis, temporal discontinuity, fragmented vision, cross-cutting, and multiple viewpoints" (113). Rulfo's novel uses all of the techniques enumerated above. This observation therefore supports a reading of the novel as a continuation of this modernist literary tradition of borrowing techniques from film. Moreover, it is important to note that this analysis resists simplistic characterizations of film as essentially "realistic" or as naturally "experimental," rather illustrating how writers are influenced both by film's ability to seemingly convey reality, and by its technical qualities that highlight a fragmentary and subjective visual experience.

It is also worth underscoring how the Mexican film industry of the 1960s welcomed Rulfo's collaboration on a series of films, illustrating how the relationship between film and novels, especially in independent film circles, was actively sought out in a Mexican context. The film adaptation of *Pedro Páramo*, where Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez worked as

screenwriters, was hardly an anomaly. Indeed, from approximately 1955 to 1964, Juan Rulfo worked on various projects, including *La escondida*, directed by Roberto Gavaldón and a film adaptation of his own work, *El gallo de oro*, also directed by Gavaldón. He even worked as an extra in *En este pueblo no hay ladrones* (Boixo 327). Boixo examines this film circle, where writers and filmmakers collaborated extensively:

> en torno a Manuel Barbachano Ponce, mecenas del cine mexicano independiente, se crea un ambiente propicio en el que participan escritores interesados en el cine y profesionales cinematográficos. Rulfo tiene una buena relación con estos profesionales (Figueroa, Carlos Velo, Rubén Gámez, Alberto Issac, Antonio Reynoso e, incluso, Luis Buñuel) y es muy respetado por escritores que en esos años se interesan por el cine y elaboran guiones cinematográficos, como Gabriel García Márquez y Carlos Fuentes. La colaboración de Rulfo con el cine innovador de aquellos años parece normal si tenemos en cuenta el experimentalismo llevado a cabo en *Pedro Páramo*, piedra angular de la renovación de la literatura española del siglo XX. (327-8)

He links the experimentalism and atmosphere conducive to the collaboration between writers and filmmakers to Rulfo's literary output, seeing his interest and collaborations with filmmakers as a natural continuation of his work as a novelist. It seems notable, however, that this seemingly fertile collaboration between writers and filmmakers under the auspices of Barbachano failed to create a well-received film adaptation of *Pedro Páramo*. Hence, this chapter will examine the complex ways that word and image worked together, while also highlighting the tension and unease produced by this close relationship between film and literature.

This porous relationship between film and literature is apparent in both the novel and the film adaptation. Both film and novel engage in a larger interdisciplinary conversation about how

to represent and respond to new sociopolitical realities. It is therefore important to emphasize how aesthetic techniques, as well as ideas about gender and nationality, pass from one medium to another. Yet, it is equally crucial to explore moments where a text or film reacts against—rather than in in concert with—techniques and ideology associated with the other medium. Hence, I see this dialogue between film and image as having not simply aesthetic but also political dimensions.

IV

Cinematic Landscapes

The representation of the landscape brings into focus questions of word and image, as well as issues of national and gender identity. I am interested in Lefebvre's observation that "landscape is a multifaceted and pluridisciplinary spatial object whose meanings and representations extend from real-life environments to art" (160). He observes that the landscape does not belong to any medium but is rather a fluid object—to use his terminology— whose mediums and meanings vary. I see the landscape as a way to frame this analysis of literature and film through an object that both have in common. Especially in the case of *Pedro Páramo*, where the landscape is a fundamental site where Rulfo explores questions of representation, gender, and nationality, I am interested in examining the way the film landscape reiterates, but also reexamines these issues in a different medium. Moreover, as a way of looking at the land that often attempts to pass itself off as natural and unchanging, I wish to examine how the film and novel's framing of the landscape as artificial or realistic allows for the naturalization or subversion of the social issues explored above.

In the book *Landscape and Film*, Martin Lefebvre asks a very pertinent question for this project: "how, then, are landscapes etched into films? What is their ideological or symbolic

function?' (160). In order to answer this question, he principally turns to the geographer Denis Cosgrove, who sees landscapes as conveying social positions through a seeming "natural" medium. He notes that landscape "represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through imagined relationships with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature" (93). Cosgrove's analysis of landscape, with its emphasis on an "imagined" and subjective relationship to nature, will be essential in my exploration of questions of national and gender identity. This view of the landscape also emphasizes how it exists in relationship to nature, rather than being a realistic depiction of nature itself, a point I have emphasized in previous chapters. However, this way of seeing the landscape does not specifically consider the ways that film as a medium influences the representation of the landscape. How, then, are film landscapes different from those found in literature or painting?

Maurizia Natali posits that film landscapes are especially adept at evoking memory. She argues that: "film landscapes are never purely narrative backgrounds nor simply distracting spectacular setting. They bear the traces of political and ideological messages. They press onto viewer's senses, memories, and fears and become part of their memory, carrying the subliminal strength of a past" (341). This chapter will examine the way these "traces" of political and ideological messages are present, paying close attention to how these traces seemingly embed themselves into the viewer's subjective experience of the film landscape. The famous director Eisenstein similarly characterizes the landscape as "the freest element of film, the least burdened with servile, narrative tasks and the most flexible conveying moods, emotional states and spiritual experiences" (qtd. in Lefebvre 139). Though he does not link this ability of landscapes to convey emotional experiences to certain ideological positions, it is notable that he, like Natali,

sees landscapes as a flexible object particularly suited to conveying subjective—rather than strictly realistic— states of being.

In her essay "The Poet's Attitude toward the Movies" Gabriela Mistral uses landscapes to flesh out her argument about the importance of subjectivity and imagination in film. The poet writes that: "I believe in the future of cinema as great art only in proportion as it packs itself with imagination, and I should believe in its vertical decline if I saw in it the symptoms (ever arteriosclerotic) of slavery to fact, to the phenomenon, to immediate reality" (142). She then goes on to explore this tension between imagination and immediate reality in cinematic portrayals of the landscape:

> Let us consider the landscape, which should afford the naturalist his greatest success. I have just seen a short and very felicitous French film, built on the theme of water, which if one were to judge by the announcements, promises something like an elementary chapter in realism. The most beautiful—and most real—parts of this film are those in which a horizontal—or a vertical—mass of free water takes on fantastic aspects, ceasing to be water and coming to suggest some other element. (143)

The Nobel Laureate underscores the way that cinematic landscapes, rather than simply serving as an "elementary chapter in realism" can serve as an imaginative and fantastic element. Indeed, she highlights the irony of this element, so often associated with realism, being especially suited to channeling the imaginative and fantastic. She then links this imagination to emancipatory ideologies, positing a future in which these imaginative films will free the minds of the working classes (168). I am interested in relating these ideas about the imaginative and emancipatory power of the landscape to my analysis of the ways that female characters think and relate to this element.

In *Cinema and Landscape*, however, Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner posit that landscape in film occupies an especially fraught—rather than felicitous— position between this subjective quality noted by the above theorists and the perception of unmediated reality. Harper and Rayner argue that:

> The realist sway of motion pictures, and the formal ideological properties of the cinematic apparatus itself, may betray or obscure this work of construction. What is contained in the frame can assume the status of the real simply from its presence within it. Yet the authenticity of the cinematic landscape is not indisputable. The critical concentration in discussions of cinematic realism on the film medium's technology of reproduction ahead of what is *selected* for reproduction alerts us to the landscape's presence as a role, as another performative element. (22)

These critics highlight the way that the camera's mechanical framing of the landscape can obscure the fact that the landscapes are ideologically motivated constructions rather than unmediated portrayals of reality. Harper and Rayner suggest that the landscape, rather than freeing the oppressed, can serve to naturalize their oppression. Moreover, by framing the film landscape as a performative element that seems completely natural or real, the critics highlight the way landscapes in film navigate this tension between performance and "reality," between the artificial framing of a camera and the experience of a seemingly unmediated natural setting. This analysis will be useful as I consider the ways that male characters frame the landscape, through narrative and even through the camera itself.

A brief analysis of cinematic landscapes reveals how these landscapes can be leveraged to call attention toward (or away from) the "landscape's presence as a role, as another performative element." Writers such as Mistral point to the emancipatory potential of self-

consciously “non-realistic” landscapes while Lefebvre, drawing on the work of Cosgrove, points to the potential dangers of naturalizing social hierarchies through representations of the landscape. In this way, cinematic landscapes—much like the visual and textual landscapes explored in previous chapters— allow for a wide range of different aesthetic and ideological discourses. The more hierarchical view of a woman as landscape—framed for the viewer’s visual pleasure— is not inevitable, but rather reflects individual artistic and ideological choices.

V

Textual and Visual Landscapes in Pedro Páramo

How have critics approached Rulfo and Velo’s landscapes? I will first briefly examine the ways that critics such as Joanna Bartow and Ivan Kenney have thought about space in the novel, and how critics such as Gabriela Yanes Gómez have examined this subject in Velo’s film adaptation. Bartow’s idea of the town as a stage set in the novel, which underscores the performative element of Rulfo’s landscapes, will be central to my literary analysis, while I refute Gómez’s formulation of the cinematic landscapes as decoration. I will then turn to close readings of key scenes in the novel and text in order to further explore how Rulfo and Velo use textual and cinematic landscapes to challenge—or cement—contemporary ideas about gender and the nation.

Bartow explores how the towns at the center of the two novels that she analyzes, *Los recuerdos del porvenir* by Elena Garro and *Pedro Páramo*, facilitate this collective framing by serving as stage sets: “Ixtepec and Comala are the central “characters” not only abstractly as collective consciousnesses, but also as theatrical stages that evoke shared recollections” (4). The fact that the novel highlights the landscape’s “stage set” echoes Harper and Rayner’s observations about the performativity of film landscapes. In both cases, the landscape is

positioned not as a natural and objective element, but instead as something constructed, interpreted, and even performed, an observation that I will expand upon to consider how these performed landscapes are used to criticize normative ideas about gender and the nation.

Moreover, though Kenney, like Bartow, focuses on space rather than specifically on landscape, many of his insights are still important for my analysis. He argues that "Buñuel's and Rulfo's distinctive approach to spatiality forms a central part of their critique of discourses of cultural nationalism…both artists create bizarre, and at times irrational, story worlds which have the effect of destabilizing national spaces in Mexico" (86). The fact that Kenney links bizarre and irrational spaces associated with Buñuel's film and Rulfo's novel to a critique of nationalist discourse will allow me to situate these spaces—or in my case landscapes—in a larger social context. However, Kenney does not explicitly link these seemingly subjective and "irrational" spaces to gender, even when he uses gendered language to describe them. Therefore, I will incorporate his observations about how space in *Pedro Páramo* serves a subversive purpose, though I will also consider why these spaces are so often imagined and created by female characters.

There are currently no studies looking specifically at representations of the landscape in Velo's adaptation of *Pedro Páramo*. However, in *Juan Rulfo y el cine*, Gabriela Yanes Gómez briefly compares representations of the landscape in both film and in Rulfo's literary output: "para él [Juan Rulfo] el paisaje—ese paisaje—tenía un peso y una presencia como el de sus relatos. En cambio, en la película *Pedro Páramo* el paisaje—y las limpias haciendas floreadas, y los interiores fastuosos…no son más que un marco decorativo que no tiene nada que ver con el misterioso y seductor mundo de Rulfo" (21). Gómez sees the novel's landscapes as having more presence than in the film adaptation and relegates the landscape in the film to a "marco

decorativo," a view I will contest in this chapter. In addition, Weatherford provides important context about the collaboration between author and director on the question of representing the landscape in the film adaptation. He explains how "el exiliado gallego no tomó a la ligera la responsabilidad de adaptar la novela, y hasta viajó en 1961 con Rulfo al sur de Jalisco y sus alrededores en busca de locaciones para la filmación de la película y para recorrer la geografía que tanto había inspirado al creador de *Pedro Páramo*" (10). Though Rulfo did not extensively collaborate on the film adaptation, it is notable that he played a role in scouting film locations, a clear indication of their importance to Velo's film adaptation.

This subjective feminized landscape is apparent at the very beginning of both the novel and film through the figure of Dolores. In the book, Juan looks down towards Comala and comments on its sad appearance. He explains that: "yo imaginaba ver aquello [Comala] a través de los recuerdos de mi madre; de su nostalgia, entre retazos de suspiros. Siempre vivió ella suspirando por Comala, por el retorno; pero jamás volvió. Ahora yo vengo en su lugar. Traigo los ojos con que ella miró estas cosas, porque me dio sus ojos para ver" (74). Here, Juan attempts to see the town through his mother's perspective, rather than actually seeing the town this way. It is as if he self-consciously attempts to see as she does and finds this attempt more difficult than expected. This negotiation between seeing the landscape as himself and as his mother is further complicated by the phrase: "me dio sus ojos para ver." This phrase seems to highlight the power and maternal authority of Dolores's remembered landscapes, which her son strains to see.

What does Juan then see through his mother's (or his own) eyes? The novel makes this more explicit than the film. After Juan's internal monologue, his mother speaks: *Hay allí, pasando el puerto de Los Colimotes, la vista muy hermosa de una llanura verde, algo amarilla por el maíz maduro. Desde ese lugar se ve Comala, blanqueando la tierra, iluminándola durante*

la noche. Y su voz era secreta, casi apagada, como si hablara consigo misma…Mi madre" (74). As the philosopher Giorgio Agamben points out, melancholy—and the mother's sighs when she remembers Comala seem quite melancholic— "open[s] up a space for the existence of the unreal" (20). From the very beginning of the novel Juan is positioned as straining to see—or imagine—the unreal landscapes associated with his mother's longing to return home.

The novel then shifts from relating the mother's view of the landscape to a male perspective centered on property. Abundio, Juan's half-brother, explains that:

> ¿Ve aquella loma que parece vejiga de puerco? Pues detrasito de ella está Media Luna. Ahora voltié para allá. ¿Ve la ceja de aquel cerro? Véala. Y ahora voltié para este otro rumbo. ¿Ve la otra ceja de que casi no se ve lo lejos que está? Bueno, pues eso es la Media Luna de punta a cabo. Como quien dice, toda la tierra que se puede abarcar con la mirada. Y es de él todo este terrenal. El caso es que nuestras madres nos malparieron en un petate aunque éramos hijos de Pedro Páramo. (76)

The brothers are unified through the act of surveying their father's landholdings, a process that implicates the reader as well, as we also imagine the territory that Abundio so graphically describes. The mother's color-filled vision of the town seems to fade into a view of the landscape as a series of boundary markers. Though the brothers participate in the masculinized act of surveying landholdings—rather than sighing and imagining like Dolores—they can merely look with a degree of bitterness. Like their mothers, they have been shut out of land ownership, in stark contrast to their strongman father. In gesturing to Pedro's extensive landholdings, the text also erases Dolores's presence, not only in her son's mind but also in the land itself. After all, much of the land was Dolores's before she married Pedro. Her unreal and nostalgic landscapes are seemingly replaced by an assertion of the cacique's control.

In this moment, male power and authority over the land is seemingly naturalized; it is visible in the hills themselves. Yet, as Abundio's dialogue makes clear, this way of seeing the landscape is also a sort of performance, replete with stage directions, "ahora voltié para allá," "y ahora voltié para este otro rumbo." Thus, the novel seems to draw upon, but also subvert conventions apparent in the regional novels about the customs of the Mexican countryside that preceded Rulfo's work. Carlos Alonso notes that these novels promote a view of "a cultural state that is interpreted as having generated itself in a natural fashion, that is, arising automatically from the midst of collectivity and in perfect consonance with the surrounding environment" (10). Though some critics might attribute these very qualities to *Pedro Páramo*, by framing the landscape in terms of performance and the unreal, I see the novel as pushing against this point of view that naturalizes a culture's relationship with the land.

The opening of the film seems to dwell in more detail on Dolores's landscapes rather than on Pedro's landholdings. After a short sequence where Juan visits his mother, Dolores, at her deathbed, the image of her dead hand clasping her son's hand fades into a long shot of the landscape. As the landscape slowly comes into focus, the viewer sees Juan as he slowly trudges through a dry and deserted land framed by distant mountains. In an ensuing close up, Juan —framed by the landscape—takes out a photograph of his mother, and speaks to the image, explaining how Dolores always wanted to return to Comala and never did (see figure 23). In this way, the landscape is also intimately connected with the figure of the mother, both as the young woman in the photograph and as the dead hand. Her life and death seem to permeate the landscape that her son must now navigate.

This scene then abruptly shifts, the eerie sound of the wind picks up, and an almost blinding mist obscures the landscape. Suddenly, a ghostly Abundio steps out of the mist. Juan,

clearly shaken, follows him into the mists and then the film cuts to a shot of both men again framed by the dry and seemingly nondescript landscape described above (see figure 24). The mists seem to work as a framing device indicating that Juan is now in a different, perhaps supernatural, sort of place. The unsettling feeling of this disorienting, even spectral, landscape is further emphasized by the discontinuous editing, which appears to echo the fragmentary passages found in the novel. For instance, as Juan and Abundio converse, the film unexpectedly cuts to a close up of a roadrunner, and then back to the two figures on the outskirts of town. The subjectivity of the landscape, and the viewer's own disorientation is also accentuated by the fact that Abundio gestures to Pedro Páramo's land, which is all off-screen.

Dolores's nostalgic and memory-laden view of the landscape takes a more tangible form in the film adaptation. Her recollections of the place of her youth are emphasized by a voiceover, where she evokes the fertile earth of the fields around Comala and the smell of spilled honey, phrases taken directly from a later fragment of the novel. As in the above segment, the viewer is again forced to imagine the unseen landscape. The viewer is invited to envision (and taste and feel) the landscape as imagined by the exiled Dolores who yearns to return. Notably, while the viewer hears Dolores's voice and imagines the Edenic landscape that she evokes, the viewer is also faced with a dark and decaying interior. This juxtaposition of the film's visual and auditory capacities jarringly overlays the past and present, the mother's memory and her son's inability to see what she sees. In the novel, the reader must flip back and forth between the mother and son's perspectives as she reads. However, the film allows both these points of view to exist simultaneously, showing the medium's flexibility when conveying different landscapes and settings.

So far, I have focused on subtle differences between novel and film. However, in both versions, Dolores's nostalgic evocation of the fields and town of Comala is almost impossible to reconcile with the town that Juan returns to. Perhaps this dissonance can be better understood by considering Bartra's analysis of the role of a mythical Eden in the construction of national identity. In *La jaula de la melancolía* he writes that:

> quiero destacar—por el contrario—un proceso mediante el cual se inventa un edén mítico indispensable no sólo para alimentar los sentimientos de culpa ocasionados por su destrucción, sino también para trazar el perfil de la nacionalidad cohesionadora; indispensable, asimismo, para poner orden en una sociedad convulsionada por las contradicciones de la nueva vida industrial. Estos campesinos pensados desde la ciudad y desde la cultura moderna son el fantasma, como Pedro Páramo, de recuerdos borrados en la memoria colectiva. (33)

Dolores's Edenic description of Comala seems to fit into this nationalist framework, where she imagines a mythical Edenic past that is irreconcilably estranged from the present. This vision accompanies her son as he travels back to Comala. Her nostalgia for the countryside—she lived most of her life in Sayula— therefore frames the way she imagines and seems to idealize the fields and streets of her youth. The bleak contrast between her nostalgic view of the land she left and the wasteland that her son encounters could be seen as supporting this nationalist positioning of the rural landscape as a lost paradise.

However, as Mary Louise Pratt points out, "the nation by definition situates or produces women in permanent instability with respect to the imagined community" (51). The mother's nostalgic re-envisioning of the land is complicated by her deathbed wish, a wish that is almost identically phrased in both the novel and film: "No vayas a pedirle nada. Exígele lo nuestro. Lo

que estuvo obligado a darme y nunca me dio…El olvido en que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro" (73). Dolores longs for a place where she was wronged, and her nostalgia is interwoven with anger. Like Rulfo's deft evocation of the tradition of regional novels, which naturalize an autochthonous cultural order, the novel and film seem to echo, and yet also subvert these nationalist tropes. Therefore, in both the film and novel, Dolores participates in the creation of—and yet also problematizes—cornerstones of Mexican national identity, while her son struggles to understand her complex relationship with the landscape.

While Dolores is presented as a maternal figure who nostalgically imagines and recreates an Edenic Comala, Susana oscillates between imagining decidedly un-Christian landscapes centered on female desire and recreating her own imprisonment in house, bed, and tomb. As can perhaps be imagined—considering her role as love interest, rather than resigned mother—her representation in the film was more controversial, both in the making of the film and in its reception. Though the scene where Dolores prepares herself for her wedding night was cut from the film, most of the scenes that Velo begrudgingly cut had to do with Susana's sexuality and her connection to the natural world (Weatherford 10). Proposed scenes where Pedro Páramo and Susana swim together in the river as children—a scene not present in the novel—and the scene where Pedro Páramo masturbates while thinking about a young Susana framed by the green hills were omitted, though Velo later lamented his decision: "La maldita circunstancia de ser mi primera película profesional me hizo cometer el error de aceptar todo esto" (qtd. in Gómez 17). In addition, the scene where a young Susana explores her growing sexuality after her mother's death was never included in the screenplay. As can be seen from the above examples, questions about the representation of gender and sexuality—which I see as integral parts of the way Susana

imagines landscapes and is in turn imagined as landscape by her father and Pedro Páramo—are inevitably raised when analyzing the relationship between novel and film adaptation.

While most film and literary critics praised Pilar Pellicer, the actress who played Susana, they also criticized the way this central character was presented onscreen. Though not all comments explicitly focus on Susana's sexualization, they reveal a sense of unease with the way her body appears on film. For instance, Weatherford laments how "la inclinación de Velo y Fuentes a desatender el peso arquetípico de Susana se percibe en la atracción que Pedro siente por la amiga de la juventud, donde la característica de Susana que predomina es su sensualidad" (19). Graciela Martínez-Zalce cuttingly comments on the way Susana is "moribunda, pero impecablemente maquillada" while Gómez writes that "yo siempre había pensado, por pura intuición poética, que cuando Pedro Páramo logró por fin llevar a Susana San Juan a su vasto reino de la Media Luna, ella era una mujer de 62 años…[pero] semejante grandeza poética era impensable en el cine" (20). There seems to be a consensus that the film's Susana is too sensual, too young, and too pretty.[16] My analysis will go in a slightly different direction, analyzing how both novel and film present Susana's imaginative and "unreal" landscapes, while using also literary and cinematic conventions to frame her as the object of male desire, a point that the above critics seem to obliquely make.

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[16] These complaints were not limited to Susana, however. Critics also saw John Gavin as being too pretty and too foreign to play Pedro Páramo: "el actor norteamericano John Gavin en el papel del patriarca muestra un cacique sin vida interior. Rulfo jamás describe físicamente a este hombre, pero no necesitamos visualizarlo como un charro recién salido de la peluquería" (Gómez 19) "no es sólo que Gavin sea mal actor; se acumulan también otros detalles. En primer lugar, el acento norteamericano, que no logra controlar. En segundo, la caracterización: un niño bonito, peinadito, planchadito" (Martínez-Zalce 370-71). Even Velo, who cast Gavin, had reservations, later stating that: "El papel estelar en Pedro Páramo, para mi desventura y frustración lo lleva John Gavin, mal actor por los cuatro costados; el mismo que hace poco estuvo de embajador de EU en México. Gavin mismo tuvo el detalle de declarar ante el Senado de su país que después de 40 películas se daba cuenta que no tenía madera de actor" (qtd. in Martínez-Zalce 369).

One difference between *Pedro Páramo* and the film adaptation's framing of Susana is immediately apparent. In the novel, Juan converses with Dorotea, with whom he is now buried, about the snatches of Susana's monologues that he can faintly discern from the latter's own grandiose tomb. This sort of conversation can be seen in the following passage, where Juan speaks first and Dorotea responds:

> —No se le entiende. Parece que [Susana] no habla, sólo se queja.
>
> —¿Y de qué se queja?
>
> —Pues quién sabe.
>
> —Debe ser por algo. Nadie se queja de nada. Para bien la oreja. (145)

Juan seems to dismiss Susana's speech using gendered language, "no habla, solo se queja," even accusing her speech of being unintelligible. Yet, it is Dorotea who urges him—and perhaps by extension the reader—to keep listening. In this way, Susana's monologues from the tomb are framed by conversations about who should be listened to and who should be silenced, a debate that clearly takes on a gendered dimension.

However, the film strategically avoids these underground conversations. As film and literature critic Chatman observes: "verbal narratives can be completely non-scenic, 'nowhere in particular,' transpiring in a realm of ideas rather than place. The movies have difficulty evoking this kind of non-place. Even a pure black or gray of white backdrop will suggest night, or a fogged-in area, or heaven, or an over-illuminated room, but rarely 'nowhere' (106). Given the difficulties of representing this sepulchral non-place, the film reimagines Susana's monologues through a series of flashbacks. This strategy may eliminate some of the nuanced framing explored above, but also allows for Susana's experience to be mediated not by Juan, but rather by the camera.

In the novel, however, Juan first overhears Susana recall her mother's death. Though this scene does not appear in the film, it seems to occupy an important role in the novel, signaling a transition into the second section of the narrative, a section dominated by Susana (Bartow 3-4). Moreover, this scene also positions Susana in relationship to women, relationships that are glossed over in the film, which focuses on her relationships to men. This character first positions herself within an intimate domestic space: "estoy acostada en la misma cama donde murió mi madre hace ya muchos años; sobre el mismo colchón; bajo la misma cobija de lana negra con la cual nos envolvíamos las dos para dormir. Entonces yo dormía a su lado, en un lugarcito que ella me hacía debajo de los brazos" (141). She imagines herself within the wool blanket, below the mother's arms, on top of the mattress, creating a strong sense of envelopment and perhaps even entrapment. The repetition of "misma" heightens this effect, as Susana cannot escape the maternal bed. Though Susana remembers the comfort of her mother's arms, this domestic maternal space is almost claustrophobic, as the mother's body and bed still seem to encircle Susana after the former's death. The often-idealized maternal space is therefore framed in terms of constraint, as well as familiarity.

Susana then situates herself in her tomb. She completely negates her previous spatial positioning, illustrating the subjectivity of her spatial imaginings: "pero eso es falso. Estoy aquí boca arriba…porque no estoy acostada solo por un rato. Y ni en la cama de mi madre, sino dentro de un cajón negro como el que se usa para enterrar a los muertos. Porque estoy muerta" (141). She therefore forges a tenuous associative relationship between the two confining spaces positioned in terms of both their incompatibility, but also their implicit likeness. As critics such as Kenney and Lomnitz have observed, by situating herself within the house and tomb, she places herself within two national spaces that played an important role in post-revolutionary

Mexico: “the home was often presented as a metaphor for the state” (Kenney 73) and “the nationalization of death is a singularly Mexican strategy” (Lomnitz 20). Indeed, as explored above, Kenney notes that “the acute sense of entrapment of the characters portrayed can be linked to a subversive critique of nationalist hegemony” (74). Thus, Susana’s representation of her body in both home and tomb can be seen as part of this larger social critique.

These restrictive spaces contrast with the landscape Susana then evokes. She boldly re-creates the natural spaces of her youth from her coffin as an antidote to this life of constraint. She takes a bird’s eye view that centers on the vastness of wind and sky:

> El viento bajaba de las montañas en las mañanas de febrero. Y las nubes se quedaban allá arriba en espera de que el tiempo bueno las hiciera bajar al valle; mientras tanto dejaban vacío el cielo azul, dejaban que la luz cayera en el juego del viento haciendo círculos sobre la tierra, removiendo el polvo y batiendo las ramas de los naranjos. Y los gorriones reían; picoteaban las hojas que el aire hacía caer, y reían…Era esa época. En febrero, cuando las mañanas estaban llenas de viento, de gorriones y de luz azul. (141)

Like a panoramic movie shot, Susana San Juan first imagines wide open spaces and then zooms in slightly to describe the way that the wind stirs up dirt and makes the tree branches sway. However, even this earthier image focuses not on the ground itself, but rather on the restless mix of sky and earth. Her vision never quite lands on an earthbound object. Moreover, this is a vision of constant atmospheric movement; the wind blows, the dust moves in circles, branches shake and laughing birds peck at windblown leaves. Though confined, the female narrator powerfully evokes immense, constantly moving cosmic spaces.

She then describes the incompatibility between her mother's death and these vibrant spring hills: "Por la puerta abierta entraba el aire, quebrando las guías de yedra. En mis piernas comenzaba a crecer el vello entre las venas, y mis manos temblaban tibias al tocar mis senos. Los gorriones jugaban. En las lomas mecían las espigas" (142). Though critics have seen this contrast between house and nature as illustrating the world's indifference to the mother's death, a spatial reading allows for a different interpretation. Perhaps, by positioning herself as part of this fertile landscape, she is able to imagine feminized spaces outside of the dead and darkened home, asserting independence from the dead mother who envelops her in the previous passages. In this in-between space between the house and the spring morning outside, between womanhood and girlhood, Susana is caught between what she sees as her social role and her feelings: "Que yo debía haber gritado; que mis manos tenían que haberse hecho pedazos estrujando su desesperación. Así hubieras tú querido que fuera. ¿Pero acaso no era alegre aquella mañana?" (142). Hence, by stubbornly focusing the fertile spring landscape connected to her growing sexual consciousness, she refuses to conform to the social role of the performatively mourning daughter kneeling by her mother's coffin. She grieves, but she also looks outside and imagines herself among the hilltops, positioning herself outside of a restrictive nationalist discourse focused on the home and the dead.

However, her conflation of female sexuality with the landscape is also presented through a less emancipatory lens, especially through the figure of Pedro. The eponymous character remembers flying kites with Susana, his unrequited love, when they were both children:

> pensaba en ti, Susana. En las lomas verdes. Cuando volábamos papalotes en la época del aire. Oíamos allá abajo el rumor viviente del pueblo mientras estábamos encima de él, arriba de la loma, en tanto se nos iba el hilo de cáñamo arrastrado por el viento…y allá

> arriba, el pájaro de papel caía en maromas arrastrando su cola de hilacho, perdiéndose en el verdor de la tierra. (82)

Critic Ciaran Cosgrove notes that this passage "suggest[s] the consubstantiality of Susana and air/water" (85). However, my analysis goes a step further. I argue that rather than simply being connected to the elements, Susana is intimately linked to the green and flourishing landscape mediated by memory and desire. After all, the still young Pedro is ensconced in the outhouse while he imagines this scene. The remembered girl/landscape works its way into Pedro's body, in this instance as a manifestation of physical desire. Moreover, Pedro's physical enclosure in the confined and putrefying space of the outhouse contrasts with the expansive landscapes that he recreates. This superposition of two very different spaces is perhaps another example of the juxtaposition between Comala as a fertile space full of potential and its decline into a wasteland run by the brutal cacique that Pedro becomes.

Pedro's evocation of the girl/landscape as he masturbates also highlights his possessive and objectifying gaze. Hannan astutely notes how "Susana is a body objectified by fantasy…passive verb forms underscore the subject/object dichotomy beginning to take root: Susana's lips appear 'como si los hubiera besado el rocío'" (447). She does not directly tie this objectification to Susana's connection to the landscape though, an argument she makes in connection to Dolores: "this gendering equates women with land, showing how both are considered possessions as well as elements that provide service" (448). However, it is important to note that Pedro's male desire remains unfulfilled, suggesting a simultaneous centering and decentering of male desire through the feminized landscape. After all, Pedro does not manage to win over Susana, who spends most of the novel studiously ignoring him, and his green fields eventually become a wasteland. Moreover, in the scene itself, the fact that this fantasy is

repeatedly interrupted by his mother's voice commanding him to leave the outhouse and to help his grandmother with chores seems to cut into his objectifying reverie; he is forced to obey his mother and (at least momentarily) toss his daydreams aside.

As mentioned above, this scene was considered controversial, and Velo begrudgingly cut it from the screenplay. However, this vision of Susana can perhaps be compared to a scene in the film, where Pedro remembers how he fell in love with a young Susana when they bathed together as children in the river. In this scene, Susana looks out the window. As viewers, we see her figure framed by the window, but cannot see the landscape that she contemplates. Pedro enters the room and puts a proprietary hand on her shoulder (see figure 25). Then—unlike in the novel—they actually have a conversation. Susana asks, "¿es el río?" and Pedro assents and declares that "allí aprendí a quererte, ¿recuerdas?." Susana then refuses to remember and a disconcerted Pedro assures her that the next day, "visitarás la hacienda, verás lo grande que es." Then, just as in the novel, he seems to extend a proprietary gaze over both Susana and his lands outside the window. This proprietary view is further cemented in the next scene where he and Susana have sex, further cementing this connection between physical pleasure, remembered landscapes, and the object of his desire. As the novel never describes any physical intimacy between Pedro and Susana, this is an especially notable deviation.

This male association of Susana with the landscape is further reinforced through her fraught relationship with her father. In the book, Susana's father, Bartolomé San Juan, takes narrative control, uneasily reflecting on their lives by the mines and her future in Comala by Pedro Páramo's side:

> –Hay pueblos que saben a desdicha. Se les conoce con sorber un poco de su aire viejo y entumido, pobre y flaco como todo lo viejo. Este es uno de estos pueblos, Susana. Allá,

> de donde venimos ahora, al menos te entretenías mirando el nacimiento de las cosas: nubes y pájaros, el musgo, ¿te acuerdas? Aquí en cambio no sentirás sino ese olor amarillo y acedo que parece destilar por todas partes. (148)

Bartolomé describes Comala using words that allude to taste and touch, while he privileges sight—a sense often associated with landscapes—in his description of the wilds that the pair have left behind. If Comala is old and rank, where the senses are numbed by the smell of rot, the wild landscape by the mines—a place associated with Susana— is positioned as fresh and invigorating.

Indeed, the allusions to birth, greenery and birds all echo Susana's vision of the spring landscape outside of Comala, though in the voice of her father, her association with beginnings, birds, and clouds seems less benign. This outside world is now as rotten and constraining as the town she leaves behind: "Este mundo, que lo aprieta a uno por todos lados, que va vaciando puños de nuestro polvo aquí y allá, deshaciéndonos en pedazos como si rociara la tierra con nuestra sangre. ¿Qué hemos hecho? ¿Por qué se nos ha podrido el alma?" (149). This world presses in on all sides, while father and daughter disintegrate, seemingly under its weight. What rotted away this vision of new beginnings? What did he do? The text does not specify, though other passages hint at incest: "pues por el modo como la trata más bien parece su mujer" (146). In this way, Bartolomé's monologue about landscape provides cover for his reflections about a taboo subject, and the landscapes that Susana looked to as an escape from a dark house end up constraining her further.

This circuitous allusion to incest is more directly depicted in the film version. The adaptation reimagines a scene from the novel that some critics see as having sexual undertones, where Susana is lowered down by her father into a cave. In the adaptation, Bartolomé first sends

Florencio, Susana's love interest, on a suicidal mission to the mines. The film cuts to Bartolomé entering his house, where Susana lies sleeping in her bed. The camera zooms in and frames her sleeping face. There is then a long shot of Bartolomé watching the sleeping Susana. He pushes back the white mosquito netting and his daughter wakes up, wrapped in a white sheet. Her body, framed against the clean white bedding and the mosquito net, connotes purity and innocence, even as her bare shoulders and the visible contours of her body seem to sexualize her (see figure 26). In contrast, Bartolomé, standing over her fully clothed, with half of his face shadowed, appears especially ominous. A series of shots/reverse shots, where Bartolomé comments on her body, "eres delgadita y fuerte," "estás creciendo," while she responds warily, heighten the visual contrast between father and daughter. Bartolomé then asks her to get dressed while foreboding music plays in the background.

Next, the viewer sees Bartolomé in a cave, lowering Susana down a sort of crevasse. The camera lingers on Susana's body from below, as she is lowered down. She ends up in a tight space, feeling around in the semi-darkness (see figure 27). As in the scene above, Bartolomé stands above her, while she is again enclosed, this time by the cave walls, rather than by mosquito netting. This spatial positioning seems to heighten the power disparity between them. Bartolomé yells at her to find "dinero, ruedas de oro" but all she finds is a skull that can barely be made out in the murk. Her father, growing more aggravated, descends and lands at Susana's side with a resounding thump. He looms over her, just like the cave walls, and leans in close. Like Bartolomé, the viewer looks down at Susana's face while he unsettlingly tells her she looks just like her mother did as a young woman. Then she is crushed by his powerful embrace, and the film cuts to Susana wading into the ocean.

Though there is no nudity or explicitly sexual content, the film still goes much further than the novel in showing the source of Susana's trauma. Especially considering the fact that other scenes deemed too sexual in nature were cut—and rape and incest provoke a much stronger sense of horror and outrage than Dolores's wedding night preparations—this seems like a significant choice. In order to better understand the ways that this scene is portrayed on film, I will turn to Laura Mulvey's analysis of the representation of women in classic Hollywood cinema. Though she writes about films in a different cultural context, her general observations still seem applicable to this Mexican film. Mulvey uses psychoanalysis for what she terms a political purpose: "psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (1). She then ties the representation of women in film to "voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms" by which women are represented either as an "icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men" (6) or as the objects that need to be degraded. Indeed, she argues that the unease produced by looking at a woman as an icon is often assuaged by a "preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object" (6). In a film where Susana is often featured in close-ups that almost abstract her features, perhaps it is no coincidence that a violent scene that the novel refuses to directly depict is reimagined more explicitly. The scene in the cave seems to be an example of the "re-enactment of the original trauma" that will later be balanced by Pedro Páramo's attempts to save her. Perhaps, in this case, some of these classic cinematic ways of looking at women shift the author's literary representation in new—and less emancipatory—ways.

Moreover, coming back to the subject of landscapes more broadly, I am interested in the way that this incestuous relationship in both film and novel unsettle the "naturalness" of the woman/landscape's exploitation. Indeed, it seems to be no coincidence that Susana is raped in the bowels of the earth, in a place where natural minerals are extracted for human gain. Gabriela Nouzeilles describes an imperialist attitude towards women and nature that she argues is recycled and reformulated throughout the twentieth century: "la mujer aparece como territorio y espacio, fuente de goce erótico-epistemológico y de provocación para el conquistador masculino" (20). Here, she highlights a colonial attitude that naturalizes the conquest of both women and nature. Moreover, Bartra specifically writes about the inherent gendered violence of the nation-building project, a subject I have also touched upon in my first chapter. He explains how "nuestro padre…fertiliza a la madre patria natural, la tierra, pero que al mismo tiempo la mancilla con su salvajismo primordial. De aquí viene ese ingrediente melancólico que observamos, en mayor o menor proporción, en todo sentimiento nacionalista" (59). Bartolomé's assault of his own daughter therefore serves to make the "natural" —albeit violent—process of nation building through the subjugation of the woman/land profoundly and disturbingly unnatural.

Interestingly, the film immediately cuts from a depiction of Bartolomé overpowering his daughter to an image of Susana wading into the ocean, followed by a scene of her having sex on the beach with Florencio. As is often the case with representations of Susana, the film shifts from darkness to almost blinding daylight, from enclosed spaces to expansive and seemingly liberating landscapes. This juxtaposition also seems to fit into Mulvey's framework. Here, Susana assumes a male position by imagining herself at the beach, initiating a sexual encounter with Florencio: "in contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the

identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition in which the alienated subject internalized his own representation of this imaginary existence. He is a figure in a landscape" (5-6). Yet, in the film this positioning of woman-as-an active-figure-in-the-landscape is quite fleeting, even in a scene presented as a contrast or corrective to the rape scene explored above. When Susana is on the beach with Florencio, the camera zooms in on her partially clothed body as she looks straight at the camera, rather than at her lover (see figure 28). Moreover, it seems notable that the camera repeatedly reveals more of her body than that of Florencio. In this way, she ends up in a passive rather than active role, even in a scene where—at least in principle— she asserts her sexual desire in a landscape of her own imagining.

In the film version, the focus is clearly on her body as an object of male desire, while the novel's depiction of this scene centers on her act of imagining a coastal landscape where she can explore her sexuality. In the book, Susana—speaking from the grave—imagines a wide-open coast and Florencio's body as she is confined to the enclosed spaces of her bedroom and tomb: "Mi cuerpo se sentía a gusto sobre el calor de la arena. Tenía los ojos cerrados, los brazos abiertos, desdobladas las piernas a la brisa del mar. Y el mar allí enfrente, lejano, dejando apenas restos de espuma en mis pies al subir de su marea…y él me siguió el primer día, desnudo también, fosforescente al salir del mar" (159-160). Here, sensory images privilege touch over sight. Susana imagines the heat of the sand, the soft sea breeze, and the form of her imagined lover from the confines of her bedroom/tomb. She recreates a visceral landscape of sensation and female desire.

This dream-landscape is then described as a dynamic and moving space, very different from the static and unchanging imaginings of her bed, tomb, and even the mine. Susana

describes the ocean with a special focus on the movement of the waves: "Era temprano. El mar corría y bajaba en olas. Se desprendía de su espuma y se iba, limpio, con su agua verde, en ondas calladas" (174). The fixation on time and motion is apparent in the fact that she notes that it was early and then goes on to describe the ocean through a series of verbs, "corría," "bajaba," "desprendía" and "iba." In addition, the subtle personification of the ocean, which possesses "su espuma" and "su agua verde" creates the sense of a moving, self-contained entity. As critic Ciaran Cosgrove observes, "the sea is viewed as an element ever in process, an ebbing and flowing movement to which Susana will attune her own corporeal rhythms" (87). Moreover, this poetic view of the ocean seems to echo Mistral's observations about the emancipatory power of the subjective landscape analyzed above. Presented with spaces of physical restraint, this character imagines restless open spaces that exist in tactile harmony with her physical body.

The novel and film's drastically different ways of presenting the same scene can perhaps be better understood through an analysis of Laura Mark's ideas about haptical and optical visuality. According to Marks, haptical images "invite the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, and thus facilitate the experience of other sensory impressions as well" (2). On the other hand, optical images present things "from enough distance to perceive them as distinct forms in deep space; in other words, how we usually conceive of vision. Optical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object" (3). She then goes on to posit that haptic images present a tactile alternative vision of the female body that highlights sensory knowledge over objectivity, while optical images create an ethnographic and othering effect (131). In the context of the novel and film's treatment of Susana's sexual fantasies or recollections, it seems like the film scene exemplifies optical visuality while the novel creates haptic images. In this way, the potentially subversive and subjective quality of Susana's

imagined landscapes in the novel are conventionalized through the film's use of optical images. Indeed, the camera's gaze seems to reflect the gaze of male characters such as Pedro and Bartolomé. Hence, the movie enables the audience to gaze at Susana's sexualized body in a scene that is presumably about her own assertation of sexual desire. In other words, she becomes the object, rather than the subject, of desire.

Though the film adaptation was not as well-received as its director might have hoped, it raises many important questions about gender, nationality, and representation in mid-century Mexico. The very fact that the film adaptation was so often criticized reveals the degree to which it became a flash point for larger discussions about what the world Rulfo forms "alrededor de la esperanza que era aquel señor llamado Pedro Páramo" looks like and represents (73). Moreover, in a novel that highlights the subversive power of imagined landscapes, it seems only appropriate to examine the way that Susana's tactile seascapes and Dolores's nostalgic view of Comala are imagined and reinterpreted not only by other characters, but also by artists working in a different medium and even by the reader/viewer. In a sense, we are all implicated in the creation of Comala, a town that—according to the author—"no existe" ("A fondo") And as Netflix is in the process of creating a new version of the film adaptation, this town that does not exist, and yet is so vividly imagined by the characters, viewer, and readers, will yet again be the site of multiple—and contested—reimaginings (Germán).

CHAPTER FOUR

Frontiers Made of Air: Cinematic Landscapes in *Gringo viejo* and the Hollywood Film Adaptation

I

In his essay "How I Started to Write," Carlos Fuentes recounts how as a child in Washington, D.C., he saw *Man of Conquest*, a 1939 Western about Sam Houston directed by George Nicholls, Jr., that presented a dramatic—and anachronistic—account of the Alamo. Appalled at the way this film depicted Mexicans, a young Fuentes stood up in the movie theatre and yelled, "¡Viva México! ¡Que mueran los gringos!" (8-9). In this origin story, Fuentes positions himself in opposition to the Hollywood film and the country where he spent much of his childhood as the son of a Mexican diplomat. However, Enrique Krauze contests the patriotic Mexican spirit at the heart of this anecdote. In his essay "The Guerilla Dandy," he states that Fuentes is a product of Hollywood and a foreigner in his own country (28). It seems notable that both the novelist and his intellectual adversary frame Fuentes's relationship to Mexico and the United States through the lens of Hollywood films. For both writers, Hollywood touches a nerve. In this chapter, I am interested in further exploring the ways that the relationship between Hollywood film and literature is intertwined with Fuentes's views about the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. How can an exploration of the relationship between film and literature allow for a more nuanced understanding of the way Fuentes conceives of the relationship between Mexico and the U.S.? And how does this exploration complicate the rather binary positions presented above?

This chapter will specifically analyze the ways that Fuentes plays with—but does not blindly repeat— charged Hollywood stereotypes and imagery in *Gringo viejo*, the author's 1985

novel. In this book, an eastern schoolmistress goes west where she confronts the stark and seemingly lawless reality of life in the Sonoran Desert; journalist and writer Ambrose Bierce (portrayed as an anti-social outcast) crosses the border between the U.S. and Mexico searching for the final frontier; and a sensual—yet ruthless— Mexican revolutionary has an affair with the aforementioned schoolmistress. All these characters appear to set up hierarchies between U.S. citizens and Mexicans, civilization and savagery, that echo an expansionist mythos often seen in Westerns and other Hollywood genres. Yet, as Steven Boldy notes in his analysis of the novel, "the duality of what is represented by the United States and Mexico is reproduced within one side of the opposition, thus decentering it" (497). The passion and sexuality of the Mexican revolutionary, for instance, mirrors that of the schoolmistress's own father, and the border that the "hero" finds is not the final frontier he imagined in gilded age San Francisco. The decentering is clearly apparent in the description and development of the characters but is even more visible in his representation of U.S., Mexican, and Latin American landscapes. Washington, D.C., is described as a tropical—and rather carnal—jungle, transferring stereotypical images of Latin America north. Northern Mexico is described as the final frontier, reorienting frontier mythology from the U.S. West to the other side of the border. Even the Sonoran Desert is reimagined with superimposed images of ancient oceans. In this way, binary distinctions between Mexico and the U.S.—and North America and Latin America more generally— are undermined by the instability and malleability of the landscapes which shift and reconfigure like the characters themselves, refusing to stay in their "proper" clichéd places

What then happens to the author's subversive depiction of the landscape when the words on the page of the novel become a series of images in a Hollywood movie? Especially when the film contains elements of a Hollywood genre—the Western—which the book consciously

references and destabilizes? *Old Gringo*, the 1989 film version directed by Luis Puenzo and starring Jane Fonda, Gregory Peck, and Jimmy Smitts, allows for an exploration of this very question, though the film has largely been overlooked by film and literary critics. Using Timothy Corrigan and Robert Stam's theories of film adaptation, I will examine how the film adaptation draws from both the source novel and Hollywood cinematic conventions—some of which are present in the novel itself— to present the Northern Mexican landscape and the Mexico-U.S. border. I see the film as preserving the sense of the landscape as a place of myth, sensuality, and romance apparent in the novel. However, by omitting the tropical depictions of Washington, D.C., and the oceanic desert in favor of the more conventional reorientation of the western frontier to Mexico, the film's landscapes do not self-consciously disrupt expectations: the landscapes—though spectacular—are predictable for an audience familiar with Westerns. Therefore, the film adaptation reproduces images of some landscapes present in the novel without Fuentes's challenging counter-images which call attention to the hierarchical methods of depicting national difference, otherness, and a contested border space

To better explore this complex relationship between countries and genres, I will first analyze the sociopolitical context of the 1980s that facilitated the production of the novel and film adaptation. Then, to analyze how both the novel and film draw upon cinematic stereotypes, myths, and tropes, I will explore how scholars have thought about representations of frontier myth and the Western landscape in film. I will next analyze the relationships between these Westerns and Hollywood and Mexican films about the border, to highlight how ways of seeing and understanding the landscape flow between different genres and national film industries. In this case, I argue that many ideas about the "Wild West" are displaced to the Mexico-U.S. border. Subsequently, I examine representations of the tropics in foreign films about Latin

America to better understand the tropes that the author subverts and echoes in his representations of a tropical Washington, D.C. Finally, I will focus on specific passages and scenes from the book and the movie that foreground the landscape to explore how these works destabilize—and yet also cement—stereotypical ideas about land and nationality rooted in the cinematic traditions explored above.

II

The Intertwined Making of *Gringo viejo* and the Film Adaptation

Joaquin Roy charts the interwoven process of writing the 1985 novel and producing the film adaptation, a process that spans two languages, countries, and decades. Roy meticulously describes how:

> La novela en español se comenzó a escribir en México en 1964 y se terminó allí en 1984. En 1982 declara que había escrito una novela (nouvelle, o 'novela corta' en la terminología mas tradicional del español) sobre Bierce, en inglés. En 1981 ya la había entregado a Jane Fonda. Aquí las especulaciones oscilan entre la inclusión (o creación) del personaje de Harriet, o la ampliación del mismo. En 1983-84 hay todavía una versión original en inglés que se 'traduce' por el propio autor al español. Este texto es a su vez traducido por Margaret Peden al inglés, pero está incompleto, ya que la versión publicada en 1985, tanto en inglés como en español, contiene por lo menos tres capítulos o fragmentos nuevos. El proyecto de película, por fin, se realizó en 1988. (207)

Though it is dangerous to speculate about Fuentes's thought process as he wrote these different drafts, it seems clear that the English novella about Bierce shown to Jane Fonda with a movie adaptation in mind influenced the novel published in Spanish three years later, illustrating an ongoing mediation between film and literature and between an audience in Mexico and the U.S.

By briefly charting the cultural and economic ties between the U.S. and Mexico that facilitated this ongoing dialogue between novel and film in Fuentes's own work and in the film adaptation, a more nuanced picture emerges of how ideas about otherness, national identity, and the border are negotiated as—to paraphrase Guillermo Sheridan—the book is translated into hollywoodense (118).

First, it is important to reiterate that Fuentes's literary career was linked to film decades before he would sell film rights to Jane Fonda's production company and finish *Gringo viejo*. Fuentes participated in the Mexican film industry as a screenwriter, as is explored in chapter three, where—among other projects— he wrote the screenplay for the film adaptation of *Pedro Páramo* while working on his influential novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. The impact of his participation and interest in film is analyzed by critics such as Lanin Gyurko, who have examined the profusion of cinematic references in Fuentes's novels. Gyurko notes:

> Fuentes's incessant incorporation of characters, settings, themes, and plots, as well as a plethora of cinematic techniques such as closeups and crosscutting, pan shots and dissolves, distant shots and forward and reverse zoom shots, as well as allusions to directors, actors, actresses from myriad Hollywood, Mexican, European, and Asian films. (4)

Though Fuentes in his own writing expressed caution at the idea of literature becoming too cinematic, stating in a 1965 essay that "el cine ha de ser cine, y no teatro o novela, pues de lo contrario, se corre peligro todavía mayor: que la literatura—oh, Dos Passos—intente convertirse en cine," his literature and essays continue to incorporate film references and techniques, as is readily apparent to readers of *Gringo viejo* ("El cine y el escritor" 28).

Fuentes's longstanding interest in film then takes on a transnational dimension in the 1980s, as Mexican cinema struggled to compete with imported Hollywood productions (Fox, 80-81). For instance, Paul Leduc, an influential Mexican film director, lamented that Churubusco Studios in Mexico City, where *Old Gringo* was primarily filmed, "was rented out for filming a single multimillion dollar movie produced by Dino de Laurentis: *Dune* (1985). It was recently rented again for two years by Walt Disney Studios…one union is financed mainly with U.S. dollars, and its workers live off making films for Hollywood at low cost" (57). In this larger sociocultural context, Claire Fox argues that Fuentes's career "reflects the decline in Mexico's ability to produce cultural products for mass consumption as a result of its economic crisis. His move towards bilingualism facilitated the discussion of cinema and other mass media in his writing, and it introduced to United States-Mexican relations as a central theme" (81). Fox sees Fuentes—whose class privilege, bilingual upbringing, and authorial clout allow him to move between literary and academic circles in Mexico and the U.S.— as increasingly positioning himself towards a transnational readership. This apparent pivot allows for a greater exploration of Hollywood and border themes in works such as *Gringo viejo*, and perhaps helps to explain why the novel was a bestseller in both the U.S. and Mexico.

This turn towards the topic of U.S.-Mexican relations and Hollywood cinema in the novel then facilitates the Hollywood film adaptation. Indeed, Brian Vizzini argues that:

> much of *Old Gringo*'*s* initial appeal to U.S. audiences lay, as Kenneth Hall points out, in its appropriation of the themes, characters, and trappings of an elegiac Western, one characterized by the lament or loss of the hero (Hall 137-47). The presence of gunfighters, soldiers, love and loss made for familiar viewing for audiences weaned on U.S. productions of the 1940s through the 1970s. (135)

Boldy makes a similar point, noting "the Hollywood air of a Tortilla-Western to many of the scenes…not surprisingly, there is already a Hollywood film version of the novel" (489). Therefore, Fuentes's engagement with Hollywood films in the novel—and specifically Westerns—facilitates the adaptation of the novel into hollywoodense. However, as will be explored below, the way Fuentes subverted Hollywood tropes and stereotypes was generally discarded, in favor of reinterpretations of the tropes and stereotypes themselves.

Though Fuentes draws upon the cinematic genres and conventions that make the film more familiar and appealing to an audience accustomed to Hollywood films, the fact that he is a Mexican author writing about the Mexican Revolution allows the film adaptation to be promoted as a celebration of diversity. Vizzini sees the film adaptation as a sign of Hollywood opening its storytelling to a more international group of filmmakers. He notes that:

> while *Old Gringo* had a U.S. parent company, Columbia Pictures Corporation, the film's production and marketing, like its initial conceptualization, was international in nature. The U.S. production companies Columbia Pictures and Fonda Films hired director Luis Puenzo and scriptwriter Aida Bortnik, both of Argentina and having recently collaborated on the critically renowned *Historia Oficial,* to shoot the film in Durango, Mexico, using both Mexican and U.S. actors. The end result, a cinematic 'first' in many respects, was a film whose story, cast and production team all bore international credentials. (136)

The film—which capitalized on developments such as the increase of Latinx Spanish-speakers in the U.S. and the cheap production costs of filming in Mexico explored above —was therefore promoted as celebrating diversity and opening up the stories told in Hollywood. Indeed, Jane Fonda was quoted as saying, "maybe, it's because we're so Protestant, but our national tendency

is to see another nation or another people and to be paranoid, patronizing or downright destructive." Through her character Harriet, she strives to "understand, respect and love" the different way of life in Mexico (Barrios).

However, this celebration of internationalism in the Hollywood film adaptation had clear blind spots. Fox explains that "it is possible to see the trap Hollywood set for itself in conceiving of the film as a 'bicultural' enterprise. That translates into the idea that one culture is 'the United States' and the other culture is 'Hispanic,' be it either North American or Argentine or Mexican" (69). This binary framework and conflation of all Spanish-speakers in the Americas (which Fuentes criticizes in the novel) led to the casting of Jimmy Smitts, a Puerto Rican actor, as a Mexican Revolutionary, and for Luis Puenzo, an Argentinian, to direct the film. The Mexican press was quick to criticize these choices. Fernando García Núñez, a critic writing for *Excelsior*, wrote that: "the most generous thing you can say about the film is that it is pure gringo: That is, it is an extremely superficial production on the Mexican Revolution for average, U.S. consumption, for Americans who buy those red velvet sombreros decorated with sequins and things of that sort," (qtd. in Smith) while the critic for *La jornada* more generously concluded that " 'Old Gringo' is a respectable but complacent film" (qtd in Smith). Critics in the U.S. also questioned the choice of director. In a slightly strained analogy, the *Los Angeles Times* critic Sheila Benson writes that: "using Puenzo, the Argentine director who made "Official Story," as director and co-writer presumably assured the film of a properly Latin feeling. Actually, in terms of the cultural differences between Argentina and Mexico, it was a little like hiring a New Yorker to write about New Mexico." Therefore, critics on both sides of the border expressed discomfort at the way that this supposed celebration of diversity homogenized the vastly

different experiences of Mexican, Argentinian, and Puerto Rican filmmakers and actors, creating a binary distinction between an Anglo-American "us" and a Latin American "other."

Ironically, given the way that Fuentes's novel subverts Hollywood ideas about difference, the film adaptation creates a simplified and even hierarchical view of national identity and otherness both in the making of the film and in the finished product. Though it positions itself as celebrating diversity and Mexican history, it ends up reinforcing stereotypical tropes about Latin Americans and Mexicans.[17] In this way, the relationship between film and literature in *Gringo viejo* and the movie is intimately connected to unequal power relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Both novel and film adaptation are therefore firmly situated in—and respond to—contemporary debates about transnational production and identity.

III

Westerns and the Frontier Myth

Gringo viejo and Puenzo's film adaptation reference and reinterpret a larger body of cinematic work to explore pressing questions about nationality, identity, and otherness being addressed in the late 1980s. As has been detailed in previous chapters, representations of the landscape are often central to these larger debates. Therefore, I am interested in exploring how both novel and film subvert or reinforce notions of nationhood and difference inscribed in the three main cinematic landscapes found in *Gringo viejo*: the western frontier, the borderlands, and the tropics. As representations of the landscape have been generally overlooked in criticism of the novel and film adaptation—no articles have been written focusing on this subject—this

[17] This tension in the film between reinforcing power hierarchies and celebrating Latin America is also apparent in the treatment of the Mexican movie extras in the film adaptation, who were paid $8 a day and not given lunch (Fox 80).

chapter will examine an understudied element of both novel and film that I see as central to the exploration of the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, and between film and literature.

Many scholars have connected representations of the landscape in Westerns to U.S. frontier mythologies. However, before analyzing frontier mythologies specifically, I will first address a seemingly simple question central to this chapter: What is a myth? In his influential book, *Gunfighter Nation,* the third book in a three-part investigation of the myth of the frontier in U.S. culture, Richard Slotkin asserts that:

> myth expresses ideology in a narrative, rather than discursive or argumentative, structure. Its language is metaphorical and suggestive rather than logical and analytical. The movement of a mythic narrative, like that of any story, implies a theory of cause-and-effect and therefore a theory of history (or even of cosmology) …although myths are the product of human thought and labor, their identification with venerable tradition makes them appear to be products of "nature" rather than history—expressions of a trans-historical consciousness or of some form of "natural law." (6)

I will use this suggestive definition of a myth throughout the chapter, as I explore the way that novel and film employ—and subvert—cinematic myths about the borderlands, the western frontier, and the tropics.

Following in the footsteps of historian Frederick Jackson Turner's famous frontier thesis, Slotkin goes on to argue that the frontier mythology is central to U.S. identity. He characterizes this powerful frontier mythology as "our oldest and most characteristic myth…according to this myth-historiography, the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation and displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy and a phenomenally dynamic

and “progressive” civilization” (10). In the twentieth century, he points to movie Westerns as a central repository for frontier mythology. He argues that film Westerns drew upon frontier mythologies apparent in printed forms of mass media as well as Wild West shows. However, according to Slotkin, these mythologies were adapted to fit the specific constraints and opportunities afforded by film. Notably, this critic ties the development of the Western to the landscape:

> the history of a movie genre is the story of the conception, elaboration, and acceptance of a special kind of space: an imagined landscape which evokes authentic places and times, but which becomes, in the end, completely identified with the fictions created about it…the western town of false-front saloons and board sidewalks are instantly familiar to us, as recognizable, and as dense with memory and meaning. (234)

In this way, the fictional space of the Hollywood Western becomes central to the genre and a rich repository of cultural meaning about the frontier.

María del Pilar Blanco connects this idea of Westerns wrestling with frontier myths to theories of haunting. In her book, *Ghost-Watching American Modernity: Haunting, Landscape, and the Hemispheric Imagination*, she argues that Westerns such as *High Plains Drifter*, directed by Clint Eastwood:

> can be read as a conscious reappraisal of the western genre—it is a western that *haunts* the genre itself—at a moment in film history when the cinematic genre was in notable decline. However, this film announces the breakdown, or rather hollowing out, of what was once the consolidation of “genre” and other “cultural ideas” about the U.S. West…the film’s haunting of western classics dramatizes its own self-differentiation from myths now seen as increasingly archaic. (97)

In this way, she explores how more contemporary Westerns may shed a critical gaze over the genre that they participate in, differentiating themselves from the frontier myths by enacting a breakdown of these very myths.

Indeed, she sees this process play itself out in the landscapes present in *High Plains Drifter* (see figure 29). She explains how "Lago [the fictional town where the film takes place] is portrayed half-built, absolutely frail: Seen in shots taken from a distance, it is conspicuously a film set that sits awkwardly on the deserted landscape" (97). Thus, Blanco analyzes this questioning and reappraisal of the frontier myth by focusing on haunting, which she sees not simply as a thematic element, but rather as "problems of textual representation and innovation, when crises of perception provoke new advances in literary craft" (9). I see *Gringo viejo* engaged in a similar process. As in the film *High Plains Drifter*, Fuentes's work differentiates itself from frontier myths and stereotypes prevalent in the movies the author saw as a child even as he reenacts these very tropes. Like the landscape in the Clint Eastwood movie that is perched awkwardly in the desert, Fuentes's written landscapes draw attention to their own artifice and fragility, while the film adaptation naturalizes these same spaces.

Perhaps what is left out of the frontier myth is as telling as what is left in. Scholars such as Carl Wilmsen explore how Mexican relationships to the western landscape (much of which was part of Mexico until the Mexican-American War) are erased in Western films that perpetuate frontier mythologies. He argues that though "the American landscape is produced through a complex set of processes that rely heavily on the labor of people of color and working-class whites" Mexican Americans' relationships to the land have been repeatedly erased in Westerns (182). Drawing on the analysis of Paredes and Kim, he examines the ways that the triangulation

of Anglos, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans serves to present Mexican Americans (who are often conflated with Mexicans) as particularly poor land stewards.

Wilmsen then explicitly connects this erasure of people of color with frontier myths. He argues that:

> this cinematic erasure of Mexican Americans from the land not only reproduces the fiction that American settlers filled up an empty continent but also reinforces a major notion underlying that fiction: that Native Americans and Mexican Americans were not using the land productively. This is indicative of the Janus-faced nature of the characterization of Native Americans; on the one hand they are acclaimed for having environmental stewardship skills that maintained a healthy North American environment, while on the other hand they are depicted as being an insignificant presence on the landscape. For Mexican Americans, the characterization is simply a reflection of the notion that they had no connection with the land whatsoever. (189)

Hence, Wilmsen highlights the ways that the positioning of Anglos, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans among "axes of environmental stewardship" —in which Mexican Americans are represented as having the least (and worst) connection with the land—serves to erase the relationship of this group with the landscapes of the U.S. West. This erasure, which so angered a young Fuentes, is also central to the film and novel's exploration of the hierarchical power relationships between the U.S. and Mexico that are reflected in the way the western landscape is represented.

In *Heroes of the Borderlands: The Western in Mexican Film, Comics, and Music*, Christopher Conway further explores this erasure of the relationship between Mexicans and the land, employing the film *Red River* to illustrate this racist trope. He analyzes the scene where

Tom Dunson, the archetypal Anglo-American hero, shoots Don Diego, a Mexican rancher and appropriates his land (see figure 30):

> Dunson does not care that Don Diego has old grants to the land. “You mean you took it away from whoever was here before,” Dunson tells the vaquero before he shoots him, “Indians, maybe.” For Dunson, possession is not about titles but about power and force. He implies that he is to Don Diego what the Mexican once was to the indigenous peoples, he robbed the superior antagonist. What’s more, as Groot says during the tense exchange with the vaquero, the land is “aching” to be used and Don Diego is too lazy and weak to give it what it needs. Dunson’s killing of the vaquero, like his earlier killing of a Comanche, is a foundational myth that approvingly explains how Anglo-entrepreneurialism was founded on the southwestern border. (14)

Here, the critic vividly illustrates how Westerns such as *Red River* undermine the relationship between Mexicans and Mexican Americans with the land. Through an act of foundational violence, the film asserts the primacy of Anglo-American land use and ways of looking at the western landscape, assertions that Fuentes’s novel slyly undermines, and the film adaptation appears to replicate.

Moreover, Charles Ramírez Berg also points to the pervasive influence of the stereotype of the Mexican bandit in Westerns. Though he does not specifically address these characters’ relationship to the land, the fact that Mexicans that are stereotypically represented as bandits who are “emotional, irrational, and usually violent [and whose] intelligence is severely limited resulting in flawed strategies” clearly undermines Mexicans’ claims of land ownership and responsible environmental stewardship in Westerns (113). Indeed, as will be explored below, Mexican revolutionaries were often portrayed as bandits in Hollywood films and the press to

undercut their political agendas and legitimacy. Thus, the negative portrayals of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Westerns is intimately connected to their (presumed) inability to form productive relationships with the land, unlike the supposedly fruitful endeavors of Anglo frontier settlers. In this way, the Western landscapes is represented in a way that reinforces racial and national hierarchies.

Though many critics address the importance of the frontier myth in Westerns, an issue that is clearly articulated in *Gringo viejo* and the film adaptation, other scholars point to the limitations of this approach, focusing instead on how Hollywood films represent the border not through nostalgic allusions to a frontier past, but rather through themes and tropes that situate these films in their contemporary socio-cultural context. In *The Landscape of Hollywood Westerns*, Deborah Carmichael points to the centrality of the landscape to the genre but situates this element in a contemporary context. She forcefully states that: "in studies of the Western, the importance of the landscape itself, the idyllic or treacherous environment negotiated in these films, often receives support-role status, yet without the land, national mythmaking would not exist" (1). Carmichael goes on to frame representations of the landscape through larger social conflicts. She argues that "the impossibility of balancing or reconciling the 'green world' with capitalist progress or community construction has always been a major theme in Westerns…American Western movies resonate with ecological and environmental concerns still unresolved today, as well as stories of personal and national identity formed within a relationship with nature" (4).

In a similar vein, Stephanie Fuller argues that representations of the desert in border Westerns respond not simply to nostalgic frontier myths, but also serve as a way of articulating and negotiating contemporary socio-political questions: "rather than responding to the frontier,

Western films which are set on the border engage with their contemporary cultural contexts" (8). In this way, these critics—and, I would argue, Fuentes— see Westerns as responding not simply to a nostalgic frontier past, but rather as engaging in contemporary debates around neo-imperialism, national identity, and the environment. This perspective will be employed in this chapter, where I look at how the western landscape is used to reinforce and undermine these notions about national identity and the "other" that are prevalent not in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, when the novel and film adaptation takes place, but that respond to the novel and the film adaptation's own contemporary sociocultural reality.

IV

Cinematic Representations of the Border in Hollywood and Mexico City

What is the relationship between the idea of the frontier as expressed in the Western genre, and the reality of the Mexico-U.S. border? How are frontier myths modified or discarded when films represent the borderlands? Camila Fojas addresses this question, framing the frontier as an antecedent to the idea of the border: "The southern frontier is one of the most emotionally charged zones in the United States, second only to its historical predecessor and partner, the western frontier" (134). David Maciel also points to commonalities between representations of the frontier in Westerns and representations of the border, lamenting that the Mexico-U.S. border has been portrayed as "the 'wild west,' where civilization confronts barbarism…not only are border citizens victimized by cinematic images, but the border setting and ambiance have been likewise stereotyped. The border continually has been depicted as the lawless, primitive and rugged last frontier of the United States and Mexico" (83). Moreover, Alex Saragoza also argues that "crossing the border becomes a way of extending the frontier, where the lonely, detached hero must confront a villain, where the law fails to function, and where civilization remains at

bay" (164). In this way, these critics see aspects of the "wild west" frontier myth negatively reappropriated in films about the border. In a sense, the frontier myth is displaced to the Mexico-U.S. border in more contemporary discourse, a shift that *Gringo viejo* and the film adaptation engages in to varying degrees.

Critics such as Maciel point to the ways that stereotypes about the border are prevalent in both mainstream U.S. and mainstream Mexican films. He argues that:

> beginning in the late 19th century and continuing throughout the 20th century, writers and media production specialists have portrayed the U.S.-Mexican border as a lawless, rugged, individualistic, and perilous area populated by men and women of action, criminals and crime fighters, settlers, and others who sought a last frontier…. there is no greater cultural manifestation of the general image and widely held perceptions of the U.S. Mexican border than the cinema. (2)

Moreover, he emphasizes that both U.S. filmmakers (primarily based in Hollywood) and Mexican filmmakers (primarily based in Mexico City) have contributed to these tropes about a border that is far from their lived realities: "both visions of the border, either that of the North American/Hollywood or of the Mexican commercial productions, have been very similar. Both provide equally stereotypical views of the border region and are generally devoid of social reality. The portrayal of the border is usually negative" (5). In this way, he widens his analysis to examine how commercial films in both the U.S. and Mexico have engaged in similarly negative and stereotypical depictions of the border, depictions which implicitly contrast with the "civilized" peoples watching these films from the cultural centers of both countries.

Fojas and Saragoza more systematically examine similarities and differences in the way the U.S. and Mexican film industries have depicted the border. Fojas differentiates between these

two industries, characterizing Mexican border films as "strongly nationalist, discouraging northern migration and debunking the myth of the 'American Dream.' They thematize the entanglements of cultural contact and the experience of displacement and economic exile." She sees Hollywood border films as focusing "on the heroic mission of the Texas Rangers, border guards, DEA agents, or other police personnel. This difference leads to more critical Mexican border stories away from the border provenance and into U.S. cities where conflicts of dislocation take place" (134). Saragoza also emphasizes certain similarities between Mexican and U.S. representations of the border. Though he acknowledges and delineates concrete differences, such as the more central role of the border in U.S. imagery, this critic argues that both Hollywood and Mexico City represent the border as a "chasm between two national histories and a reflection of the shared history of conflict, conquest, and distrust. Although the two national economies interact along the border, and the music, food and fads of both countries have shown little respect for boundaries, an essential difference persists beneath the veneer of accommodation" (21). In this chapter I am especially interested in exploring this question of how irreconcilable differences are challenged and naturalized through the malleable landscapes of *Gringo viejo* and its film adaptation.

How then is the landscape of the border represented in film, and what can this representation reveal about questions of national identity and otherness? Saragoza sees representations of the desert that pervade border imagery in binary terms. He argues that:

> the selective use of the physical features of the border has facilitated its depiction as a boundary between good and evil. Usually, the border town or area conveys a proximity to corruption, licentiousness, and immorality. Despite the coldness of the high desert country, the hard rainfall of South Texas, and the windstorms of the Southwest, the

> cinematic border is most often sun-drenched, shimmering with heat. The Protestant-imbued mind has frequently identified hot climates with eroticism, illicit sex, and exotic locales, and its corollaries: vice, lassitude, and decadence…American moviemakers have sustained this perception of the border, and they have often embellished it with the symbolism of heat and its menacing moral meanings. (160)

Conway takes a similar view of Mexican film representations of the landscape in Mexican Westerns such as *Los hermanos del hierro* directed by Ismael Rodríguez. Here, the critic characterizes the film's landscapes as "frontier-like, depicting sparseness and underpopulation. Most important is the desertlike plain that is the scene of killing and transit. Rodríguez uses this space to accent the sterility and permanence of violence and revenge, and to infuse his take with a kind of abstract universality" (102). Hence, film landscapes from both sides of the border reinforce the stereotypical notion of the border landscape as a violent and morally questionable place.

Both Rodríguez and Conway see the landscapes as adhering to, rather than questioning, stereotypical notions about Northern Mexico and the borderlands. However, just as films such as *High Plains Drifter* subvert Western landscape conventions, films such as *El Topo* destabilize landscape conventions in the Mexican film industry. Directed by the Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowsky in 1970, this acid Western film presents the familiar landscape of Northern Mexican in a surreal way (see figure 31). Blanco vividly describes how:

> For Jodorowsky, the desert landscape offers quite a mythological and even allegorical version of simultaneity: He portrays the fantastical concurrence of desires, belief systems, and styles within a space that has become recognizable to the viewer as a canvas for a Western. In *El Topo*, he demonstrates how the act of representing an American desert

on film can be wildly haunted by numerous other imaginations of the desert where mourning, desire and duels also play important roles. (78)

The film plays with the recognizable space of the Western, overlaying other traditions—such as the role of Japanese Samurai—to rethink and interrogate this fictional desert space. As Fuentes worked on Mexican film projects during the period when *El Topo* is filmed, it is perhaps possible to connect this surrealist Latin American Western's treatment of the landscape with Fuentes's landscapes overlaid with seemingly out of place and even surreal elements in *Gringo viejo*, where the landscape seems to also be haunted by other imaginings of this space, a treatment at odds with the more conventional landscapes of the film adaptation.

V

Representations of the Tropics

Moving south from the borderlands, the novel and film adaptation also address pre-conceived ideas about the Latin American landscape. The quintessential landscape used to describe this expansive space—at least in Fuentes's novel—is the tropics associated with Southern Mexico and Latin America more generally. North American and even European films exoticized this emblematic tropical Latin American landscape. One feature of this sort of exoticization was the sense of placelessness; the tropics of Latin America were equated with the South Pacific and other parts of the world. For instance, the famous Soviet director Eisenstein's script for the Sandunga segment of *Que viva México!* describes the setting the following way: "Time runs slowly under the dreamy weaving of palms and costumes, and customs do not change for years and years…the Tehuantepec marketplace is an interesting sight. If you will look in this corner you may think yourself in India…In still another place it looks like the South Seas" (qtd. in Karetnikova 53). The specificity of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, matters less than its ability to

stand in for a "timeless" tropical destination (see figure 32). I see Fuentes as effectively leveraging this sense of the Latin American tropics as generically exotic in his depictions of Washington, D.C, where he destabilizes the binaries between the local and the exotic, civilized temperate climates and uncivilized tropics, by making the U.S capital into yet another interchangeable tropical destination such as the South Seas or tropical Latin America. In other words, he brings attention to the displacement of different "exotic" locales—where India can stand in for Oaxaca—by slyly adding Washington, D.C., into the mix. Moreover, by adding allusions to Cuba—where Harriet's father fights in the Spanish-American War and ends up living with a local woman—Fuentes adds yet another layer and locale to this series of similar tropical landscapes.

Critic Stephanie Fuller connects this tropical placelessness with colonial attitudes. When analyzing the 1956 film *Wetbacks*, directed by Hank McCune, she argues that:

> Rather than finding anything specifically Mexican about the setting of *Wetbacks*, the production company and reviewers alike understood its landscape as a denationalized tropical and exotic space. Taking the Mexican out of Mexico, the film re-maps the surface of the country with a homogenous tropical environment, explicitly highlighting the fact that many of the scenes were filmed elsewhere. Through its illusionary tropical vision of Mexico, *Wetbacks*…gestures towards American colonization and construction of Mexico. (23-24)

She sees this process of creating an almost standardized tropical space out of a specific country and culture as connected to practices of U.S. colonization in Latin America and the South Pacific (see figure 33). I will argue that Fuentes effectively flips the script and maps a generic jungle space onto Washington, D.C., rather than Mexico, challenging and drawing attention to these

neocolonial representative practices. However, the film adaptation strips away this subversive political element by adhering to a more conventional—and temperate—depiction of Washington, D.C.

Moreover, this creation of a generic tropical space is also deeply gendered and sexualized, an element that Fuentes touches upon in *Gringo viejo*. Returning to *Viva México*, Andrea Noble notes that, "in the 'tropical paradise' of matriarchal Tehuantepec, which is the focus of *Sandunga*, the Indigenous Other is an overtly gendered construct, populated by exotic, bare-breasted women. Indeed, this is a classic trope in ethnographic discourse, whereby ethnography and pornography converge" (131). In this way, the sexualized body of the Indigenous woman is explicitly connected to the creation of the exoticized tropical landscape in colonial discourse. Both women and landscape are offered up to the western viewer's gaze. Even when women of color are not prominently featured, such as in *Wetbacks*, there is still a clear link between eroticism and the exoticized Mexican landscapes. Fuller argues that "in *Wetbacks*…the illusionary exotic Mexican landscape is inextricably linked to the growing romantic relationship between the protagonists and provides a space where the exotic can also become erotic" (22). As the characters and landscapes are intimately connected in *Gringo viejo*, I posit that through the loose connections between Harriet, her father's black lover, and the tropical landscapes of Washington, D.C., Fuentes also explores the role of race and sexuality in depictions of the tropical landscape.

By charting cinematic depictions of the three main landscapes depicted in the novel and the film adaptation, the Western frontier, the Mexico-U.S. border, and tropical Latin America, a more nuanced picture of how the novel and film adaptation reinforce but also challenge cinematic landscape conventions emerges. Moreover, it is important to note that discussions of

Gringo viejo and the film adaptation have been left out of this critical dialogue, though they directly engage with many of the myths, stereotypes, and tropes central to studies of these film landscapes. Thus, by centering my discussion of the novel and film around representations of the transnational landscapes, this chapter will add a new and complex case study to these analyses of film landscapes.

VI

The *frontera* in *Gringo viejo*

When Guillermo Sheridan writes about *Gringo viejo*, he points to landscapes and geographic locations that are unrealistic and discordant. For Sheridan, these factual inaccuracies are representative of larger problems with the novel, where Fuentes conflates elements of Zapatismo with Pancho Villa's fighters and incorporates scenes from writers such as Martín Luis Guzmán out of context. The critic sees these literary devices as creating stereotypical images of the Mexicano that have nothing to do with the varied experience of different peoples, regions, and histories. He notes that:

> Fuentes pone el sur en el norte con la misma facilidad que subsume las variedades de la identidad en un solo paquete, que es como ubicar la batalla de Wounded Knee en Wall Street…En otro nivel, las discordancias no son menos estentóreas: Harriet viaja de Washington a Chihuahua por la inesperada ruta de Veracruz (que es como ir de Los Angeles a Vancouver por Puerto Rico). (119-120)

Though these "discordancias" in terms of geography and landscape are also central to my analysis, my interpretation diverges from that of Sheridan. What if instead of being a sign of sloppiness or ignorance, where one symbol of Mexico is simply conflated with another, these discordant landscapes are purposefully drawn and disruptive? My analysis of the text will use

this question as a starting point to explore a series of dissonances directly connected with the landscape. I will examine how the old gringo incongruously displaces ideas about the U.S. frontier into the borderlands, how Harriet sees images of Mexico superimposed over the U.S. landscape, and how Washington, D.C., is conflated with Southern Mexico and Cuba. In all these instances, I see Fuentes as playing with and subverting stereotypical ideas about the U.S. and Mexico. His discordant landscapes therefore criticize—rather than perpetuate—an essentialized view of national identity.

It is notable that the novella Fuentes showed Fonda was titled "The Frontier," a fact that underscores the importance of this space in the novel (Pick 17). The old gringo, whose character echoes that of the aging anti-social hero in search of new frontiers found in Westerns, repeatedly reflects on and reassesses the meaning of the frontier as he travels south into Mexico. When remembering his life as a journalist for William Randolph Hearst in San Francisco, he evokes a classic frontier trope explored above: "incrementando mi culpa gastando lo poco que ahorraba en esos malditos bares de San Francisco donde los californianos nos reunimos a mirar hacia el mar para decirnos: Se acabó la frontera, muchachos, se nos murió el continente, se fue al diablo el destino manifiesto, ahora a ver dónde lo encontramos: ¿sería un espejismo del desierto?" (71-72). Here, the old gringo seems to position himself—and his fellow Californians— as inheritors of the frontier myth who were born too late. Stuck at the westernmost edge of the U.S. and whiling his time and money away in seedy bars, he reflects on how "se fue al diablo el destino manifiesto" a phrase which seems to criticize the idea of manifest destiny and lament the fact that the western frontier era is effectively over. However, he still seems to want to find a new frontier, asking "a ver dónde lo encontramos" even if he does not quite believe in the idea, wondering if it is simply a mirage in the desert. The old gringo shows a degree of ambivalence

about the frontier myth, even as it propels him to search for new frontiers in Mexico, "la única frontera que le iba quedando," as an antidote to the stasis and disillusion of his life in San Francisco (20).

Yet, when the old gringo first travels to El Paso, he is shocked that it does not align with the Western frontier myths that he—like many of the films above— displaces on the Mexico-U.S. border. The narrative voice describes his feelings upon arriving in the city:

> Caminó unas cuantas cuadras por la ciudad fronteriza; la había imaginado más triste y desganada y vieja de lo que realmente era, enferma también de la revolución, de la cólera del otro lado. Era una ciudad, en cambio, de automóviles nuevecitos, tiendas de cinco-y-diez y gente joven, tan joven que ni siquiera había nacido en el siglo XIX. Buscó en vano su idea de la frontera americana. (18)

The new and thriving city, with all the signs of civilization and modernity: five and dime shops, new cars, young people who cannot remember the past, is jarring because it does not align with "su idea de la frontera americana." Moreover, the fact that the city does not seem to share the fate of Mexico (which is imagined as a sickly, angry place) seems to unnerve the newcomer, revealing how his preconceived ideas about the borderlands as a turbulent, worn-down, violent sort of place stem from his imagined idea of the frontier. Thus, through the character of the old gringo, the author seems to play with stereotypical images of the border-as-frontier that do not align with the actual ordered and urban landscape. The frontier turns out to be a sort of mirage—though one populated by stores and cars— that the old gringo could not imagine from San Francisco.

When the old gringo crosses over from Texas to Chihuahua, he finds it difficult to maintain the sense of orientation that he is already losing in a landscape that turns out to be less familiar than expected. The narrative voices describes how:

> Ahora tenía que mantener su sentido de orientación, pues si la frontera estaba dibujada ancha y clara en el río que divide a El Paso y Ciudad Juárez, más allá de la población mexicana no había más delimitación que la distancia donde se unen el cielo y el llano sucio y seco. (19)

As he moves away from the river and the cities that mark the frontier (notably, this is the word used instead of border in the English translation, which was translated by Margaret Sayers Peden and by the author) he struggles to distinguish one side from the other ("The Old Gringo," 11). Now that he distances himself from the seemingly artificial human structures and boundaries, the only demarcating boundary is the dirty and unpoetic horizon line. In this unremarkable natural landscape, composed of nothing more than a dry and dirty plain, it becomes increasingly difficult to locate the frontier and orient himself correctly. In this way, Fuentes plays with and subverts ideas about the frontier myth and the borderlands that seem incongruous when superimposed over the landscape that the old gringo actually encounters.[18]

This notion of landscape as subjective and malleable—rather than set in place—is also established through the other border-crossing character, Harriet, the governess who travels from Washington, D.C., to the Miranda hacienda in Northern Mexico to teach the landowners' children English. When Harriet recrosses the border from Mexico to the U.S., her memories of

[18] Marc Morestin also notes that, "gringo viejo penetra a México clandestinamente y a vado, sin usar el puente fronterizo, como si fuera inmigrante ilegal…por lo tanto, el gringo es un transfronterizo ideológico. Se burla de las fronteras" (44). He therefore presciently inserts a contemporary debate about undocumented immigration into these older ideas about the frontier.

Mexico are reconstructed through the image of dust sweeping across the border and accompanying her back home to Washington, D.C. The narrative voice relates how:

> cuando ella cruzó la frontera y miró hacia atrás y vio a los dos hombres, el soldado Inocencio y el niño Pedrito, y detrás de ellos, lo piensa ahora, vio al polvo organizarse en una especie de cronología silenciosa que le pedía recordar, ella fue a México y regresó a su tierra sin memoria y México ya no estaba al alcance de la mano. México había desaparecido para siempre, pero cruzando el puente, del otro lado del río, un polvo memorioso insistía en organizarse sólo para ella y atravesar la frontera y barrer sobre el mezquite y los trigales, los llanos y los montes humeantes, los largos ríos hondos y verdes que el gringo viejo había anhelado, hasta llegar a su apartamento en Washington en la ribera del Potomac, el Atlántico, el centro del mundo. (11-12)

Here, the "polvo memorioso" associated with Harriet's memories of Mexico sweeps across the U.S. landscape, through the imagined expanse of wheat fields, rivers, and mountains, until it arrives at Harriet's own doorstep in Washington, D.C. This permeable substance—at once earthy and airborne— seems to challenge the firmly delineated border between Mexico and the U.S.

The Mexican dust saturated with memory seems to haunt the U.S. as it uneasily settles over the landscape and forces Harriet to reckon with her experiences in Mexico. Moreover, the sense of amnesia associated with Harriet and her country of origin, "regresó a su tierra sin memoria," is overrun by the dust through which this character reconstructs and organizes her memories of Mexico and of the world beyond the borders of the U.S. and her home in the capital, the supposed "centro del mundo."[19] As Blanco articulates in her analysis of haunting in

[19] Debra Castillo also explores this suggestive passage, framing Harriet's memories as a sort of creative reconstruction that parallels the process of writing, "Harriet Winslow, in an unspecified present, sits and calls up fragmentary, contradictory memories of a Mexico that cannot be found, that is an unavoidable presence: opaque and

U.S. landscapes: “the scenes the authors studied here depict, as I will argue, are concerned with describing ghosts and various stylizations of haunting in terms of their simultaneity to (not their generational anticipation of) the living world. In other words, I read them as the emergence of alternative presences and landscapes within modern consciousness” (13). Following Blanco’s argument, I read the “polvo memorioso” that spreads itself over the U.S. as an alternative presence and landscape that uneasily coexists with ideas about the country’s centrality and superiority. Dusty memories of Mexico seep into the U.S. landscape, complicating clear delineations between center and periphery, Mexico and its northern neighbor, past and present.

This sense of the border landscape as permeable and changing is also reinforced a few pages later, when the Mexican revolutionaries are sent to disinter the body of the old gringo— buried in the desert of Northern Mexico— so that it can be transported to Washington, D.C., with Harriet. Frutos García, one of the revolutionaries, worries that the body of the old man is already disintegrating:

> y la verdad es que casi sucedió así, soplando el viento entre tierras abandonadas, barriales y salinas, tierras de indios insumisos y españoles renegados, cuarteros azarosos y minas dejadas a la oscura inundación del infierno: la verdad es que casi se va el cadáver del gringo viejo a unirse al viento del desierto, como si la frontera que un día cruzó fuera de aire y no de tierra y abarcara todos los tiempos que ellos podían recordar. (16)

The border, like the old gringo’s body, is in danger of disintegrating, of losing its earthly form. As in the image of dust crossing the border discussed above, here the border is associated not with the seemingly unchanging solidity of earth, but with air and movement, “como si la frontera

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inaccessible, yet taking unmistakable form (deformation) in her mind…this Mexico, gone forever, provokes memory, and the novel based on these memories brings Mexico, like the old gringo and Tomás Arroyo, back to life to die again” (37). In this way, she sees the spatial reconstruction I examine as a creative and literary reconstruction.

que un día cruzó fuera de aire y no de tierra" and with the migratory movements of Native Americans, Spaniards, and cattle rustlers. Even the abandoned mines are depicted as dynamic rather than static; they are being flooded by hell.

The fact that this landscape encompasses "todos los tiempos que ellos podían recordar" further reinforces an expansive and malleable view of the border, where the boundaries between air and earth, past and present, Mexico and the U.S. appear to blur and threaten to disappear altogether. This representation of the landscape flirts with the stereotypical image of border tropes such as the cattle rustler, the rebellious Native American, and the badlands. Yet, by emphasizing movement and migration—rather than stasis and firmly drawn boundaries—these stereotypical representations become part of a larger argument about the inherent fluidity and malleability of the border landscape.

The analogy between the border and the body is further established in a narrative aside. Frutos García first voices a view that displaces the U.S. frontier to Mexico, just as the old gringo does above. He also reflects on the fact that gringos, unlike Mexicans, "se pasaron la vida cruzando fronteras, las suyas y las ajenas—y ahora el viejo la había cruzado hacia el sur porque ya no tenía fronteras que cruzar en su propio país"(12). However, a long parenthesis inserted by the narrative voice—which gives voice to the opinions of two dead and one absent character offers yet another point of view:

> ("¿Y la frontera de aquí adentro?", había dicho la gringa tocándose la cabeza. "¿Y la frontera de acá adentro?", había dicho el general Arroyo tocándose el corazón. "Hay una frontera que sólo nos atrevemos a cruzar de noche—había dicho el gringo viejo—: la frontera de nuestras diferencias con los demás, de nuestros combates con nosotros mismos.") (13)

The border encompasses a series of opposites; it is the mind and the heart, the struggles with the self and the struggles with the other. The labor of crossing these myriad borders of the self and the other, the mind and the heart, is therefore juxtaposed against the view of Mexico as a final frontier for Anglo-Americans. Though this psychological view of the border has been challenged, I argue that it is also used to subvert the mythologies at play in the idea of Mexico as a final frontier. The border—rather than being a distant frontier on a movie screen—hits close to home, in the universal reckoning with the self and the other. It is not a line separating the U.S. and Mexico, but rather a series of inner struggles that haunt the characters no matter where they are.[20]

VII

Fuentes's Oceans and Deserts

If the border shifts and becomes ever more difficult to delineate, so does the seemingly solid ground of the desert. Indeed, the motif of the desert as an ancient ocean recurs over the whole novel, illustrating how not simply the border, but also the very notion of the desert as an essentially lawless place—central to the depiction of the borderlands explored above—is slyly undermined. A seemingly out of place aquatic element is introduced early in the text, in the scene where the old gringo is disinterred. The narrative voice explains that "el coronel se quedó callado un instante: tuvo la clara sensación de oír una gota que caía en medio del desierto. Miró al cielo seco. El rumor del océano se apagó" (15). This phantom raindrop in the middle of the desert—set before the almost phantasmal "indios insumisos y españoles renegados, cuarteros azarosos y minas dejadas a la oscura inundación del infierno," mentioned above—creates a sense

[20] Maarten van Delden also explores the intersecting psychological and political dimension of this passage, arguing that "the urge to move across cultural barriers amounts to a search not only for the other but also for the self. Insofar as the encounter with the other sets the stage for an encounter with the self, Mexico and the United States end up mirroring rather than rebuffing each other" (725).

of incongruence between different landscapes and temporal realities that are uneasily superimposed over the desert. Coming back to Blanco's point about haunting, the phantom raindrop seems to evoke alternative presences that the different characters are forced to reckon with.

The displacement of the desert landscape with oceanic vistas is further apparent when the old gringo and Harriet embrace on the Miranda hacienda: "abrazados los dos, sintieron que se hundían en el fondo de un gran lecho: el del océano que alguna vez ocupó este plato de grava y luego se retiró, dejando el páramo habitado por todos los espectros del agua: los mares, los océanos, los ríos que aquí fueron o pudieron ser" (47). The water images seem to haunt the desert landscape, just as images of Mexico seem to haunt Harriet when she is back in Washington, D.C. Furthermore, by taking a geological view of time that accounts for the receding water of the sea [21] millions of years in the past, and water that could come back in the distant future, the fragility and impermanence of the desert landscape is emphasized. Rather than being a place with essential unchanging characteristics such as its association with lawlessness or the frontier, the desert becomes a changeable and dynamic space.

At one of the most climatic moments of the novel, where the old gringo burns General Arroyo's papers and the general shoots him in retaliation, the image of ancient oceans in the desert is also woven into the text. The narrative voice describes how: "el desierto era el espejo de

[21] According to geologist Ronald DeFord, "A Jurassic sea invaded Mexico from the south. Outcrops near Placer de Guadalupe and in the Malone Mountains show that this sea reached the Chihuahua trough during Kimmeridgian time in the latter part of the Late Jurassic. The sea occupied the trough between the Diablo platform on the northeast and the Aldama platform on the south- west; it was confined by the Coahuila platform on the southeast. Although the trough sank to admit the sea beginning in Late Jurassic Kimmeridgian time, the region continued sinking and the Coahuila platform and Aldama platform did not sink beneath the sea until Aptian time. The oldest strata on the Diablo platform comprise thin layers of Albian age."

sí mismo: mordía el fondo del mar antiguo, la grava de la gran playa abandonada por las aguas" (148). The tangible remains of the ocean, the gravel beds and dry seafloor, are then embedded in a human history that is unleashed in this cathartic moment: "y el general Tomás Arroyo, que nunca había hablado mucho porque tenía los papeles, ahora tenía que hablar en nombre de los papeles quemados. Ahora la memoria dependía del jefe, y dependía de ellos" (148). In this way, the remembrance of the ancient oceans is connected to the remembrance of the community's history and struggle to take control of their ancestral lands. The images of the ancient oceans become rooted in an exploration of the desert's complex and continually changing history, a history that spans both geologic and human time and that cannot be reduced to easy cinematic stereotypes. Moreover, perhaps paralleling the way that images of Mexico are superimposed over the U.S. or images of the frontier are superimposed over the border, the superimposition of the ocean over the desert destabilizes one of the most basic binaries—that of earth and water—which then forces the reader to confront the other binaries set up in the text.

VIII

The Tropics and Washington, D.C.

Perhaps the most obvious displacement of landscapes is apparent in the novel's depiction of Washington, D.C., as a tropical jungle. Interestingly, the equatorial language the author uses to characterize the U.S. echoes a style of writing that Fuentes famously criticized earlier in his career. In *La nueva novela hispanoamericana,* he argues that nineteenth and twentieth-century Latin American writers are subsumed by the jungles and landscapes they describe:

> "¡Se los tragó la selva!", dice la frase final de *La vorágine* de José Eustasio Rivera. La exclamación es algo más que la lápida de Arturo Cova y sus compañeros: podría ser el comentario a un largo siglo de novelas latinoamericanas: se los tragó la montaña, se los

tragó la pampa, se los tragó la mina, se los tragó el río. Más cercana a la geografía que a la literatura…el mundo latinoamericano era ante todo una presencia implacable de selvas y montañas a una escala inhumana. (9)

Here, Fuentes critiques earlier Latin American novelists for visions of jungles and rivers on an inhuman scale that overwhelms the human element, reducing the landscape to mere geography. It is notable to contrast this characterization of the landscape with Fuentes's allusions to the manmade sets and cultural legacy of cinematic descriptions of the Southwest and Northern Mexico, as well as the expansionist frontier ethos, where entrepreneurialism and agriculture ultimately win out in the struggle with the natural elements. However, echoes of this naturalist Latin American rhetoric are clearly apparent in the novelist's descriptions of early twentieth-century Washington, D.C. as a tropical jungle devouring marble buildings, displacing contemporary views about the Latin American landscape to its northern neighbor.

What then, is the reader to make of this parroting of naturalist Latin American discourse about the landscape transposed to the swamplands of Washington, D.C.? What I find striking about this displacement is the way that Fuentes seems to combine Latin American ideas about Latin America from the time period in which the novel is set with later characterizations of the region found in U.S. and European film. By incorporating more general images of Latin America—rather than simply focusing on Mexico and the U.S.— the author situates this discussion of nationality and difference in a more expansive cultural and historical context that also considers the Monroe Doctrine and the relationship between the U.S. and Caribbean countries such as Cuba. He therefore creates a triangulation of landscapes and countries—the U.S., Mexico, and Cuba—that overlap through the shared motif of the overwhelming tropics. The dry deserts of the Mexico-U.S. border that allow for an exploration of the relationship

between the neighboring countries are surrounded by these lush tropical landscapes that situate the themes of national difference and otherness in a broader hemispheric context that incorporates both a Latin American and U.S. perspective.

This connection between the U.S. capital and the tropics is clearly drawn when the Greco-Roman buildings are depicted as being threatened by tropical foliage. The narrator describes how Harriet found herself:

> Sitiada por Washington en el verano, cuando bastaría dejar de vigilar un segundo a la vegetación para que la selva lo invadiese todo, y se tragase a la ciudad capital entera con un crecimiento lujoso de plantas tropicales, enredaderas y magnolias podridas.
>
> —La respuesta humana a la selva tropical de Washington ha sido construir un panteón grecorromano. (51)

Washington, D.C., is explicitly described as a tropical jungle in danger of being devoured by the creeping vegetation, echoing the naturalist rhetoric Fuentes criticizes in regional novels, or even Faulknerian depictions of the U.S. South. Like the images of the ocean seeping into the desert, the landscape is dynamic and everchanging, rather than static and set in place. It is also notable that this image of Washington, D.C., evokes the image of ruined cities and ancient civilizations covered by vegetation that were much photographed by U.S. citizens and Europeans who ventured into the tropics in the nineteenth and twentieth century. One can sense the future obsolescence of the U.S. capital in this representation. Moreover, the fact that the construction of a Greco-Roman pantheon in such an environment is depicted as a human foible reinforces the sense of incongruence between the built environment and the tropics that threaten to encroach upon it, undermining binary differences between a temperate U.S. based in European tradition and the supposedly timeless Latin American tropics.

Fuentes then describes the life Harriet left behind as a schoolteacher living with her mother in the U.S. capital. Transplanted from New York to the capital:

> Ella se hundía en el tórrido verano de las marejadas atlánticas, como se hundía en el calor de su propio cuerpo dormido. Eran suyas la misma humedad de las márgenes del Potomac y la vegetación mojada y lánguida, sólo en apariencia domesticada dentro de la ciudad de Washington, que en realidad invadía hasta el último rincón de los jardines perdidos, los estanques, los umbríos patios traseros cobijados por techos de verde humedad, alfombrados con los capullos muertos del cornejo blanco y el olor agridulce de los negros. (52-53)

In this passage, the constant allusions to heat, "el tórrido verano," "calor," "humedad" and vegetation, "la vegetación mojada y lánguida," "sólo en apariencia domesticada" evoke the tropical film tropes explored above. Moreover, the unsettling reference to "el olor agridulce de los negros" equated with the overwhelming vegetation also adheres to neocolonial tropes about exoticized black bodies, further painting a scene reminiscent of those in *Wetback*. Perhaps Fuentes is also playing with southern gothic tradition, situating the city within a particular vision of the U.S. South. Nonetheless, the fact that Washington, D.C., —rather than Southern Mexican locations also mentioned in the novel— is depicted using these loaded terms to describe its hot and humid summers seems to further destabilize the boundaries and hierarchies between North and Latin America by exoticizing the U.S. capital rather than Latin America. In other words, the neocolonial gaze is effectively turned on itself.

It is also important to note that Harriet moves to Washington, D.C., after her father abandons the family and runs away with a Cuban woman of African descent during the Spanish American-War. Harriet and her mother keep the father's abandonment a secret, insisting that he

was killed in Cuba, to maintain their respectability and to receive a pension from the U.S. government. They relocate to Washington, D.C., to be close to the father's empty tomb. This unspoken and taboo connection between her family and Cuba seems to haunt Harriet. Perhaps the profusion of tropical images that threaten to overwhelm the capital can therefore also be read as a way that the family's blood connections to Cuba—like the overwhelming vegetation—threatens to disrupt the differences between the U.S. and Latin America. The "other"—whether it be the tropical vegetation or the father's second mix-raced family—again hits too close to home. The tropical vegetation evocative of a Cuba she cannot talk about seems to haunt Harriet's experiences of Washington, D.C.

The conflation of the Mexican revolutionary, Tomás Arroyo, with Harriet's father, Captain Winslow, also mirrors the conflation of sexualized tropical imagery often used to describe Latin American landscapes with the center of U.S. political power. As Harriet dances with General Arroyo, the general is conflated with the distant father and memories of Washington:

> Harriet bailando esta noche con su padre erguido, condecorado, valiente…el capitán Winslow sin embargo oloroso a algo distinto y ella clavando la nariz en la nuca del padre, oliendo a la ciudad de Washington en la nuca de su padre, esa falsa Acrópolis de mármol y cúpulas y columnas plantadas en el barro húmedo de un trópico pernicioso porque no dice su nombre: un sofoco septentrional, la jungla de mármol como un cementerio grandioso y deshabitado, los templos de la justicia y el gobierno hundiéndose en una maleza ecuatorial, devoradora, creciente: un cáncer vegetal enredado en los cimientos de Washington, una ciudad mojada como la entrepierna de una negra en celo. Harriet hundió

la nariz en la nuca de Tomás Arroyo y olió a sexo erizado y velludo de una negra, capitán Winslow, estoy muy sola y usted puede tomarme cuando guste. (105-106)

In this long passage, Washington government buildings sink into equatorial weeds and the pernicious tropics encircle the foundations of the city. With its marble and temples of justice and government, D.C. seems to be masquerading as a grandiose Greek city; it refuses to recognize the true nature of the tropical ground it sits upon and that threatens to swallow it up.

This partially concealed landscape that always threatens to show its true colors also seems to be associated with the sexual relationship between Harriet's father and the unnamed black woman whose body and fetishized sexuality is disquietingly linked to the city, "una ciudad mojada como la entrepierna de una negra en celo." The familiar father is thus rendered unfamiliar through his association with the othered woman, "oloroso a algo distinto," just as the familiar Washington landmarks are rendered in an almost unrecognizable manner when seen through an exoticized lens. To complicate things further, the father is repeatedly conflated with Tomas Arroyo, Harriet's new Mexican lover. In this way, the binaries between the U.S. and Latin America are subverted by this exotic and sexualized vision of the U.S. capital that renders the unfamiliar familiar and the familiar unfamiliar.

Harriet is not the only character with an absent father who ends up in the tropics, however. In the second to last chapter, Harriet remembers how Tomás Arroyo tells her about his own father, a landowner from Chihuahua who sexually assaulted his Indigenous mother and did not recognize her son. His father visits another landowner in the Yucatán, where he sexually assaults another Indigenous woman, who then kills him with her boyfriend. Arroyo describes these strikingly different landscapes associated with his father:

> mi padre era un terrateniente del norte, aquí donde estamos ahora: desierto y nopal y unas cuantas viñas aquí y allá, también magueyes y buenas cosechas de algodón. Noches frías aquí en el desierto. Estamos arriba, el aire es delgado. Dicen que allí abajo es caliente y húmedo el año entero. Una dura costra de tierra sin ríos. Pozos muy hondos. Selvas color gris, dicen. Yo no he estado allí. (183)

Arroyo describes northern and southern Mexico in opposing terms: one is cold and dry, the other warm and humid, one is a desert, the other a jungle. Even the fact that he adds phrases such as "dicen que" or "yo no he estado allí" underscores the separation between these two different locations, as he has never been to the south. He then goes on rhetorically unite these two disparate landscapes: "yo vengo del norte. Este hombre desconocido, el asesino de mi padre, viene del sur. La revolución se mueve. En algún lado hemos de encontrarnos…yo lo abrazaré. Él vendrá a conocer esta tierra donde mi padre un día fue poderoso y temido. Yo iré a conocer la tierra donde su esqueleto está colgado en un pozo" (176). The revolution therefore unites these two men (the woman who killed her rapist is notably unmentioned) and these two landscapes that are so distinctive, and yet are intimately entwined in the same family story.

Yet Arroyo dies young and this much anticipated meeting of north and south never happens in the book. This sense of estrangement extends to the relationship between Harriet and Tomás. Though this chapter illustrates how Harriet realizes she is profoundly estranged from Arroyo and from Mexico, "fue en este instante, en los brazos de Arroyo, cuando Harriet odió a Arroyo, sobre todo, por esto: ella había conocido este mundo pero no podía ser parte de él y él lo sabía y sin embargo se lo ofreció" an analysis of the landscapes offers a more complicated interpretatation (186). Harriet's travels back to a humid and tropical Washington, D.C., with the skeleton of her father-figure echoes the journey that Arroyo was going to take towards the

Yucatan and his own dead father. Through Harriet's memories of Mexico and her heated embrace with Arroyo, a different sort of north and south, that of Mexico and the U.S. come together, but are also profoundly estranged even in this moment of unity. Rather than end with an image of simple brotherly union, where the southern and northern men meet in Mexico City, the novel ends on a more disquieting note, where echoes of the Yucatan can be found in the U.S. capital, and Harriet is left to negotiate the similarities and differences of the Mexico she left behind for good. In this way, these complex and layered landscapes disrupt simple binaries between Mexico and the U.S while acknowledging the conflict and difference between the countries.

VIII

Hollywood's Mexico

How are these malleable and haunted written landscapes translated to the big screen? Firstly, it is important to appreciate how the novel's more abstract literary landscapes are reimagined in the film adaptation. An image of the landscape from the novel such as "el desierto era el espejo de sí mismo: mordía el fondo del mar antiguo" is perhaps difficult for the reader to visualize; it seems to work at the level of literary motifs (mirror, ancient ocean) rather than at a more literal level. Therefore, the film adaptation is especially well positioned to take creative liberties with these literary landscapes which are quite suggestive, but which leave substantial room for cinematic interpretation. Indeed, what interests me about the film is the way that the cinematic landscapes diverge from those in the novel, and what this divergence might reveal about the relationship between text and film and the U.S. and Mexico seen from a Hollywood perspective. Following the theories of Corrigan and Stam highlighted in chapter three, I am interested in exploring how the political and cultural setting of the film affects its reinterpretation

of the source material, rather than criticizing the film for failing to be a faithful translation of the novel. As Corrigan writes, “the exchange between film and literature demands, especially now, rigorous historical and cultural distinctions…the more carefully these terms and issues can be situated in their specific historical, national, and cultural contexts, the more accurate a discussion of this literature and these films will be” (2).

The creative differences between novel and film adaptation are readily apparent in the different landscapes presented in each. The film adds a spectacular representation of the city of Chihuahua complete with a fireworks display, a cityscape given very little attention in the novel. In this way, the film focuses its attention on the landscapes (or cityscapes) of Northern Mexico and the border. Images of the tropics and the cityscape of Washington, D.C. are notably missing. I see the film as narrowing its focus to explore questions of difference between the U.S. and Mexico, rather than widening its lens to consider a hemispheric perspective that includes tropical landscapes. These questions of difference between the U.S. and Mexico are also affected by the sociocultural context in which the movie was made, as is explored above. The film seems to spectacularly draw upon representations of the landscape and of Mexican identity found in Westerns and previous Hollywood movies without interrogating the way this representation reinforces ideas about national identity and the other. Thus, even as the film seemingly celebrates difference through eye-catching depictions of Mexico, it also reinforces hierarchical ideas about the U.S. and its southern neighbor.

As the film adaptation’s plot, unlike the novel, is in chronological order (except for the flashback opening scene), I will therefore examine the film’s landscapes chronologically, rather than thematically. I will first analyze the flashback, where the old gringo’s body is disinterred from a majestic Mexican landscape at sunrise. Then, I will consider the representations of

Washington, D.C., and the city of Chihuahua. Though these scenes do not feature landscapes, but rather lavish interiors and cityscapes, they effectively establish a hierarchy between the sedate and civilized setting of the capital and the wild and tumultuous spaces associated with Mexico. Next, I will analyze the landscapes associated with the Miranda hacienda, landscapes that appear to privilege the perspectives of the Anglo-American characters who must navigate an exotic and dangerous environment, a framing that further cements the binaries between the U.S. and Mexico. I will finally explore the last scene, where Harriet crosses the clearly delineated Mexico-U.S. border.

The film adaptation's arresting western landscapes are apparent in the first few minutes of *Old Gringo*. The film opens with an establishing shot of the desert, where the body of the old gringo is being disinterred. The sweeping desert vistas, with sculptural rock formations and rugged unvegetated mountains receding into the distance, evoke the setting of a Western (see figure 34). The orchestral music and antiquated type font used for the opening credits reinforce this old-time Western feeling. It is notable that the landscape is captured at what seems to be sunrise, where the rosy, saturated tones of the rising sun soften the harsh setting, creating what Fox characterizes as a "positively Edenic depiction" of the deserts of Northern Mexico (79). The saturated colors and vivid tones create an idealized view of Mexico, but also perhaps also evoke a sense of otherness often associated with exoticized landscapes. Indeed, this majestic Western setting is undercut with signs of difference, notably in the form of the patterned serapes, sandals, sombreros charros, and crossed cartridge belts that signal "Mexicanness." Though Mexican revolutionaries in Northern Mexico generally favored cowboy boots and Stetsons, this reinterpretation of the revolutionaries appears to reinforce the idea of these Mexican figures as ethnic others and adheres to a stereotypical notion of Mexicanness that can be easily read by a

U.S. movie-going audience ("Mirada a la vestimenta de la revolución mexicana"). The idealized Mexican landscape that can be seen as celebrating diversity is therefore complicated by these other elements.

This shot then dissolves into another long take of the landscape. The same saturated, atmospheric colors frame a view of a dusty desert landscape replete with scattered agaves, distant horsemen, a train in the mid-ground, and rose-hued mountains (see figure 35). The epic scale of the landscape is apparent in the fact that the figures are small and fragile against the immensity of the desert. Perhaps echoing Fox, a *New York Times* critic also laments that the "sunset is too painted and perfect," further illustrating the eye-catching saturation of color over the desert landscape, as well as the idealization of this space (Maslin). In a voiceover Jane Fonda, who plays Harriet, asks, "how could I not remember this land where death is not the end but only the beginning?" a dialogue that, inscribed over this dusty and saturated landscape, also appears to reinforce differences between Mexico and the U.S. in terms of perceived disparities in the way these nations think about death. In this way, word and image appear to work together to frame Northern Mexico in terms of its difference, even as the beautiful landscape presents a seemingly positive view of Mexico.

The screen then shifts to a text over black that reads "Washington, D.C., 1913." It is interesting to note that the landscapes analyzed above are not given a specific location, perhaps reinforcing a more general and stereotypical sense of Mexicanness which contrasts with the specificity attributed to the U.S. mise-en-scéne. The viewer is then presented with an image of a stuffy bookstore. The dark-paneled wood, second story balcony that sits just over the heads of the characters, floor to ceiling bookshelves, and packed room create a sense of constraint (see figure 36). This sense of constraint and general propriety—which Ambrose Bierce throwing his

books on the ground and storming off to the utter shock of his well-dressed audience seems to reinforce instead of challenge— creates a view of Washington, D.C., that greatly contrasts with the unrestrained tropics and sexuality apparent in the novel.

The more sedate capital is also underscored by the next scene, where Harriet declares that she will move to Mexico from the well-polished and wallpapered interior of her mother's house. The lavishly decorated interior, with its pleasing contrast of textures and colors, seems to indicate stability and refinement (see figure 37). Unlike in the novel, where the character's inner turmoil is reflected in the jungle-like surroundings, here Harriet's interiority seems to markedly contrast with the "civilized" bookstores and middle-class interiors that are the viewer's only glimpse into the city. In this way, Washington, D.C., is implicitly set up as a genteel contrast to Mexico, further reinforcing a hierarchical view of the two countries, where the U.S. is sedate and civilized and Mexico is an exciting and exotic getaway that pulls at the restless protagonists from the north. Moreover, this view of the East Coast as refined and complacent in contrast to the rough and dynamic life in the west also echoes classic Western tropes, where an Eastern schoolmistress—such as Harriet—must learn how to adapt to more rugged and adventurous life out west. Hence, the film effectively deploys Western tropes also found in the source novel without interrogating them.

These rather static urban interiors—where the only volatile element seems to be Harriet and the old gringo— give way to an energetic and chaotic exterior scene in the city of Chihuahua. Here, an eye-level tracking shot adds to a dynamic street scene packed with moving people in the same garb as the revolutionaries explored above, wooden wagons, and donkeys framed against Spanish colonial-style buildings (see figure 38). Mariachi music plays throughout this scene. These obvious indications of difference, the donkeys, the people, the architecture, and

the music, appear to invigorate Harriet. She contemplates the city in a series of shot/reverse shots. As Pick writes, this positioning of the Anglo-American governess as witness to revolutionary Mexico "privileges the perspective of American characters and, with its stylized replication of the picture postcards produced in El Paso by studio photographer Walter H. Horne, refers back to the role played by Americans as narrators and witnesses of the revolution" (20). Though Pick refers to picture postcards rather than films, this analysis reinforces the idea that U.S. visual conventions—whether cinematic or photographic—help to privilege a foreign perspective. By privileging Harriet's perspective—which is merged with the viewer, who presumably sees the city from the governess's vantage point—the film adaptation creates further distance between the protagonist (and audience) from the U.S. and the multitudes of Mexicans caught up in the revolution.

Harriet then leaves the city and travels to the Miranda hacienda, a trip that is framed by a series of landscapes. A montage, featuring an old automobile and horses set against distant mountains and adobe buildings, a rusty old mineshaft, and a close up-of the car and horsemen making their way on a dusty gravel track surrounded by what appears to be sagebrush reproduces the visual vocabulary of Westerns. The camera then cuts to a scene of Harriet and her fellow-travelers stopping by the side of the road to rest. They look up and see the old gringo on a horse framed by sculptural mountains while the music crescendos (see figure 39). This shot is also evocative of classic Westerns, where the lone horseman navigates the wilds of the west. It seems notable to me that the old gringo— rather than Tomás Arroyo, Frutos García, or any of the other Mexican revolutionaries—is framed in this quintessential western shot. Like the scene analyzed above, where Harriet's point of view is privileged, this spatial positioning of the old gringo seems to foreground the experience of the Anglo-American. After all, the old gringo—unlike his

Mexican counterparts—is directly inserted into the traditional role of the lone Anglo-American rider mastering a difficult landscape. Though the novel also invokes this trope in order to subvert it—as is explored above—this film rendering seems more celebratory and nostalgic than critical, framing this non-Mexican man in a dominant position above the Mexican landscape.

Other cinematic tropes about the border/frontier as a lawless and violent place are invoked when all the characters arrive at the Miranda hacienda. The armed revolutionaries on horseback boldly ride into the hacienda, echoing the image of gunmen riding into a shootout (see figure 40). A bloody and extended shootout set against the cactuses, dust, dilapidated walls, and distant mountains ensues. In the middle of the fighting, the camera zooms out to reveal a dusty, sepia-tinted plain. Through the dust, more riders on horseback and a train spewing black dust—the reinforcements— appear. Some of the reinforcements play mariachi music (see figure 41) as they head into battle. The fighting then spills over to the corrals, filled with anxious cattle struggling to escape. The old gringo, for instance, crawls through the straw and takes refuge behind a wooden trough by an upturned wooden wagon before becoming the protagonist of the fighting by risking gunfire and rerouting a train that slams into a stone wall and goes up in a most spectacular explosion. Celebrating the victory, general Arroyo pets his horse in the corral and then burns down most of the hacienda, which is framed by the dusty landscape and the distant mountains.

I see this extended and gory battle scene as invoking many Western tropes also apparent in the novel; there are shootouts, impressive horseback feats, corrals, a dusty landscape through which the reinforcements arrive, and scenes of violent masculine heroism. However, the frontier imagery and landscapes in the film adaptation are seamlessly translated into a revolutionary battle scene. This choice reads as a simplification of the nuances and specificity of the Mexican

Revolution to a series of Hollywood cliches about sharpshooters and brave horsemen with some mariachi players thrown into the mix in a stereotypical display of Mexican identity. This scene could perhaps be an example of the frontier that the novel's old gringo imagined and yet never found.

As explored above, the corollary of the border/frontier as a violent lawless place is a representation of this space as enabling steamy, licentious sex. After the battle dies down and Harriet becomes more at home with the revolutionaries, she falls in love with General Arroyo. There is a romantic and softly lit sex scene between the two of them followed by a shot of General Arroyo riding a horse with Harriet against a landscape set in soft focus (see figure 42). Harriet, now in a loose-fitting white dress and with her hair down—a stark contrast to her structured clothing and tight face-framing braids that she wears in Washington, D.C.—leans in close and kisses her lover while the camera captures a gently moving landscape.

Rather than the sepia tones and washed-out colors used in the landscape framing the battle scene, here the landscape is rose-hued and idealized, echoing the film's opening scene. The shifting landscape, although still of the Miranda hacienda and its environs, is more vegetated, with trees interspersed with cacti and foliage. This more intimate and Edenic landscape—notably the camera never zooms out and no one else appears in the background—therefore reinforces a more exoticized and sexualized vision of Northern Mexico that seems to evoke tropes from films such as *Wetback*. The film celebrates the union of these two different characters, with Harriet then declaring, "I was always afraid of the unknown. Whenever my mother said someone was different, what she really meant to say was worse," a statement that seems to be in implicit contrast to her new international affair with a Mexican revolutionary and more tolerant point of view. Yet, this celebration of difference through a romantic connection

still seems to set up hierarchies between the U.S. as sexually restrained and civilized, and Mexico as a softly lit and Edenic place where the staid governess can literally let her hair down and explore her sexuality with an exoticized "Latin lover" figure.

The love affair inevitably goes awry, and Harriet returns to her home country with the old gringo's remains. In the final scene, the governess crosses a bridge that divides Mexico and the U.S. Here, the landscape highlights differences between the two countries. Instead of the adobe and stone buildings, for instance, the U.S. side features western false-front style buildings and a profusion of U.S. flags (see figure 43). These differences are perhaps more vividly apparent through a final pull-back dolly that slowly reveals the different flags waving on each side of the river in the twilight. This final image that seems to purposefully emphasize the different nationalities rather than zooming out to reveal a landscape that looks the same on both sides (see figure 44).

Adapted by Hollywood, the film's landscapes therefore become a space that reinscribes notions of difference and otherness even as they seemingly celebrate diversity and tolerance through romanticized images of Mexico. If Fuentes' novel imagines the complexities of the U.S. gaze over Mexico and in turn casts a Mexican or Latin American gaze over the swampland that is Washington D.C., the movie simplifies this point of view by seeing Mexico through U.S. cinematic tropes. In this way, the stunning landscapes and lavish sets use the same cinematic vocabulary as the text, and yet come to a vastly different interpretation that responds to a late 1980s Hollywood context.

X

An analysis of the landscapes found in *Gringo viejo* and the film adaptation allow for a more nuanced discussion about how ideas about nationality, the border, and the other are

reinterpreted and reimagined in literature and film and in Mexico and the U.S. Though landscapes seem to be literally set in place, the shifting ideas about the frontier, the border, and the tropics found in novel and film suggest otherwise. In the hands of a writer such as Fuentes, cinematic landscapes that lend themselves to essentialized ideas about nationality and difference are deftly subverted, while the very same tropes can be used to create the spectacular and stereotypical images found in the film adaptation. Indeed, the codified conventions of cinematic landscapes are perhaps especially suited to this dialogue between literature and film and the U.S. and Mexico, as they provide a common vocabulary that can be endlessly reconfigured and reexamined.

CHAPTER FIVE

Haunted Borderlands: Written, Acoustic, and Photographic Landscapes in *Lost Children Archive*

I

In recent years, many unaccompanied child migrants have died in the desert along the Arizona-Mexico border. This region of the borderlands is fraught with colonial histories of violence tied to the development of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states. Indeed, in these very same places of state-sanctioned border deaths, the U.S. and Mexican military in the nineteenth century forcibly displaced Apache men, women, and children from their ancestral homelands and even massacred entire villages (Guidotti Hernández 85). How can we understand and represent a place wrought with colonial legacies and its ongoing practices through the written word, photographs, or sound? What perspective is necessary? And how do representations of the landscape shape the stories told (or not) about the children who died there?

In her novel *Lost Children Archive*, Valeria Luiselli explores these difficult, timely questions. Published in 2019, the novel follows the journey of a middle-class journalist of Mexican origin living in New York City as she drives to the unfamiliar U.S.-Mexico borderlands with her husband, daughter, and stepson to record a sound project about unaccompanied migrant children. Navigating her identity as a relatively privileged immigrant who is still pulled over by the border patrol (but who can show papers), she considers the experiences of these vulnerable undocumented child migrants from Mexico and Central America in the same unfamiliar landscape. Notably, the journalist starts to understand the desert lands of this border region as haunted. For the purposes of this chapter, I will use literary and cultural critic María del Pilar Blanco's description of haunting: "haunting can take many forms. Alongside apparitions of

supernatural shapes or beings that would otherwise be imperceptible, it can also mean the disquieting experience of sensing a collision of temporalities or spaces—an experience that is nonetheless riddled with doubt and uncertainty" (1). This is the context in which I will analyze how the adult narrator sees her husband's project about the forced removal of Apache peoples as echoing the experiences of the unaccompanied migrant children in the same landscape and hears echoes of the unaccompanied migrant children in her own children's backseat chatter, where they play at being lost in the desert.

When her ten-year-old stepson takes over the narration and describes these games he plays with his five-year-old sister, games that lead to the boy running away with his sibling in tow, this sense of a haunted landscape is heightened. These more privileged children hear the voices of the dead in the midday heat and take blurred pictures where the landscape is barely discernible. Here the landscapes are sensory and immediate—sound, touch, and taste often receive more emphasis than sight—but also spectral, filled with the tenuous traces of people who no longer exist in the flesh. Absence and presence, documenters and subjects, sound and sight all coexist uneasily in this constantly shifting space. This chapter asks: How do these haunted landscapes allow the author to contend with the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children on the U.S.-Mexico border?

This chapter will first briefly address the humanitarian border crisis, Luiselli's involvement in the crisis as a translator for unaccompanied migrant children, and her previous work on the subject. In doing so, I demonstrate how readers need a comprehensive understanding of U.S. immigration history and neocolonial policies if they are to understand the stakes of Luiselli's book. To better understand the connection between haunted landscapes, nation-building, and state-sanctioned violence, I will then turn to the work of theorists such as Blanco

and Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, who explore questions of haunting and racialized violence in the Southwest. I will then analyze theories about soundscapes, photography, and touch, and put them into dialogue with an analysis of visual, acoustic, textual, and tactile representations of landscapes in the novel. I specifically examine the ways that the novel's acoustic, tactile, visual, and textual representations of Southwest landscapes create a flexible framework that allows the author to examine the possibilities and limitations of documenting the experience of migrant children and the contested borderlands that they must traverse.

Ultimately, then, I demonstrate how these subjective and sensory representations of the landscape unsettle authoritative and realistic modes of reporting, where the reader/viewer is invited to survey the subject and/or landscape from a distance, ways of seeing often associated with nation-building and colonization (*Landscape and Power* 2). Throughout the novel, I see the disconcerting layering of visual, literary, tactile, and acoustic representations of haunted landscapes as a sort of "highway storm" that envelops the reader. "Highway storms erase the illusory division between the landscape and you, the spectator; they thrust your observant eyes into what you see," explains the journalist narrator. "Even inside the hermetic space of the car, the wind blows right into your mind, through stunned eye sockets, clouds judgement" (153). By surveying the landscape, the narrator ends up surveying herself, her confused judgement, and intensely sensory reaction to a place she cannot separate herself from. I argue that these subjective and sensory landscapes upset the hierarchical distance between spectator and subject, forcing us to interrogate ways of seeing and experiencing the humanitarian border crisis rooted in colonial legacies and nation-building projects. In turn, these unsettling spectral landscapes create a space to explore questions about power, privilege, and the possibilities—and limitations—of representing the other.

II

Luiselli as Translator

As a writer of Mexican origin with an international childhood and longtime residence in New York City, writing her third novel in English, even Valeria Luiselli's biography seems to push against a nationalist framework. However, unlike the children she writes about in *Lost Children Archive*, she crossed borders as a child and as an adult legally, with the social and economic capital that comes from her more privileged—though unsettled—upbringing as the child of a diplomat. Hence, in writing a book about unaccompanied migrant children in English, she is forced to reckon with her own position as a more privileged border-crosser, a writer that might share a nationality or language with the unaccompanied migrant children but whose class privilege, green card, and ties to U.S. and Mexican cultural and literary elites place her at substantial remove from the subjects of her writing. Moreover, it is also important to note that the spaces in both Mexico and the U.S. that she has called home are cultural and economic centers far from the border: she has lived in Mexico City and lives in New York City like the female narrator.

Even before Luiselli wrote a novel that so clearly wrestles with these questions of positionality, her literary rise and success in the U.S. invited critical comments about how Luiselli benefits from a neoliberal international book market that favors the sort of cosmopolitan and border-crossing writing that the writer is known for. The questions raised about this literary figure who has enjoyed considerable success in the U.S. and the English-speaking world (she was short listed for a Booker prize, photographed for Vogue Magazine, winner of a MacArthur grant, and, rather ironically, chosen by Barack Obama for his "favorite books of 2019" list) echo the scrutiny that Carlos Fuentes—the author explored in my previous dissertation chapter on

Gringo viejo and the Hollywood film adaptation—faced for his later novels, which also used the theme of the border in order to attract a readership in both Mexico and the U.S. Cheyla Samuelson explicitly draws a connection between these two seemingly disparate figures:

> Carlos Fuentes offers an illuminating cipher for the critical reception of Luiselli as a nomadic Mexican writer. Because of her particular background and the focus of her writing, Luiselli shares with Carlos Fuentes a vulnerability to a tendency of a certain sector of Mexican critics to focus on questions of authenticity and national identity in the consideration of her work. During his career in Mexico, Carlos Fuentes confronted criticism stemming from both a youth spent abroad and his subsequent recognition and success in the United States, biographical facts he shares with Luiselli. (185)

Like Fuentes, Luiselli's positive reception in the U.S. and international childhood led some critics to suspect that the version they present of Mexico to an international audience is inauthentic or does not reflect Mexican literary concerns. For instance, when reviewing Luiselli's first novel, *Los ingrávidos*, Domínguez Michael concludes that it is "una novela muy traducida e ignorada en México" a point of view that underscores the idea that Luiselli's work—even before she wrote her first novel in English—is inherently designed for a non-Spanish speaking international, rather than national, audience ("Dos cajas de Valeria Luiselli"). [22]

However, Samuelson is quick to note that Luiselli's writing also reflects changes in how questions of nationality and identity are thought about in the twenty-first century. She argues that

[22] Úrsula Fuentesberain also notes this discrepancy between U.S. and Mexican reviews of Luiselli's work, writing that: "una cuestión curiosa es que el libro [*Los ingrávidos*] en inglés recibió más reseñas elogiosas que la versión en español, pero más que atribuir esa recepción favorable a la posición de *outsider* de Valeria, creo que se trata del espacio liminal en el que habita: ser una escritora mexicana que ha pasado la mayor parte de su vida en el extranjero" ("Valeria Luiselli: escritor desde el umbral").

differences between Fuentes's and Luiselli's approach to these questions "mark changes in the perception of nationality and identity in the twenty-first century. Contemporary shifts in thinking about identity and nation, and the global realities that underlie them, have taken us into a conceptual territory in which unitary ideas of identity and nation no longer serve in an unproblematic way" (187). She goes on to write that, "in this sense, Luiselli and her work serve as an example of what Sánchez Prado describes as a 'gradual dislodging of the Mexican writer's categorical imperative to be essentially Mexican, and the establishment of a transnational circuit of literary publishing that would better suit both cosmopolitan sensibilities and the demands of the neoliberal market'" (187). Though my last chapter contests this view of Fuentes as trafficking in essentialist ideas about Mexicanness, it is telling that the adult narrator's Mexican nationality is deemphasized—although not unmentioned— in *Lost Children Archive*, and that the author includes extensive references to writings from the U.S., Italy, Mexico, Argentina, and England, perhaps reflecting these changing expectations noted by Sánchez Prado and Cheyla Samuelson. Indeed, by writing in English, Luiselli inserts herself into the literary canon of the country where she now lives.

Critics such as Illse Logie see Luiselli's books as critically intervening in these discussions about her place in a transnational book market. She frames the author (as well as her contemporary Mario Bellatin) as a writer who deftly explores this tension between the local and the international—and the realities of the transnational book market—in her own work:

> Bellatin y Luiselli logran insertarse en este sistema global y hasta adelantarse a la literatura mundial manteniendo una relativa autonomía… la tensión entre lo local y lo mundial constituye el principio generador de sus tramas y que, a través de

diferentes procedimientos, logran expandir la noción de literatura latinoamericana al tiempo que subvierten ese mismo ecosistema global del que forman parte. (209)

In this way, Logie sees Luiselli's work as not simply catering to the whims of the international book market, but rather self-consciously exploring—and even subverting— the expectations surrounding contemporary writers of Latin American origin.

This tension in terms of the way that Luiselli's work has been understood—to simplify the argument somewhat, as a writer who benefits and is indeed a product of the transnational neocolonial publishing framework, or as a writer who subverts "ese mismo ecosistema global"—informs my approach to this chapter. I will consider how Luiselli criticizes neocolonial ways of seeing the U.S.-Mexico border, while also self-consciously highlighting how the adult narrator negotiates her own tenuous position as a middle-class immigrant who—especially in moments of doubt— suspects that she might be reinforcing, rather than critiquing, this neocolonial gaze. I therefore see Luiselli's third novel as self-consciously navigating the tension between the national and international, an English and Spanish readership that are part of a larger transnational book market as she raises questions about the ethics of representing the humanitarian border crisis from the perspective of an adult narrator who shares many (though not all) of her own biographical details.[23]

[23] In a BBC interview, Luiselli's negotiation of national identity is perhaps telling, "como buena representante de la nueva generación literaria mexicana, Luiselli escribe en español y en inglés. 'Me siento mexicana', asegura. Pero aclara que ninguna nacionalidad la determina como escritora" ("Valeria Luiselli"). Samuelson also notes that this negotiated Mexican identity, like that of the adult narrator in *Lost Children Archive*, grants her considerable privilege: "she seems to be able to provisionally claim her nationality but her persona escapes many of the negative connotations of 'mexicanness' in a US culture that increasingly manifests as openly xenophobic and racist. Her personal narrative of cosmopolitan, globe-trotting erudition and fluent English all signal her difference from the more stereotypical immigrant story of Mexican Americans in the US" (187).

The tension between the local and the international that Luiselli navigates in her work is often expressed through haunting. In her analysis of *Lost Children Archive* and Luiselli's first novel, *Los ingrávidos*, critic Sara Núñez de la Fuente notes that "en relación con los marcos espaciotemporales, se ha observado que Valeria Luiselli recurre al léxico de la tradición fantástica y emplea el concepto de fantasma para hablar de temporalidades que se cruzan" (102). She goes on to examine how different timelines and localities in *Los ingrávidos*—namely the female narrator in Mexico City and the poet Owen in New York in the 1920s—cross in both expected and phantasmal ways, uneasily tying together different cultural centers and time periods (89-90). I see the same trend in *Lost Children Archive*, where the ghosts of unaccompanied migrant children and Apaches in the desert Southwest intersect with the experiences of a cosmopolitan family from the coast, for whom this environment is entirely unfamiliar. Hence, I see the intersecting spaces and timelines expressed through the language of haunting as a method Luiselli uses to explore the intersections between the local and the international—and between those whose voices carry weight and those whose voices do not—that critics are quick to note in her work.

Finally, it is also important to underscore that Luiselli writes about this tension between her home country and adopted country, and her closeness and yet distance to the experience of unaccompanied migrant children not only in fiction, but also in *Tell Me How it Ends*. This book-length essay published in 2017 details her experiences translating for unaccompanied migrant children in New York Immigration court while waiting to receive her own green card, and the road trip she takes with her family to the U.S-Mexico border to get a better sense of the country in which she is living. For instance, she writes that:

> It was thanks to my lost green card, and thanks to my lawyer abandoning my case, that I became involved with a much more urgent problem. My more trivial pursuits as an 'alien writer' or 'pending Mexican' took me into the heart of something larger and more important. As I walked down Broadway one morning, speaking to my lawyer over the phone one last time before she handed off my case, I inquired about her new job. She explained that the Obama administration had decided to create a priority juvenile docket in immigration courts to deal with the deportation proceedings of thousands of undocumented children…before we hung up, I asked if there was a need for translators or interpreters in court, even if they weren't lawyers, and she said of course there was. (32)

Here, she is quick to minimize her own problems with the U.S. immigration system, characterizing her lost green card as "my more trivial pursuits" while also subtly mocking the system's institutional and dehumanizing language. She is an "alien writer" rather than an "illegal alien," an altogether different plight. The more "urgent problem," and the subject that is "larger and more important," is characterized as the deportation proceedings of undocumented children, which she agrees to help with as a translator. In passages such as the one explored above, the writer self-consciously explores her own positionality as a professional-class writer waiting for a green card while writing and translating the experiences of these vulnerable children for a U.S. audience. *Lost Children Archive* can therefore be situated in a larger body of work by the author that explores how to represent the humanitarian border crisis and highlights how her own lived experiences influence the way she sees the children she writes about.

Luiselli's position as a writer of Mexican origin who lives in New York City and writes in English about the border between the U.S. and Mexico has been scrutinized by critics of her work, who see her writing as an example of the sort of novels favored within neoliberal and

transnational publishing circles. I argue that *Lost Children Archive* self-consciously responds to the conditions of its own production. In this way, as Logie notes, Luiselli inserts herself into— and even interrogates her own position in— this wider discussion about nationality, neoliberalism, and representations of the other.

III

Unaccompanied Migrant Children and U. S. Immigration

To fully appreciate how unaccompanied migrant children at the border are part of a much larger neocolonial context of nation-building and racial exclusion addressed in the novel, I will briefly detail a history of immigration law in the U.S. Though the U.S is a nation of immigrants, restrictive immigration policies have been implemented from the nation's founding to the present day. Indeed, Deborah Boehm and Susan Terrio argue that "from the nation's founding until today, U.S. immigration laws and policies have emphasized restriction, exclusion, and control. Contemporary immigration and deportation policies are a legacy of long-standing ideas about race, imperialism, and state power" (5-6). The 1790 naturalization act excluded non-white people from becoming naturalized citizens (amended to include people of African origin only in 1870) while nineteenth-century legislation barred immigration from most countries in Asia. Caps on immigration from southern and eastern European countries were implemented in the early twentieth century, and only in 1952 was race formally removed as grounds for exclusion. In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act opened immigration to people from non-European countries by creating a system focused on skilled workers and family reunification, but also placed restrictions on the entry of Latin Americans (Pew Research Center). Hence, centuries of immigration policy in the US have restricted the movements of "undesirable" —generally

understood as non-white or at least non-Western European—peoples, reflecting longstanding neocolonial attitudes toward racialized and othered groups.

More recently, illegality has been constructed in racialized terms. Boehm and Terrio detail how:

> During the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries until the contemporary moment, the US government has expanded the category of "illegality," ushering in further restrictions on immigration and criminalizing immigrants, including migrant youth and even very young children. Immigration and antiterrorism laws, such as the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 and legislation passed after September 11, 2001, placed a heightened emphasis on security and containment. (6)

These more restrictive laws passed during a period that saw increases in immigration from non-European countries are linked to racist and nativist sentiment and turn children into criminals charged in court for entering the country illegally.

Unaccompanied child migrants, who generally come from Central America's Northern Triangle countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) and are often Indigenous, find themselves enmeshed in this restrictive legal framework. Though unaccompanied child migrants had been entering the U.S. for decades, the increase in unaccompanied child migration in 2013 and 2014 resulted in changes in government policy. Katherine Kaufka Walts explains how 2014 "became a 'tipping point' for the US government's as well as media attention to the issue, with more than 68,000 unaccompanied immigrant children arriving at the southern border, most from Central America and Mexico" (82). In response, the Obama administration created a priority docket in July 2014 to fast-track these children's deportation cases. Children's families or

guardians in the U.S. were only given 21 days to find a lawyer for their first hearing. Failure to find a lawyer to represent the case often resulted in the child being deported (Pierce). The consequences of this priority docket were clear. Gabriel Stargardter reported for Reuters that "Obama's administration has stressed that Central American children who cross the border illegally will be sent home." This was the situation that Luiselli found herself in as a translator for children seeking asylum in the immigration courts in New York City.

The Obama administration took other steps to curtail the immigration of Central American and Mexican migrants, including children. Torres describes how "the United States employed severe policies of deterrence towards the refugees in its own backyard. This was manifest in aggressive expansion of U.S. Homeland Security migration control, including: outsourcing enforcement to Mexico; re-introducing migrant family detention; increasing family unit raids" (14). The consequences of these policies were devastating: "these strategies of state deterrence and enforcement heightened the vulnerability of asylum-seeking women and children from Mexico and Central America to human and legal rights abuses not only in their home countries, but throughout the entire migration process and in the United States" (14).

This long-standing and racialized notion of immigrants as illegal and as a threat to the nation-state was then leveraged by the Trump administration. Writing in 2018, Torres writes that: "we are facing the most anti-refugee and immigrant administration in recent U.S. history…within weeks of taking office he signed three controversial executive orders on internal immigration enforcement, border security, and the infamous travel ban targeting Muslims—casting asylum seekers and immigrants as a threat to national security" (14). Then, in December 2017, the Department of Homeland Security began separating children from their parents at the border, in violation of both international and domestic law (Perez 37). However, these policies

have not stopped children from migrating to the U.S. Kaufka Walts explains that "although current US governmental data suggests that unaccompanied child migration has declined since January 2018, presumably because of the Trump administration's hardline stance against immigrants, evidence shows that children are continuing to migrate and that their numbers continue to rise" (82).

What conditions in the children's home countries prompt this dangerous journey to the U.S.? According to the American Immigration Council, "researchers consistently cite increased Northern Triangle violence as the primary motivation for recent migration, while identifying additional causes including poverty and family reunification" (2). Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala have high homicide rates of 90.4 per 100,000 people, 41.2 and 39.9 respectively ("A Guide to Children Arriving at the Border"). Indeed, "the violence frequently targets youth. Recruitment for gangs begins in adolescence—or younger—and there are incidents of youth being beaten by the police who suspected them of gang membership" ("A Guide to Children Arriving at the Border: Laws, Policies and Responses" 3). In countries where the state cannot be relied upon to prosecute or deter crime, and where local communities have little power over established gangs, the children are left with little to no protection against violence in their home countries and therefore make the dangerous journey to the U.S.[24]

The harrowing experiences of unaccompanied migrant children at the U.S.-Mexico border can therefore be seen as part of a larger historical and cultural context, in which the U.S.

[24] A legacy of neocolonialism not only informs the treatment of immigrants fleeing these unstable countries but is also a significant factor in why they were forced to immigrate. Saldaña-Portillo makes this connection explicit: "this deep history of the imbrication of US and Central American citizenship and security across rather than within national boundaries—from killing communists and their sympathizers there to deporting drug dealers and users here—brings us to the cases of the Central American women and their children who flee the targeted gendered violence" (9).

has employed neocolonial policies to police the border and to intervene in the politics and economy of Central American countries. The idea of a crisis on the border, where “illegal” and racialized people are seen as posing a threat to U.S. sovereignty and national security is not an invention of the Obama or Trump administrations, but rather has centuries-long roots. These young child migrants are part of a much older history of colonization, racialized violence, and state consolidation that echoes through the borderlands in *Lost Children Archive.*

IV

Landscapes of Violence in the Southwest

In the Southwest borderlands, the history of immigration, national consolidation, and neocolonial practices has left its mark on the landscape and on the people who live or attempt to pass through this contested terrain. The violence of this legacy and its current day iterations is explored by Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, who analyzes how the Southwest landscape was weaponized against the Indigenous inhabitants of this region in the late nineteenth century. She draws on the work of Mary Pat Brady, and paraphrasing and expanding on Brady’s work, argues that space:

> is a highly social process that has an effect on the formation of subjectivity, identity, sociality, and physicality in myriad ways. Subjugated identities are produced through spatial configurations of power that literally turn a landscape against its inhabitants. The case of American Indians—and I would add, that of Mexican Indians…illustrates space as a way of organizing power relations (8)

This idea of a land turned against its inhabitants is also echoed by Paul Conrad, who in this book about Apache diasporas, asks, “How does one start over on foreign land, or on land made foreign by colonialism?” (1-2).

How exactly did new nation-states “turn a landscape against its inhabitants,” to use Brady’s evocative phrase? This chapter will briefly address the history of the Apaches and their lands—which is a central thread of *Lost Children Archive*—though of course this question could be answered much more broadly. Conrad argues that differing concepts of landscape and ownership between colonial powers and the Apache people were used to justify the seizure of Indigenous land:

> Apache mobility proved more challenging to European and Euro-American empires and nation-states and their citizens. Southern Apaches, for example, viewed their homelands as a chain of diverse landscapes with valuable resources that they moved between seasonally to plant crops, hunt, or harvest wild fruits throughout the year. This chain of places ensured they had a diversified source of food and varied climates well suited to life during particular times of the year—cool highlands in the summer, warmer lowlands in the winter. Yet such mobility was anathema to European and Euro-American understandings of exclusive property rights: or to their understandings of fixed settlement and farming as linked to civilization and Christianity; or by the nineteenth century, to their belief that exclusive jurisdiction over a defined territory was at the core of what it meant to be a nation. (6)

In this case, nations-states formed from Euro-American traditions— the U.S. and Mexico—imposed their own view of property rights and nationhood on the Southern Apaches. This framework, which greatly differed from the way that these Indigenous groups understood questions of land use and sovereignty, was then used as justification to seize territory from the

Southern Apaches.[25] Hence, Southern Apache views—and claims— to the landscape were leveraged against them, deemed illegitimate by European empires and the Euro-American nation-states that followed them.

How exactly did these new nation-states see the West? Art historians have highlighted the importance of painted and photographic landscapes in promoting the view that the U.S. had the divine right to settle these already occupied territories. Matthew Johnston explains that art historians have "focused on landscape painting as the preeminent pictorial locus for disseminating the widespread belief in the country's Manifest Destiny to settle and develop the continent" (69) while nineteenth and twentieth-century landscape photography was often situated in a similar tradition: "landscape photography renders the land settlable. The colonial enterprise, settler societies and landscape photography are mutually reinforcing" (*Photography and Landscape*, 69). Landscapes such as Albert Bierstadt's "Mount Corcoran," depicting an idealized lake in the Rockies, and photographs of the Grand Canyon by William H Bell are often situated in this tradition (see figures 45 and 46) (National Gallery of Art, "Uncovering America"). Hence, the landscape became a way of articulating this expansionist, colonial project.

In order to seize Apache territory, these new nation states also weaponized the desert lands against Apache dissidents, a strategy now used against undocumented immigrants. Territorial incursions broke the Apache territory into smaller pieces of unproductive land that could not support the Apache people, and groups such as Geronimo's band were forced to march across the warmest parts of their land in the summer after surrendering to the U.S. army (Debo,

[25] As Álvaro Enrigue (whom Luiselli was married to) writes, "la apachería era una país con una economía, con una idea de Estado y un sistema de toma de decisiones para el beneficio común" (17, Mexamérica, El libro de Gerónimo) emphasizing the fact that though the Apache people held different ideas about sovereignty and land ownership, they had a sophisticated political system and economy that was conveniently ignored by colonial settlers who claimed Apache land.

44). Now, this same area is weaponized against undocumented immigrants who have been forced away from entry points in border cities and must now attempt to cross the border in unpopulated areas that experience extreme temperature fluctuations with little water (Cantú 16-17). Emily Vázquez Enríquez writes that "as portrayed in Luiselli's novel, because they tend to be inhospitable to humans, border biomes[26] can be weaponized against the people who traverse them." She goes on to situate Luiselli's novel in a literary tradition including *The Devil's Highway* (Luis Alberto Urrea, 2018), and *The Line Becomes a River* (Francisco Cantu, 2018) that, according to Vázquez Enríquez, "denounce the cruelty and death generated by the weaponization of the desert" (76).

Other strategies—such as deportation and incarceration— used by the then new nation-states to assert their territorial claims against the Apache people are now also used to deter immigrants, many of whom are also Indigenous, on the U.S.-Mexico border. Conrad relates how the nineteenth-century history of the Apache people's struggles against the U.S. and Mexico "highlights parallels between U.S. officials and their Hispanic predecessors in southwestern America in their approaches to Native people…it shows how deportation and incarceration became key strategies of state control, long before the twentieth century, when such histories are usually rooted" (10). The strategies of deporting and incarcerating undocumented immigrants, which—as explored above—were used extensively by the U.S. government in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century can be connected to the incarceration and deportation of Apache peoples in the same region a century earlier by growing nation-states. Indeed, this connection is highlighted in *Lost Children Archive* through the incorporation of the husband's

[26]Here, Enríquez uses an ecological definition of biome, which is "a major community of plants and animals with similar life forms and environmental conditions" according to the Encyclopedia Britannica entry (Augustyn).
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project about nineteenth-century Apache history into a book that explores the modern-day humanitarian crisis at the border.

How does this violence affect not only these marginalized peoples, but also larger communities who witness, read, or hear about atrocities committed in the desert? According to Guidotti-Hernández, "while there is something irretrievable about the experiences of the people who emerge as subjects in the historical record strictly because they are somehow implicated in acts of violence, a kind of social residue polices the behaviors of those who enter contact with that violence through hearing about it or reading about it" (6). This framework acknowledges the limits of conveying the experience of the victims of this violence and in response considers the effect of this violence in a larger social context. She sees this violence as a way that the nation-state polices the behavior of this larger community, who hears or reads about it, framing their citizenship around the acts of violence committed against these racialized others: "this process highlights the disciplined body in relationship to the nation-state because law, confinement, and punishment inform citizenship" (6). Hence—as is also explored in the novel—the process of conveying information about this violence to a larger audience may serve to reinforce the power of the nation, rather than serve as impetus to dismantle the state institutions that bear responsibility. The relationship between those who experience violence, and the larger community is a complex one, which raises larger questions about the ethics and limitations of reporting on the violence of the borderlands.

Sociologist Avery F. Gordon links haunting to this societal processing of violence. She sees haunting as responding to violence that is either distant in time or which is justified by the nation-state:

> haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security). Haunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them. What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely. (189)

Gordon situates haunting as a response to what she terms "abusive systems of power," which seems to aptly characterize the power relations between the U.S. (and Mexican) governments and marginalized groups along the border. She then elaborates on the concept of haunting by arguing that haunting "alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view" (190). The ghosts of Apaches and unaccompanied migrant children that the narrators encounter in the landscapes of the southwest can therefore be seen as one way that Luiselli explores the unresolved social violence of the borderlands.

Gordon's idea of haunting also takes on a political dimension. She sees haunting as a way not only of representing, but also of potentially dismantling state violence and the ways of seeing associated with it. She argues that:

> Haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. Indeed, it seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain for turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when

> the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done…to see the something-to-be-done as characteristic of haunting was, on the one hand, no doubt to limit its scope. At the same time, it was a way of focusing on the cultural requirements or dimensions of movement and change—individual, social, and political. (204)

Representations of haunting can perhaps be seen as a way out of the dilemma posed by Guidotti-Hernández above, where she posits that representations of violence are not in themselves radical and are often used to cement rather than change the status quo. Haunting on the other hand, seems to point towards the potential for change, what Gordon terms a "something-to-be-done." By exposing the "cracks and rigging" of a system, by examining things—or perhaps people—that are "not in their assigned place," new possibilities can emerge. In this way, Gordon sees haunting as a way of potentially destabilizing systems of power and pointing toward alternative political or cultural configurations.

How then is haunting connected to the landscape in general and specifically to the deserts of the U.S. Southwest? Blanco explores this question, writing that "by moving beyond the kinds of theoretical paradigms that are liable to reduce haunting to a generalizable psychic symptom, I have championed a more historically attuned investigation that considers it in relation to geography instead of the unconscious" (181). This approach—much like that of Gordon—situates haunting in a larger historical or sociopolitical context, rather than seeing it simply as a reflection of internal psychological unrest. Blanco specifically situates haunting in geography and in the landscape, explaining that: "I have made the (perhaps risky) effort to read haunting not just as the portrait of a ghost's apparition, but as the emergence of a question that is inspired by a

landscape in flux. In this sense, haunting signifies more than the representation of revenance, but a larger, more complex ethical question of artistic rendition" (181). I see Luiselli's landscapes as grappling with the "more complex ethical question of artistic rendition" in her depictions of the haunted landscapes of the Southwest and the past and present social violence situated in this space. Hence, rather than indicating genre (such as the gothic) or being used to explore a character's psychological state, I will treat haunting as a strategy employed by the author to try to convey the unspeakable and to, in Gordon's terms, point towards the something-to-be-done.

Though Blanco looks at cinematographic, rather than literary, depictions of the southwestern desert landscape, her observations are still useful for this project. Notably, she sees these landscapes as shaped by the ghost town, a place that she also sees as central to Mexican writing such as *Pedro Páramo*. She sees *Pedro Páramo*'s Comala as well as Lago, the ghost town in the western *High Plains Drifter* (a film analyzed in more detail in my previous chapter on *Gringo viejo*), as exploring complex ideas about ethics and accountability in a landscape often defined by emptiness and erasure:

> I want to propose that these ghost-town narratives of 'desvivir' render an interesting play between the ideas of *desert* and *desertion* that intersect in so many desert narratives. The connection between these two notions illuminates how, in turn, such stories hinge on explorations of the relations between space and ethics, locations and agency…these desert fictions, by challenging us with their haunted motivation, constantly ask us, as involved readers and spectators, to scrutinize them for responsibility and answerability in a landscape that appears bent on silence and erasure. (82)

I see the strategies highlighted in *High Plains Drifter* and *Pedro Páramo* (which is quoted in Luiselli's novel)—where the landscape and, more specifically, the ghost town, become vehicles to explore questions of answerability and ethics—as also apparent in *Lost Children Archive*. Indeed, as Blanco writes, the ghost town seems to force a discussion of responsibility and answerability for a place that has gone so awry. It is also notable that this theme of haunted ghost towns, as will be explored below, is established before the family even reaches the southwest, underscoring its importance in framing these larger questions about how the U.S. socio-political environment allows for these atrocities to take place on the border.

An exploration of how the landscape has been weaponized in the desert Southwest against marginalized groups and how, in turn, the processing of this violence emerges through depictions of this landscape as haunted allows for a more nuanced analysis of the ghosts of Apaches and unaccompanied migrant children that populate the deserts of *Lost Children Archive*. Following Blanco's argument that these haunted landscapes raise larger questions about the ethics of rendering the seemingly unspeakable and Gordon's notion of haunting as disrupting the status quo and pointing towards new social possibilities, my analysis of Luiselli's novel will center on how landscapes are used to explore questions about the ethics and possibilities of representing the violence experienced by unaccompanied migrant children on the U.S.-Mexico border and the larger society that allows this violence to take place.

V

Luiselli's Ghost Towns

Even before the family in *Lost Children Archive* reach the Southwest, the novel addresses these larger questions about how to represent a seemingly unrepresentable reality. In her analysis of the novel, Patricia Stuelke examines this very theme:

> The novel grapples with the inadequacy of language and narrative to capture the temporality and scales—hemispheric and intimate—of ongoing Central American and Mexican refugee dispossession, torture, incarceration, and disappearance by the US settler colonial capitalist carceral state. This violence, and the lives of the children who live with it, seems to exceed the narrative capacity of any of the forms at Luiselli's disposal: the road novel, but also the legal intake form, the essay, and autofiction, all forms Luiselli experimented with over the course of writing the novel. Luiselli's struggle is representative of a broader condition that Laurent Berlant (2018) names 'genre flail,' the intertwined activist and artistic scramble to represent the violence of the world, when old aesthetic forms and new institutional bureaucratic ones seem insufficient to capture the enormity of the present's structures of violence, grant false authority over experience in the name of universality, or in some cases, exert raw power to quantify and surveil. (44)

Here, Stuelke highlights the way that Luiselli grapples with the "inadequacy of language and narrative" to represent the experience of unaccompanied migrant children. The forms at Luiselli's disposal, both aesthetic and bureaucratic, seem insufficient when it comes to conveying the "enormity of the present's structures of violence." Indeed, the adult narrator in *Lost Children Archive* details her own concerns in representing the plight of unaccompanied migrant children, perhaps reflecting the author's own apprehensions: "constant concerns: cultural appropriation, pissing all over someone else's toilet seat, who am I to tell this story, micromanaging identity politics, heavy-handedness, am I too angry, am I mentally colonized by Western-Saxon-white categories?" (79).

Stuelke situates Luiselli's response to this crisis of representation in the form her novel takes, namely that of an archival novel. According to this critic, the archival novel allows Luiselli to "enable the novel's meditations on the problem of narrating missing, disappeared refugee children, as well as the larger crisis of representation writers feel so acutely in this moment of 'genre flail'" (44). My textual analysis of *Lost Children Archive* will also center on this question of how to represent the humanitarian border crisis, as well as this "larger crisis of representation." However, I argue that landscapes are an understudied and yet important way that Luiselli grapples with these representational quandaries. Indeed, the landscape becomes an archive of sorts, filled with traces of past lives waiting to be examined and narrativized.

I will first examine Luiselli's representations of the varied U.S. landscapes that the adult narrator and her stepson encounter on their road trip to the Southwest—focusing specifically on the recurring image of the ghost town— to analyze how the author uses the landscape to explore questions about answerability and responsibility. What do these ghost towns say this society that allows—and even justifies—the violence at its borders? And how can the adult narrator and child narrator, from their positions as relative outsiders, represent these ghostly places that they struggle to understand? I will then turn to descriptions of the Southwest landscape, focusing my analysis on how the author creates landscapes centered on touch and sound that create what film scholar Laura Marks refers to as haptic images. I argue that this strategy is used to upset the hierarchical distance between spectator and subject, forcing the reader to question their ways of seeing border violence. Finally, I will look at the polaroid images taken by the author—but attributed to the stepson in the novel—to explore how these intertextual and multimedia representations of the landscape are used to turn the lens back on the photographer (the stepson) and author, interrogating their own process of seeing and representing. I conclude that through

these textual and visual landscapes, the author creates a space to explore and critique her own representations of the experience of unaccompanied child migrants and the society that enables this violence.

It is notable that the first spaces depicted in the road-trip section of the novel are described as if they were ghost-towns. The adult narrator relates how:

> in the first town we pass through, deep in Virginia, we see more churches than people, and more signs for places than places themselves. Everything looks like it's been hollowed out and gutted from the inside out, and what remains are only the words: names of things pointing toward a vacuum. We are driving through a country made up only of signs. (54)

Though this description of the town is not a landscape per se, the emphasis on signs that point to nothing, "more signs for places than places themselves," and the seeming futility of language to describe places that no longer exist, "names of things pointing toward a vacuum" seem to point towards the problem of representing what is no longer there or what cannot be seen that is also highlighted through the author's representations of the landscape. Indeed, this ghost-town like quality seems to speak to larger societal collapse, forcing the reader to ask unanswered questions about how and why the town—and by extension the entire country— became placeless and hollowed out.

A conversation between the adult narrator and her stepson also underscores this idea of the landscape as a site of societal unrest. The adult narrator relates how her stepson asks:

> Why can't we just go back home?
>
> He is fidgeting with his Polaroid in the backseat, learning how to handle it, reading the instructions, grunting.

> There is nothing to take pictures of anyway, he complains. Everything we pass is old and ugly and looks haunted.
>
> Is that true? Is everything haunted? asks the girl.
>
> No baby, I say, nothing is haunted.
>
> Though perhaps, in a way, it is. The deeper we drive into this land, the more I feel like I'm looking at remains and ruins. (51)

The fact that the boy deems the scenery as not worthy of being photographed, as a place that is "old, ugly, and looks haunted" (the first two adjectives are tellingly not refuted by the adult narrator) highlights the distance between the child inside the car and the space outside that he, and his stepmother, struggle to see, let alone represent. With fewer residents left to see the landscape, and with these travelers unwilling or unable to represent these deserted places, the landscape—which perhaps embodies certain now antiquated points of view about western expansion and national consolidation explored above—simply disappears, becoming "nothing to photograph." If earlier views of the landscape emphasized the process of settling and populating a supposedly "virgin" land, here the landscape is emptied out and ruined to the point of incomprehensibility, a seeming refutation of these earlier ideologies.

Considering this notion of the landscape as no longer existing, at least in the eyes of these travelers, perhaps it is no surprise that when the boy decides to take a photograph of this landscape a few pages later, it comes out blank. The adult narrator relates the boy's frustration:

> It's no use; the Polaroid comes out blue and then slowly turns creamy white. He claims the camera is broken, has a factory error, is probably just a toy camera, not a real camera.
>
> I assure him it's not a toy, and suggest a theory:

> Perhaps they're coming out white not because the camera is broken or just a toy camera but because what you're photographing is not actually there. If there's no thing, there's no echo that can bounce off it. Like ghosts, I tell him, who don't appear in photos, or vampires, who don't appear in mirrors, because they're not actually there. (55)

The repetition of the phrase "not actually there" seems to reinforce this recurrent sense of the landscape as not actually existing. If we understand a landscape as the relationship between a viewer and a tract of land mediated by culture, to not see a landscape indicates the collapse of any sort of coherent worldview. Indeed, going back to the definitions of landscapes I provide earlier in my dissertation, Edwin S. Casey affirms that, "there is certainly unrepresented space, including large tracts of earth; but to be a landscape is to be a place already on the road to representation: at the very least, it is to be the more or less coherent embodiment of a point of view" (xv). Following this definition, to not see a landscape shows the collapse of a "more or less coherent point of view" that speaks to the larger representational crisis at the heart of this novel.

How then can these ghostly landscapes be represented if they are not "actually there"? Perhaps in response to this question, the narrator then turns her attention to the work of previous documenters of these placeless places. The boy's leading question about what to photograph forces the adult narrator to analyze how her perspective on the landscape is mediated through the lens of road photography and travelogues:

> I know, as we drive through the long, lonely roads of this country—a landscape that I am seeing for the first time—that what I see is not quite what I see. What I see is what others have already documented: Ilf and Petrov, Robert Frank, Robert Adams, Walker Evans, Stephen Shore—the first road photographers and their pictures of road signs, stretches of

> vacant land, cars, motels, diners, industrial repetition, all the ruins of early capitalism now engulfed by future ruins of later capitalism. (102)

In the adult narrator's framing, she is already primed to see the landscape as a sort of non-destination composed of the ruins of capitalism and "stretches of vacant land." Therefore, what she sees (or does not see) as she drives through these "long, lonely roads" is complicated by this larger tradition. Her sight is mediated and informed by previous photographs, disrupting the idea of a neutral spectator who can objectively take in and understand a whole landscape.

Indeed, the same ideas about emptiness pervade many of these representations of the U.S. cited by the adult narrator. For instance, in their humorous account of their travels in the U.S. in the 1930s, Elsa Court relates how Soviet travelers Ilf and Petrov "are only half-joking when they report that, asked in which direction America might be, Americans all tend to point to somewhere else, some place in the distance. 'They couldn't say for certain where the actual America is located […] – they just pointed their fingers vaguely into space'" (1). Court goes on to relate how:

> Ilf and Petrov come to conclusion that "real" America is in fact best embodied by a non-destination: more precisely, a gasoline station at the intersection of two roads. They produce a photographic representation of this one-storey commercial construction… to this gasoline station picture, one which may have been overlooked by many, they offer the provisional caption: "This right here is America!" (2-3) (see figure 47).

This depiction of the country sees the non-destination of the placeless gas station as a quintessentially U.S space. In a similar vein, MOMA curator John Szarkowski argues that Robert Frank's *The Americans* "established a new iconography for contemporary America, comprised

of bits of bus depots, lunch counters, strip developments, empty spaces, cars, and unknowable faces" (qtd in O'Hagan) (see figure 48). Notably, this iconography of the U.S. as full of empty spaces, unknowable faces, and non-destinations is often seen in opposition to the more celebratory expansionist landscapes analyzed above, illustrating how the adult narrator aligns herself with this critical tradition (Pollak 29).[27] Curiously enough, though, these prior images of U.S. ruins—the "ruins of early capitalism"—are erased by the "ruins of later capitalism" that the narrator sees out the window, suggesting a sense of continuity, but also of rupture, where the first depictions of ruins and erasure are themselves erased, leaving the adult narrator to confront a new set of bewildering remains and ruins.

As Gordon writes, "Toni Morrison's (1989) argument that 'invisible things are not necessarily not-there' encourages the complementary gesture of investigating how that which appears absent can indeed be a seething presence…to write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories" (17). This observation perhaps allows for a better understanding of how the landscapes that are "not actually there" and are "non-destinations" becomes a "seething presence," a place where social crisis and displacement takes the form of ghost-towns, blank pictures, and gas stations. This struggle to represent the ghost towns therefore allows for a nuanced discussion about haunting, representation, and the possibilities and limitations of documenting social crisis and displacement even before the family reaches the Southwest.

VI

[27] This notion of America as not existing or as not being "real" could perhaps also be connected to the work of postmodern theorists such as Baudrillard, who, for instance, argues that "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real (6)."

Landscapes of Sound and Touch

The adult narrator, who is "foreign but not entirely so" seems to oscillate between identification and disconnection as she struggles to make sense of—and even to see— the landscapes of the post-industrial heartlands (104). This fraught relationship between spectator and subject is further explored in representations of the Southwest desert landscape and the unaccompanied migrant children who must navigate this inhospitable terrain. Interestingly, many references to the haunted Southwest landscape in the novel favor sound or touch instead of sight. How do these sensory landscapes allow for a different way of "seeing" the desert lands of the Southwest and the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children? To better understand how these acoustic and tactile Southwest landscapes engage in larger questions about the ethics—and even the possibility of— representing the experience of unaccompanied migrant children in the desert, I will first briefly explore different ideas about how the relationship between spectator and subject is unsettled or changed when the spectator listens to or touches the landscape instead of simply seeing it from a distance.

In his seminal book *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (a book that is cited in the novel), R. Murray Schafer defines a soundscape broadly. He writes that "the soundscape is any acoustic field of study. We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape or an acoustic environment as a soundscape" (16). However, he cites specific representational problems when it comes to this latter category of acoustic environments, describing how:

> we can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape. However, it is less easy to formulate an exact impression of a soundscape than of a landscape. There is nothing in sonography

corresponding to the instantaneous impression which photography can create. With a camera it is possible to catch the salient features of a visual panorama to create an impression that is immediately evident. The microphone does not operate this way. It samples details. It gives the close-up but nothing corresponding to aerial photography. (16)[28]

Here, Schafer distinguishes between visual and acoustic landscapes, noting how photography can create an "instantaneous impression" and a panoramic—or even aerial— point of view of the landscape as opposed to a soundscape, which "samples details" and "gives a close-up." This point of view is elaborated upon by Hildegard Westerkemp, who sees a soundscape's more detailed and close-up qualities as "allowing for the listener to establish physical contact with the natural surroundings, revitalize[ing] our sensory experiences, and teach[ing] us a way of perceiving the environment in a more intimate manner" (qtd. in Yuki). The qualities of intimacy and physical contact associated with soundscapes seem at odds with the more impersonal quality attributed to photographic or visual landscapes. Perhaps these qualities associated with soundscapes are especially appealing to a writer such as Luiselli, as these intimate close-ups may point towards a less hierarchical or othering way of depicting the Southwest landscape and those marginalized groups associated with it.

Touch is also a sense that critics such as Laura Marks see as countering hierarchical or othering ways of seeing, as in mentioned in chapter three. Building on the work of philosopher

[28] It is notable that the adult narrator paraphrases this argument when she tries to teach her stepson how to use the camera: "The boy and I fiddle with his new camera outside. What am I supposed to do? he asks. I tell him—trying to translate between a language I know well and a language I know little about—that he just needs to think of photographing as if he were recording the sound of an echo. But in truth, it's difficult to draw parallels between sonography and photography. A camera can capture an entire portion of a landscape in a single impression; but a microphone, even a parabolic one, can sample only fragments and details" (55)

Gilles Deleuze, Marks argues that haptic visuality is used in intercultural cinema to push against an ethnographic and othering gaze (2). This sort of tactile seeing allows the viewer to connect with the image on a personal and physical level. (2). For instance, she gives the example of the "blurry, tactile image of the naked body of the artist's mother in Mona Hatoum's *Measures of Distance* (1988)" where she "creates the new image from the memory of the sense of touch" (xi) (see figure 49). She then goes on to contrast this way of seeing with optical visuality (where images are seen from a distance), which she sees as reinforcing a hierarchy between the viewing subject and the object (3). Although Marks addresses film, rather than literature, this idea of a haptic image, which—as in Schafer's view of soundscapes—creates a sense of an intimate embodied experience that unsettles the hierarchical distance between viewing subject and object will be central to my study of Luiselli's acoustic and tactile representations of the landscape.

However, as Yuki points out, "I should note that these scholars are not simply claiming that aural perception is good and visual perception is bad. Nor do they argue that seeing is ideology-ridden while hearing is neutral…a sonic portrait of the environment can be as ideological as a visual portrait" (6-7). Indeed, I see these landscapes of sound and touch as a way that the author explores the ideologies at play in the representation of unaccompanied migrant children in the desert lands. These more embodied and intimate ways of experiencing the landscape center the attention not simply on the landscape (and its inhabitants) which is assumed to be a distant object and the focus of the attention, but rather on the experience of a spectator who is inextricably linked to what she observes. This reorientation is vividly apparent when the adult narrator relates her experience in a highway storm, to return to a quote cited in the introduction: "Highway storms erase the illusory division between the landscape and you, the spectator; they thrust your observant eyes into what you see. Even inside the hermetic space of

the car, the wind blows right into your mind, through stunned eye sockets, clouds judgement" (153). Hence, these landscapes of touch and sound unsettle and question the relation between spectator and object, forcing the former to reckon with her relationship to the latter. In this way, the tactile and acoustic landscapes I will analyze below open a space in the novel to explore the challenges of representing the experience of unaccompanied child migrants from a more privileged perspective.

The first representations of the Southwest landscape are primarily acoustic, rather than visual. While still driving through humid Virginia, the husband entertains the children by telling them stories about the Southwest. The narrator relates how:

> To appease our children and fill the winding hours as we make our way up the mountain roads, my husband tells stories about the old American southwest. He tells them about the strategies Chief Cochise used to hide from his enemies in the Dragoon and Chiricahua Mountains, and how, even after he died, he came back to haunt them. People said that, even today, he could be spotted around the Dos Cabezas Peaks (44).

This landscape is evoked not through sight, but through the more obviously mediated lens of sound and storytelling. That this distant landscape, filled with old Western tropes about the ghosts of long-dead Native Americans, is framed as a children's story also raises questions about the ethics of representation. What does it mean to tell stories about this landscape—which was the site of the forced displacement of the Apache people—to entertain and appease the children? In this way, even the first mention of this still-unseen landscape shifts the focus from sight to sound, and from the landscape itself to those who tell and listen to stories about it. Moreover, the fact that Chief Cochise is depicted as haunting the landscapes he defended in life also illustrates

how haunting becomes a way that past injustices continue to reverberate into the present, shaping the way this acoustic landscape is understood.

As the family nears the Sonora desert, the adults find another way to quiet the restless children and teach them about the Southwest landscape. The narrator explains that:

> we play a game now. The game is about names, about knowing the exact names of things in the desertlands we are driving toward. My husband has given the children a catalog of plant species, and they have to memorize names of things, things like saguaro, difficult names like creosote, jojoba, mesquite tree, easier names like organ pipe cactus and teddy bear cholla, names of things that can be eaten, prickly pears, nopales, and then names of animals that eat those things, spadefoot toad, sidewinder snake, desert tortoise, coyote, javelina, pack rat. In the backseat, the boy reads them all aloud, saguaro, creosote, one by one, jojoba, mesquite, and his sister repeats them after him, teddy bear cholla, sometimes giggling when she finds that her tongue, nopales, cannot wrap itself around a word, spadefoot, sidewinder, and sometimes roaring out her frustration. (153)

Here, the father attempts to convey the landscape to his children through another lens, that of western science, which was often linked to neocolonial state-building projects, especially in the nineteenth century (Schulten 6). However, the fact that the narrator focuses on the speaking of the names, rather than what they represent, relating the difficulty her five-year-old daughter has in wrapping her tongue around the unfamiliar words highlights seemingly arbitrary sounds over the ability to visually pair the proper name with an image in a guidebook or a shrub in the landscape. Sound is again emphasized over image, disrupting the one-to-one classificatory system the husband encourages his children to apply to the landscape.

The daughter's childish imagination also unsettles this authoritative and scientific way of looking at the desert lands. The husband expects the children to correctly line up word and image: "Their father tests them. He points to the picture of a species, covering the name underneath the image and the children have to call out the right name, taking turns. The boy has learned almost all the species by heart. Not the girl. No matter what object my husband points at, she invariably, and without hesitation, shouts: Saguaro!" (154). Here, the younger child cannot properly follow the game's rules. Instead of matching the spoken word to the specific species that it corresponds to, she relishes saying just one word: saguaro, applying it to all species indiscriminately. Her childish logic disrupts the classificatory system that implicitly creates a sense of distance and hierarchy between the surveyor and the landscape. Instead, she creates a personal and highly idiosyncratic relationship to the desert lands.

The sound of the children's backseat chatter is then linked to haunting, which is also described as a disruptive force. The adult narrator describes how, unable to find information about the migrant children who will soon be deported in Arizona, she starts listening to her own children:

> I listen for more news on the radio, find nothing. I switch it off and listen to our two children playing in the backseat. Their games have become more vivid, more complex, more convincing. Children have a slow, silent way of transforming the atmosphere around them. They are so much more porous than adults, and their chaotic inner life leaks out of them constantly, turning everything that is real and solid into a ghostly version of itself…I know their father is also listening to them, although he's concentrating on the road, and I wonder if he feels the way I do—if he senses how our rational, linear, organized world dissolves into the chaos of our children's words. (179)

Just as in the passage explored above—where the girl's repetition of saguaro disrupts the father's classificatory system and way of systematizing the landscape—the children's voices disrupt "our rational, linear, organized world." The fact that the adult narrator insists that the children's vocalized games turn "everything that is real and solid into a ghostly version of itself" curiously links the children's play to haunting, in the sense that it also undermines "adult" logic and forces the parents to question and reckon with their own ways of seeing and experiencing the world around them.

It is notable that these children's games specifically take the form of imagined landscapes, landscapes that connect these children to the world of the unaccompanied child migrants. The adult narrator details the games these children play in the backseat:

> The boy shoots poisoned arrows at a Border Patrol officer from a big horse, while the girl hides from American bluecoats under some kind of desert thornbush (though she finds mangoes growing on its branches and stops to eat one before she jumps out to attack). After a long battle, the two children sing a song together to resuscitate a fellow child warrior. (180)

Here, the children conflate the experience of the nineteenth-century Apaches—they reference a child warrior from a story their father told them —with the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children. Bluecoats and border guards merge just as a desert thornbush melds into a mango tree. This oral reimagining of historical and natural worlds leads the adult narrator to the realization that, "listening to them now, I realize they are the ones who are telling the story of the lost children. They've been telling it all along, over and over again in the back of the car, for the past three weeks…Perhaps their voices were the only way to record the soundmarks, traces and echoes that lost children left behind" (180).

The experience of listening to her own children forces the adult narrator to interrogate her own approach to documenting the humanitarian border crisis. The voices of her own children describing imagined landscapes become ghostly, filled with the "traces and echoes that lost children left behind." This notion of recovering the lost voices of unaccompanied children through the voices of the adult narrator's own children seems to unsettle the distance between documenter and subject. Rather than imagine the unaccompanied migrant children "out there"—on the radio, in a distant airplane—she finds "echoes and traces" of them in the backseat of her own car, in the voices of her own children, one of whom she will lose at the end of the novel, when her marriage dissolves and her stepson stays with his dad.

Yet, these more privileged children reenacting the plight of children who die in the desert while the mother records their rather morbid game also raises ethical questions about power, privilege, and the possibilities and limitations of representing the experience of the other. As the adult narrator herself relates, "I want to tell him [her stepson] this reenactment game is silly and frivolous because—because what do they know about lost children, about hardship or hopelessness or getting lost in deserts...But I find no strong arguments, no solid reasons to build a dike around their imaginations" (155). Hence, these acoustic landscapes—where these more privileged children unsettlingly imagine that they are unaccompanied child migrants in the desert—are used to interrogate the ethics of representing the humanitarian border crisis. The reader is forced to her own conclusions about the children's desert games, the parents' tacit approval, and their mother's use of them to document the experience of the child migrants who died in the borderlands. The two children then decide to run away and find the unaccompanied migrant children themselves. The siblings get lost in the desert, just like the "lost children"—their name for unaccompanied migrant children— whose plight they reenacted in the backseat.

The boy, who records his account of this experience for his little sister who cannot yet read, orally relates this experience to his younger sister. This plot development seems to further explore—and even test— the adult narrator's assertion that her own children "are the ones who are telling the story of the lost children."

It is notable that the section of the novel narrated by the boy is presented as a recording made for his younger sister, further emphasizing the way that these children's soundscapes unsettle and question the supposedly linear, rational and "adult" ways of seeing the border crisis. Moreover, the children often understand the landscape through touch and sound, rather than through sight:

> mostly there was just hot air, dust, rocks, bushes, and light, especially light, so much of it, so much light pouring down from the sky that it was hard to think, hard to see clearly, too, hard to see even the things we knew by name, by heart, things like saguaro, names like mesquite…so lost inside light that we were sure the world around us was slowly fading, becoming unreal. (319)

In this passage the physical, tactile sensation of the heat appears to overwhelm the boy's sense of sight. The fact that he states that it was "hard to see even the things we knew by name, by heart, things like saguaro" seems to allude back to the passage analyzed above, where the scientific way of looking at the landscape dissolves in the heat, to be replaced with a growing sense of unreality. This alternate state of being is then linked to haunting. The boy goes on to relate how he hears "maybe the sound of horses approaching and I wondered if we were hearing the sound of all the dead in the desert, all the bones there" (324). Instead of allowing for a more factual and scientific view of the desert and the people in it, this landscape grounded in touch seems to push

the child further away from "reality," into an unreal world of ghosts that is a far cry from the ordered desert lands of his father's guidebook.

The boy and his sister get closer and closer to the lost children the longer they spend in the desert. He relates to his sister how: "all I could hear was the sound of your little feet thumping on the ground, the sound of your feet like a sound-shadow next to me, and my own feet, and then, further away, the sound of other footsteps, moving in front of or behind us, across the desert, identical" (327). The physical movement of the sibling's bodies and the sound of their footsteps seemingly mirrors the other little feet walking through the same landscape. Their footsteps are identical. This embodied and acoustic relationship to the landscape that they walk across—the siblings hear their own footsteps even as they continue to plod along— seemingly parallels the experience of the unaccompanied migrant children. This parallel that is even more closely drawn by their equally small bodies and still developing minds that perceive the desert lands in a distinctly childlike manner. Again, these landscapes of touch and sound seem to close the gap between the experiences of these more privileged children and the unaccompanied migrant children.

Indeed, the boy asserts that he actually meets a group of unaccompanied migrant children in the desert. Curiously these children seem to be drawn from the pages of a book about migrant children that the boy and his mother read throughout the course of the novel, creating a crossing of different temporalities that Blanco sees as a form of haunting. The boy throws a rock and another child throws it back:

> a real rock that the boy and his sister would have mistaken for an echo, confused as they were about cause and effect as the normal link between events, were it not for the fact that the rock thrown back at them hits the boy on his shoulder, so very real,

> concrete, and painful that his nerves wake up, alert, and his voice breaks out into an angry, hey, ouch, hey, who's there, who's there I said, who's there, he says, and hearing the sound of his voice, the four children look at one another in relief, because it is a real voice, finally, clearly not a lost desert echo, not a sound-mirage like the ones that had been following them all along, so they smile at one another (330)

In this passage, the tactile weight of the rock "so very real, concrete, and painful that his nerves wake up, alert" signals the presence of these other children. Moreover, the repetition of "who's there" and "hey" highlight how the children, distrustful of the tricks the desert plays on them, use sound to assure that the four unaccompanied migrant children are actually there. Only after these tactile and acoustic cues do the children revert to visual cues and smile at each other. In this way, the children understand and even confirm the presence of the migrant children through sound and touch. Yet the repeated insistence on presence, the confirmation that this experience is "real" — unlike the "unreal" tricks the desert has played on the children and their senses in the form of echoes and sound-mirages — might also make the reader question the tired ten-year-old's account.

The proximity of the siblings and these unaccompanied child migrants smiling and throwing rocks seems to point to the similarities between these two groups of children who are lost in the desert. Who better than lost children to tell the story of other lost children? However, this almost ghostly meeting in the desert, where children from a book meet the children from "real life" also seem to unsettle any easy comparisons between these two groups of children. What can the siblings—and by extension the reader—really know about the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children through these landscapes of touch and sound? Especially since

touch and sound repeatedly disorient and lead the children astray in the desert lands? As Marks writes:

> often there is a mournful quality to the haptic images I have described, for as much as they might attempt to touch the skin of the object, all they can achieve is to become skinlike themselves. The point of tactile visuality is not to supply a plenitude of tactile sensation to make up for a lack of optical image. Similarly, when in the next chapter I discuss images that evoke senses such as smell and taste, it is not to call for a "sensuround" fullness of experience, a total sensory environment, to mitigate the thinness of the image. Rather it is to point to the limits of sensory knowledge. By shifting from one form of sense-perception to another, the image points to its own asymptotic, caressing relation to the real, and to the same relation between perception and the image. (192)

By shifting from sight as the dominant sense to sound and touch, it seems that the author, like Marks observes in these films, also points to the limits of sensory knowledge. Indeed, this profusion of different senses seems to highlight the tenuous relationship between perception and reality and between representation—be it textual or an image—and lived experience. This sensory knowledge can therefore disrupt authoritative and distanced ways of seeing the border crisis, and yet also points to the limits of using these children's experiences to perceive and represent the experience of the other. The tactile and acoustic landscapes therefore create space to explore and unsettle the relationship between documenters and subjects, while not negating their very different experiences.

VII

Polaroids

Why does Luiselli include her own polaroid photographs in the back of a book about unaccompanied migrant children? Firstly, it is important to note that unlike the illustrations that I have examined in previous chapters, these photographs are written into the novel itself, attributed to the stepson. They are integrated into the very fabric of the narrative, as both the adult narrator and the child narrator relate how and when the boy takes these pictures. As Luiselli herself writes in her Works Cited section, “references to sources—textual, musical, visual, or audio-visual—are not meant as side notes, or ornaments that decorate the story, but function as intralinear markers that point to the many voices in the conversation that the book sustains with the past” (376). Hence, these photographs are clearly an integral part of the novel that serve as yet another way to explore and complicate the novel’s representation of the seemingly unrepresentable experiences.

Why include polaroid photographs, rather than a different, for instance digital, type of photography? Though polaroid images are often associated with popular use, Christopher Bonanos writes that “during polaroid photography’s heyday artists like Ansel Adams and Walker Evans sang its praises” (2). The fact that famous landscape artists such as Ansel Adam and road photographers such as Walker Evans (who is mentioned by the adult narrator, when she explains how she sees the landscape through the eyes of photographers such as Evans) have used the medium places these polaroid photographs in this larger photographic tradition. At the same time, however, polaroid images are often connected to popular culture and to amateur use. For instance, Peter Buse writes in “Photography Degree Zero: Cultural History of the Polaroid Image” that “this over-valuation of the photographic image does not sit well with the 'throw-away' quality of the Polaroid itself, with the attendant low cultural value that accrues to it…the polemical value of the stupidity of Polaroid image-making should not be underestimated,” a

point of view that underscores this notion of polaroid images as transient, with low cultural value (34). However, the "throw-away" and amateur nature of the polaroid also seems to close the distance between the photographer and the subject of the photograph. Bonanos details how "photographer and subject can make small talk as the picture steeps. When the print is revealed, it can be handed over as a gift or circulated around the room. There is no more social form of picture-taking" (4). In this way, polaroid photographs become more egalitarian in a certain sense, and seem to disrupt the often-hierarchical relationship between photographer and subject. They are available to the masses and can serve to connect—rather than separate— the photographer and the subject. Subject and photographer can chat while the photograph develops, and the picture can be physically circulated or given as a gift, all of which happen when the boy takes pictures of his family members and of the landscape throughout the course of the novel. Hence, like the soundscapes and tactile landscapes explored above, it seems to me that the polaroid photographs are used to unsettle the relationship between spectator and subject.

Buse also argues that polaroid photographs are different from other forms of photography in that they emphasize the act of photographing over the resulting photograph. In his book *The Camera Does the Rest: How Polaroid Changed Photography*, he writes that "the act of photographing is just as important as, if not more important than, the resulting photograph…it is above all the Polaroid process that gives it its meanings, that the making of the image, rather than the image itself, is what distinguishes this kind of photography from others" (515). This observation seems particularly useful when it comes to analyzing the polaroid photographs included in *Lost Children Archive*. Indeed, I argue that these polaroid photographs are used to explore different ways of seeing and representing the landscape and its temporary or permanent inhabitants. Often the polaroid pictures are overexposed and blurry, and the landscape

and its inhabitants are seemingly erased even as they are being captured, visually contributing to the novel's dialogue about the possibilities and limitations of capturing the experience of the other from a more privileged perspective, especially in an age where cell phone pictures and social media allow images to be spread indiscriminately.

I will first analyze the polaroid from the back of the book featuring a graveyard with blurred tombstones set against a nondescript landscape (see figure 50). Notably, the tombs are overexposed. They are blindingly white and almost one dimensional; any shadows or engraving on the tombstones cannot be seen. The tombs in the background almost seem abstracted, reduced to rectangular white spaces that barely leave a shadow. The exposure also leaves ghostly squares and circles in the foreground, which visually echo the shape of the tombs and contribute to this sense of the tombs as being partially erased. This sense of erasure is also created by the way that the two foregrounded tombs are placed right in front of the horizon line: the eye shifts immediately from the tombs to the empty horizon. The whiteness and one-dimensionality of the tombs visually echoes the white lines of the fence in the background, and contrasts with the darker foliage of the flowers laid on the tomb and the two trees and receding vegetation. In this way, the tombs immediately hold the viewer's attention. Thus, this image seems to play with absence and presence; the tombs seem ghostly and even partially erased even as they are the center of the composition.

This image directly dialogues with the text. The adult narrator describes this picture, taken when the family visited the tomb of the Apache leader Cochise in Oklahoma: "the last picture, of a tomb, is beautiful but brutal. I record: The arch of Chief Cochise's tombstone can be made out perfectly, but the name engraved on it is erased somehow, impossible to make out" (142). The boy later describes this same photograph, stating that "later, when I looked at the

pictures again, I noticed that the names on the tombstones hadn't come out at all. So when I showed Ma and Pa the photos, Pa said they were perfect because I'd documented the cemetery the way that it exists in recorded history…he meant, I think, that my camera had erased the names of Apache chiefs the way they are also erased in history" (206). Both the boy and his stepmother's descriptions of the photograph emphasize erasure and absence, even as they fill in missing contextual information. Moreover, both characters emphasize the act of looking and interpreting over the photograph's formal qualities, further underscoring how the polaroid photograph, as Buse argues, is singular in centering the focus on the act of its own creation, which seems to shift the emphasis from the blurred photograph to the perspective of the family who took it.

` This notion of the polaroid as allowing for a more nuanced discussion about how to capture a history that is being erased is further explored through the photograph of a small plane in the desert (see figure 51). In this photograph, the chain-link fence in the foreground is in high focus, framing the scene behind it, where a small white airplane sits in a grey unvegetated landscape framed by distant mountains and a pale blue sky. The cool color palate and the expanse of unvarying grey terrain creates a sense of desolation; the plane is the only distinguishing figure in this bleak landscape. The chain-link fence obscures part of the airplane, even as it still allows for a fairly unobstructed view, a contrast that seems to echo the sense of the tombstones being partially erased in the polaroid analyzed above. There is also a sense of disconnect between the dynamic diagonal lines of the fence and the horizonal lines of the plane and distant landscape. The stable composition of the foreground and background is therefore complicated by the chain-link fence that destabilizes the image and creates a sense of distance from this stark scene.

The textual description of the taking of this photograph also plays with this sense of absence and presence, closeness and distance. The boy describes this same scene for his younger sister, putting the photo in a larger personal and historical context:

> We were there, and the lost children had disappeared on a plane into the sky. I was looking through my binoculars for them but couldn't see anything else, and that's what I told Mama. Just like you won't see much in the picture I took of the plane before it departed. The important things only happened after I took the picture…And what happened, so you know it and so you can see it the way I do, too, when you look at the picture later one day, was that the lost children walked out of the hanger in a single line…what happened that day is not called a departure or a removal. It's called deportation. And we documented it. (191)

The seemingly innocuous airplane takes on a different meaning when the viewer understands that it is full of children about to be deported. The absent children add another layer to the image, one that cannot be gleaned from the polaroid alone. Moreover, the fact that the boy insists that "the important things only happened after I took the picture" and yet states that he "documented" the deportation also seems to highlight the tension between a textual or visual representation of a traumatic event and the event itself. The polaroid therefore seems to point towards, but refuses to depict, the experiences of these absent children. In this way, the image seems to paradoxically capture a moment of erasure.

The next polaroid photograph more vividly depicts a figure in the process of being erased. Here, the image of a man on a tractor framed by a series of receding trees is dramatically punctured by a light leak, or perhaps was developed incorrectly (see figure 52). This light leak covers the man's legs and part of his torso and makes his face indistinguishable. Age, race, and

facial features cannot be made out. Indeed, it is difficult for the viewer to ascertain where exactly the man's body starts and the light leak ends, giving this figure an unsettling and almost spectral quality. It is also notable that the light leak is almost triangular in form and seems to rise from the bottom of the photograph as if it were in the process of consuming the whole image, including part of the foliage of the tree in the middle ground. The striking contrast between this white center of the image and the red of the tractor in the bottom and the dark foliage at the top of the image further accentuates this jarring white spot. In this way, the image seems to withhold as much as it reveals, as the naturalistic three-dimensional space is reduced to a blank and formless center.

This sense of erasure or disappearance is also highlighted by the boy photographer's words. After encountering a farmer on a tractor and asking for a ride during their "lost children" journey across the desert, the boy takes a picture of this stranger. He reflects on how:

> It was an okay picture, except the rancher looked like he was fading under a bright fountain of light that I didn't remember had been there at all when I took it. And then I remembered also that I'd taken some picture of Pa where he looked like he was disappearing, under too much light. So I scratched through my stuff to find those pictures…Now, lying there on the mud by the shore of the tank, you and I realized these three pictures looked so much like one another, like pieces of a puzzle I had to put together, and I was looking at them, concentrating hard, when you suddenly came up with a clue, which was good and smart but also terrifying. You said: Look, everyone in these pictures is disappearing. (273)

In this passage, photography seems to disappear people, instead of rendering them visible and memorializing them. This counter-intuitive insight about photography can perhaps also be

applied to the other polaroid photographs I have analyzed, as these blurred or blocked images attempt to represent absent or dead subjects that are erased from the historical record. Hence, just as in the text, these polaroid photographs are used to explore the seemingly impossible task of using imagery or language to explore subjects that are not there anymore.

The final photograph that I will analyze seems distinct from the others, as it depicts an unobstructed view of a train container in a dry, grassy landscape (see figure 53). The photograph is taken from a distance, and yet part of the train container is outside the frame, creating a cropped image. The cloudless sky takes up almost two thirds of the image, while the dried grasses take up another third, leaving the only human-made element sandwiched between the two. The image seems almost abstracted, as the train container is difficult to identify in this non-descript landscape if the viewer is not aware of the image's context. Indeed, it seems incongruous in this desert landscape, the only apparent trace of human intervention or presence. The fact that the train container is hollow, and that the horizon line is visible through it seems to reinforce this sense that the rusted structure is overwhelmed by the natural world.

This seemingly empty and uninhabited space can be seen differently when the photograph is read in conjunction with the text. The boy describes how this visual landmark unites him and the four lost children:

> Suddenly, very suddenly, an abandoned train car was in front of us, some fifty years from us, and we noticed the eagles stop moving forward and start just circling above the empty space where the train car lay, how it had got there we had no idea, but we stopped our march and stared at it, I took a picture of it, and we stared some more…and the four lost children see them, too, circling how in the sky, under the rain clouds, and decide to walk straight toward them, straight ahead, walking much more

> swiftly now that the sun is sinking in the sky, walking until they spot an abandoned gondola, still small but clear in the distance, and walk straight to it, stopping right under its shadow, their four backs against the rusted side. (329)

As in the image of the plane explored above, the unaccompanied migrant children are not physically depicted in this bleak landscape, through in the text they lean their backs against the wall and stop "right under its shadow." The absence of children in the seemingly deserted polaroid photograph therefore becomes even more striking. One can imagine the children on the other side of the train container, leaning against the rusted metal, just as one can imagine the other unaccompanied migrant children in the airplane. They are so close, and yet at the same time distant and obscured by the bleak sweep of the landscape and by the ruined train container. Hence, by refusing to show these children and by creating images where subjects seem to disappear, the photographs at the end of the book visually dramatize the larger questions that the author explores about how one can ethically see—or not see—the experiences of unaccompanied migrant children from a position of relative privilege.

VIII

An analysis of the haunting visual, tactile, acoustic, and textual landscapes in the novel allows for a more nuanced exploration of how the author grapples with the question of how to represent the seemingly unspeakable experience of unaccompanied child migrants on the U.S.-Mexico border. These sensory landscapes create space in the novel to unsettle and interrogate neocolonial and hierarchical ways of seeing and experiencing the humanitarian border crisis, implicating the reader in a process that often raises more questions than answers. As Luiselli herself writes in *Tell Me How it Ends*, when faced with a crisis on the scale of the current humanitarian border crisis, "while the story continues, the only thing to do is tell it over and over

again as it develops, bifurcates, knots around itself. And it must be told, because before anything can be understood, it has to be narrated many times, by many different minds" (96). Through photographs of abandoned grasslands, tactile depictions of the desert heat, eerie meditations on ghost-towns, and the sounds of children's footsteps on stony ground, Luiselli seems to follow her own advice, creating haunting and sensory landscapes where the stories of young migrants echo through canyons and end up in our ears.

FIGURES

Fig. 1. José María Velasco, *Cañada de Metlac*, 1893, oil on canvas, Museo Nacional de Arte, Mexico City.

Fig. 2. Carl Nebel, *Las tortilleras*, 1836, lithograph. *Viaje pintoresco y arqueológico sobre la parte más interesante de la República Mexicana, 1829-1834,* by Carl Nebel, Manuel Porrúa, S.A., 1963.

Fig. 3. Juliana Sanromán, *Sala de música*, c. 1850, oil on canvas, Colección de la Fundación Cultural Antonio Haghenbeck y de la Lama, Mexico City.

Fig. 4. Homer Scott, *Julia*, c. 1900, gelatin silver print, Colección Biblioteca de la antigua Academia de San Carlos, Mexico City.

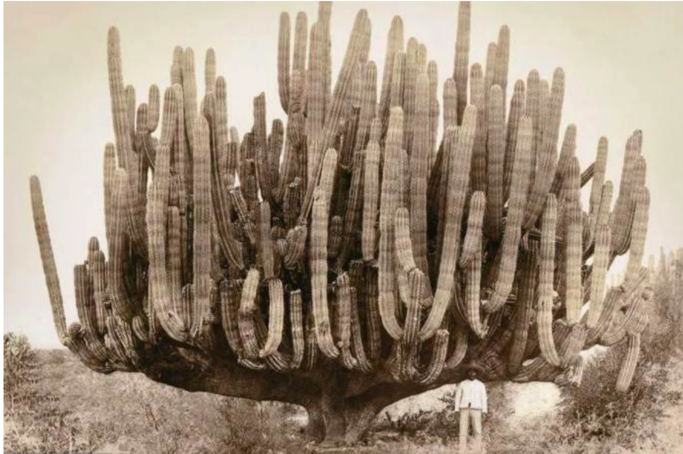


Fig. 5. León Diguet, *Cardon Cactus*, c.1895, photograph. *Por tierras occidentales entre sierras y barrancas* by León Diguet, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1992.

Fig. 6. Artist unknown, Two men, c. 1911, photograph. *Tomochic,* by Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

Fig. 7. Artist unknown, Man, c. 1911, photograph. *Tomochic,* by Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

Fig. 9. Artist unknown, Woman, c. 1911, lithograph. *Tomochic,* by Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

Fig. 8. Artist unknown, Structure, c. 1911, photograph. *Tomochic,* by Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

Fig. 10. Artist unknown, Church, c. 1911,lithograph. *Tomochic,* by Heriberto
Frías, Bouret, 1911.

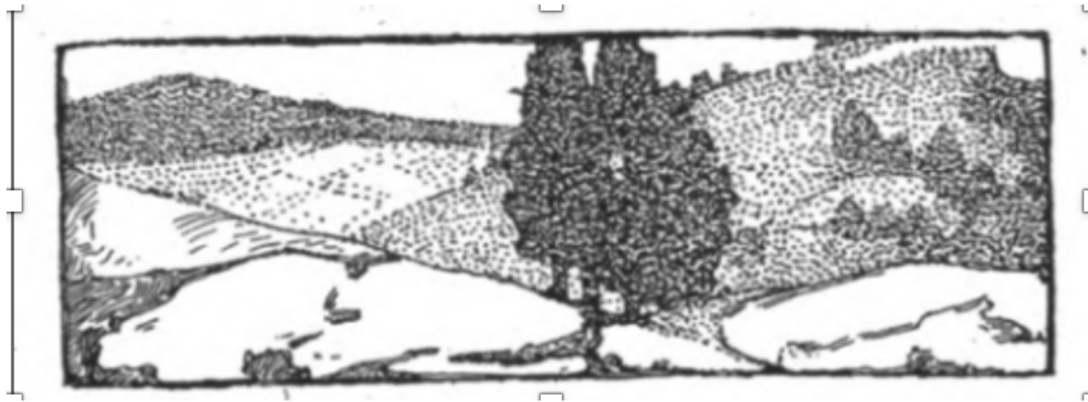


Fig. 11. Artist unknown,
Landscape, c. 1911, photograph.
Tomochic, by Heriberto Frías, Bouret,

Fig. 13. Artist unknown, Landscape,
c. 1911, lithograph. *Tomochic,* by
Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

Fig.12. Artist unknown,
Landscape, c. 1911, lithograph.
Tomochic, by Heriberto
Frías, Bouret, 1911.

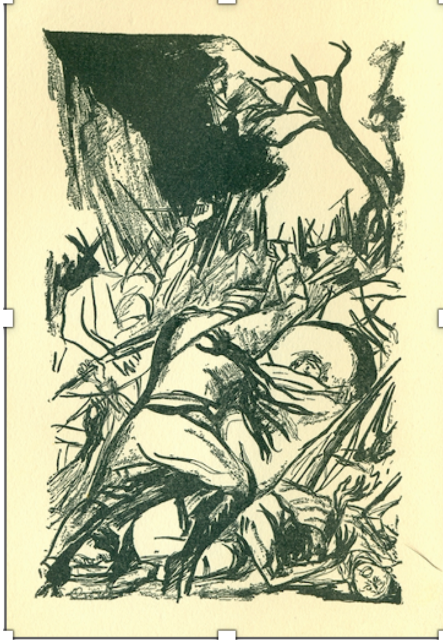
Fig.14. Chapultepec, c. 1911, lithograph.
Tomochic, by Heriberto Frías, Bouret, 1911.

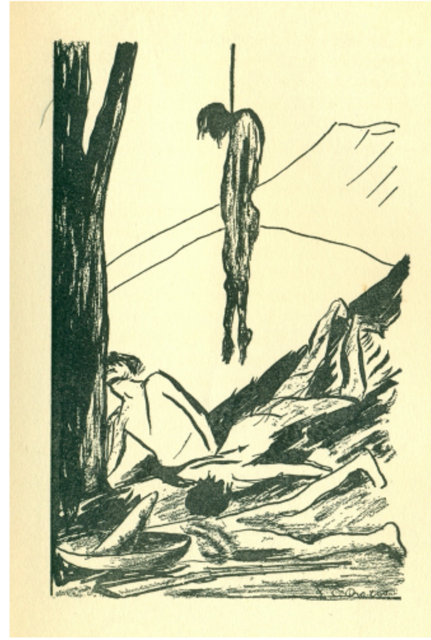
Fig. 15. José Clemente Orozco, *Paisaje metafísico*, 1948, pyroxilin on masonite. Instituto Cultural Cabañas, Guadalajara.

Fig. 16. Diego Rivera, *Paisaje Zapatista (El Guerillero)*, 1915, oil on canvas, Collection of the Museo Nacional de Arte,Mexico City.

Fig. 17. José Clemente Orozco, untitled, c. 1929, ink on paper. *The Underdogs*, byMariano Azuela, Brentano's 1929.

Fig. 18. José Clemente Orozco, untitled, c. 1929, ink on paper. *The Underdogs*, by Mariano Azuela, Brentano's 1929.





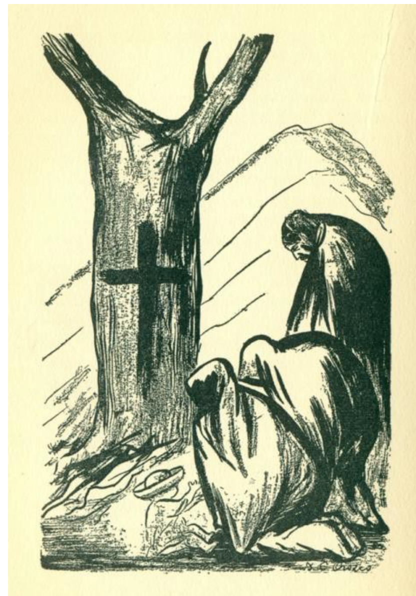


Fig. 19. José Clemente Orozco, untitled, c. 1929, inkonpaper. *The Underdogs*, by Mariano Azuela, Brentano's 1929.

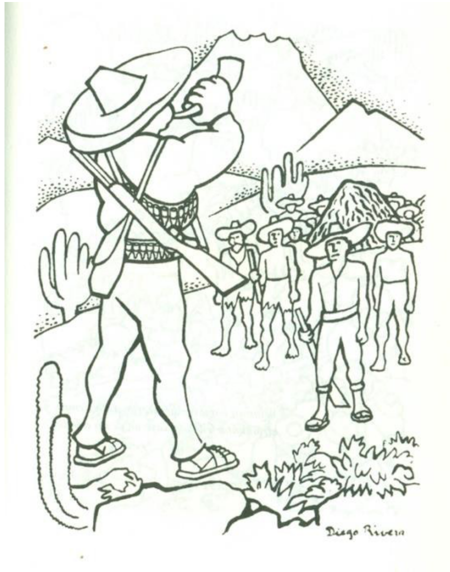


Fig. 20. Diego Rivera, untitled, c. 1930, ink on paper. *Los de abajo*, by Mariano Azuela, Fondo de cultura económica, 2012.

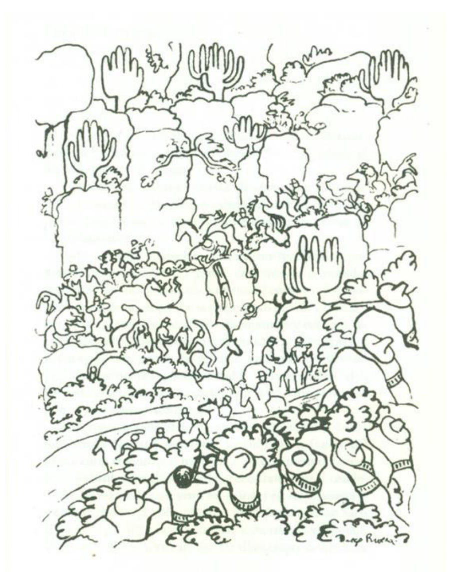


Fig. 21. Diego Rivera, untitled, c. 1930, ink on paper. *Los de abajo*, by Mariano Azuela, Fondo de cultura económica, 2012.

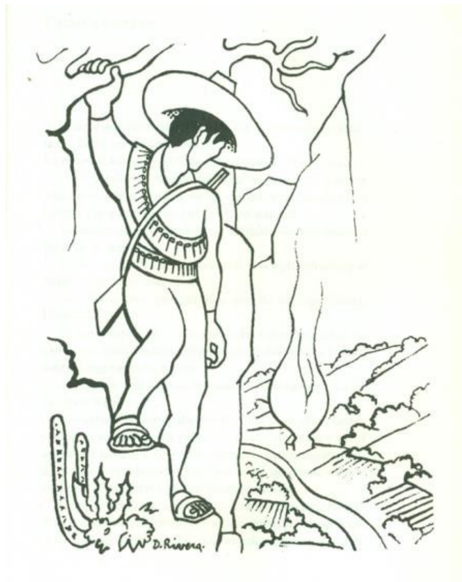


Fig. 22. Diego Rivera, untitled, c. 1930, ink on paper.*Los de abajo*, by Mariano Azuela, Fondo de cultura económica, 2012.

Fig. 23. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 24. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 25. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 26. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 27. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 28. Still from Velo, see *Pedro Páramo*.

Fig. 29. Still from Eastwood, see *High Plains Drifter*.

Fig. 30. Still from Hawks, see *Red River*.

Fig. 31. Still from Jodorowsky, see *El topo*.

Fig. 32. Still from Eisenstein,see ¡*Que viva México*!

Fig. 33. Still fromMcCune, see *Wetbacks*.

Fig. 34. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 35. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 36. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 37. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 38. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 39. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 40. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 41. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 42. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 43. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo.*

Fig. 44. Still from Puenzo, see *Old Gringo*.

Fig. 45. Albert Bierstadt, *Mount Corcoran*, c. 1876-77, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Fig. 46. William Bell, *LookingSouth into the Grand Cañon, Colorado River, Sheavwitz Crossing*, 1872, albumen print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Fig. 47. Ilya Arnoldovich Feinsilberg and Yevgeniy Petrovich Katayev, *"This Right Here is America!" Ilf &Petrov'sAmerican Road Trip*, by Ilya Arnoldovich Feinsilberg and Yevgeniy Petrovich Katayev, Princeton Architecture Press, 2013.

Fig. 48. Robert Frank, *'North-Platte, Nebraska' (U.S. 30 between Ogalla and North Platte,Nebraska)* 1956, gelatin silver print, private collection.

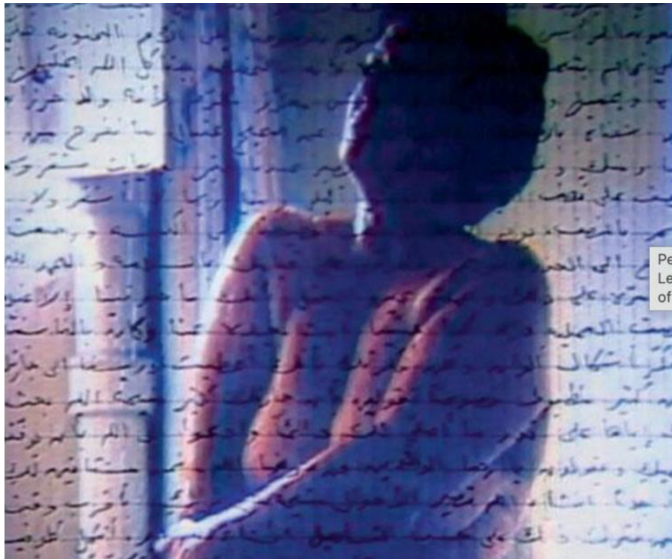


Fig. 49. Still from Hatoum, see *Measures of Distance*

Fig. 50. Valeria Luiselli, untitled, c. 2018, polaroid. *Lost Children Archive*, by Valeria Luiselli, Knopf, 2019.

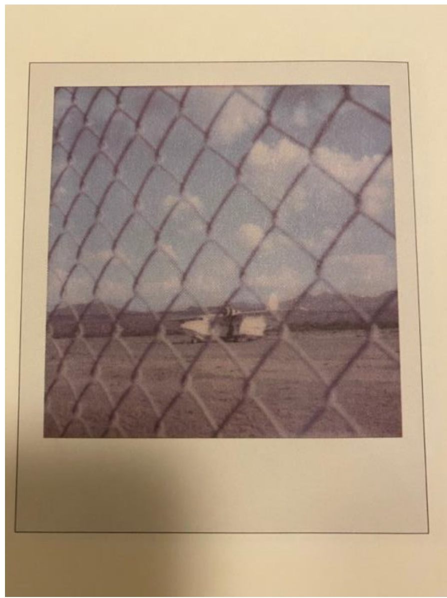


Fig. 51. Valeria Luiselli, untitled, c. 2018, polaroid. *Lost Children Archive*, by Valeria Luiselli, Knopf, 2019.

Fig. 52. Valeria Luiselli, untitled, c. 2018, polaroid. *Lost Children Archive*,by Valeria Luiselli, Knopf, 2019.

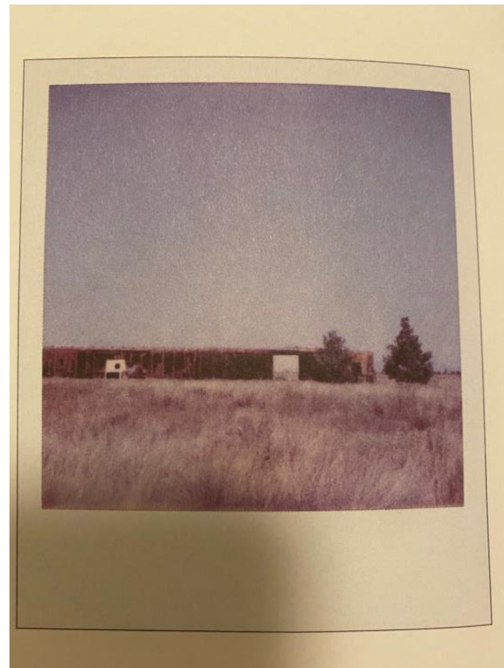


Fig. 53. Valeria Luiselli, untitled, c. 2018, polaroid. *Lost Children Archive*,by Valeria Luiselli, Knopf, 2019.

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