Equestrian Rebels

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Critical Perspectives on Mariano Azuela and the Novel of the Mexican Revolution

Edited by

Roberto Cantú

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To
my daughter

Laura Beatriz Cantú

Río de sangre,
río de historias...
—Octavio Paz

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INTRODUCTION

ROBERTO CANTÚ
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

...el agrio gusto de ignorar tu historia.
~Alfonso Reyes, *Ifigenia cruel* (322).

The nineteen essays selected for this volume were originally read at the "2015 Conference on Mariano Azuela and the Novel of the Mexican Revolution" held at California State University, Los Angeles on May 15–16, 2015.[1] Conference participants represented Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, México, and the United States. The proposed aim of the conference was to observe the first centenary of *Los de abajo* (The Underdogs, 1915), and to turn the commemoration into a critical forum where we could discuss and rethink México's literary history from the standpoint of the twenty-first century. Related objectives of the conference included the tracing of the narrative affiliation of *Los de abajo* to twentieth-century autobiographies, memoirs, and narratives of the Mexican Revolution. Specialists in conference-related fields lectured and later amplified their papers into full-length articles that are now included in this volume. This book is thus the product of our exchanges, debates, and critical differences that diversified and shaped our commemoration of the first centenary of Azuela's ground-breaking novel.

Equestrian Rebels: Critical Perspectives on Mariano Azuela and the Novel of the Mexican Revolution opens with a section on Azuela's realism as exemplified in criticism, photography, and the novel of the Mexican Revolution. In the lead essay, Georgina García Gutiérrez Vélez studies in detail the literary criticism written by Azuela, describing his passionate disputes with his critics over the nature of Mexican literature, and his considerable contributions to Mexican literary history and to the study of European masters from 1919 until shortly before his death in 1952. The sustained analysis of Azuela's thirty years of contention with Mexican

[1] To view the conference program, visit:
http://marianoazuelaatcalstatela.blogspot.com/

literary critics is framed by a parallel "civil war" in the history of French literary criticism: the 1965 polemic between Raymond Picard and Roland Barthes, with the former representing the "old criticism" and the latter the "new criticism". García Gutiérrez Vélez describes the theoretical revolution in our methods of reading sparked by the French theorists in the 1960s, with "isms"—structuralism, formalism and, among others, poststructuralism—that changed the way we read "texts". Thus studied, García Gutiérrez Vélez tacitly suggests the inevitable changes in taste, theoretical approaches, and matters of judgment in different generations and countries. Out of these literary polemics and bitter resentments that lasted many years, Azuela's novel *Los de abajo* entered México's literary canon in 1925 as the originating novel of the Mexican Revolution, and created in Azuela an unexpected literary activity that would flourish in the last decade of his life: namely, his work as a literary critic and theorist. Digging into the past, this essay by García Gutiérrez Vélez is a significant contribution to Azuela studies in the sense that it probes into the thirty years of Azuela's forays into literary criticism, and exhumes the literary tastes and judgments of a long-gone generation whose work, nonetheless, forms an important part of México's history of literary evaluation and classification.

Max Parra's essay is an example of a relatively new branch of interdisciplinary research in writing and photography, areas generally seen as verbal and visual discourses, therefore distinct and separate. Parra's intent is to interconnect these two areas of study and to analyze the "visual writing" that produced the novel of the Mexican Revolution thanks to its documentary interaction with an archival wealth of photographic images. Parra proposes that Mexico's photographic culture, exemplified in the commercialization of postcards and their mass appeal, had a direct impact on the novelists of the Revolution from its initial *Maderista* phase in 1910, to the work of Nellie Campobello in the 1930s. Parra restricts his analysis to three areas: to postcards depicting executions as memorable visual spectacles; to Campobello's narrative techniques in *Cartucho* (1931); and to formal devices that incorporated postcards as image-objects in the narrative's anecdotal incidents.

Yanna Hadatty Mora raises the question of "realism" in relation to avant-garde movements in the 1920s that were inspired by the Russian Revolution, and prods the reader to think through the various meanings of "realism" and "avant-garde" art in the novel, photography, and cinema during México's post-revolutionary era. Her study focuses on three overlapping topics: first, on the representation of Mexico City as an area of rapid urbanization during the presidential era of Plutarco Elías Calles

(1924–1934), known in Mexican history as the *Maximato*; second, on one novel by Azuela (*La luciérnaga*, 1932); third, on a politically-radicalized period in Tina Modotti's life as a photographer, specifically on her photo series known as "*Los contrastes del régimen*" (1927–1928), in which she transitions from studio photography to photography of the streets. Haddaty Mora observes that the Calles regime promoted a revolutionary imagery and discourse that included artists, factory workers, soldiers and, among other sectors of México's society, educational institutions, collectively marching under the banner of a new nation that had emerged triumphant after the defeat of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship. Azuela's novel—in stark contrast—unveils in *La luciérnaga* the poverty, diseases and hunger of the people who live in Tepito and in the urban zone known as La Bolsa, marginal and unincorporated areas known for their squalor and rampant crime. These same urban areas are the object of Modotti's 1927–1928 photo exhibition in México City, represented through the lens of Marxist utopian imagery that would be praised by Soviet film theorists and directors Dziga Vertov (pseudonym of David Abelevich Kaufman) and Sergei Eisenstein during their stay and filming in México in the early 1930s. Hadatty Mora points to the contrasting attitudes in Azuela and Modotti: the first embodies the disenchantment and moral outrage against México's post-Revolutionary elite, illustrating his disappointment in his dystopian view of life in México City's *barrios*; Modotti's utopian and militant photography, on the contrary, is the result of a political avant-garde closely affiliated with México's Communist Party. After analyzing the contrasting worldviews of Azuela and Modotti, Hadatty Mora alludes to the coincidence in shared themes and aesthetics in Azuela's *La luciérnaga*, an acknowledged avant-garde novel, and Modotti's own avant-garde photography, thus emphasizing the ambiguity of the avant-garde movements in the twentieth century and their coexistence: in Azuela, against modernity and city life; in Modotti, on the revolutionary promise and a peoples' militancy. Hadatty Mora offers the reader a clever montage of what "realism" meant in the Calles's era, studied as an ideological distortion of the nation's past, promoted as México's post-Revolutionary "official history" (hence a lie); in Azuela's 1932 novel, realism is akin to Balzac's: it is to be found in gutters and squalid pensions—metaphors for human forms of failure and corruption—that constitute the underside of México City; in Modotti's photography, realism is utopian, hence what *shall be* in the future.

The essay by Cheyla Samuelson is based on a graduate course on *la Novela de la Revolución* (Spanish 270) that she taught at San José State University. The course was designed chronologically, with required novels

and essays that ranged from Azuela's *Los de abajo* to works by Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz and, among others, Cristina Rivera Garza's *Nadie me verá llorar* (1999). One of the questions in the final examination asked how the students' understanding of the Mexican Revolution had changed after reading the assigned texts. The answers were a combination of disillusionment and enlightenment; the former was due to the critical spirit of the novels and essays read and discussed in class; the latter was what could be considered the result of an education, namely: the demystification of an official and institutionalized version of a national history, be it of México or of the United States. According to Samuelson, the critical understanding of the Mexican Revolution opened paths of inquiry into México's current economic and political problems that might have been festering since the rise of revolutionary cadres under the leadership of Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregón, and Plutarco Elías Calles; in other words, with the emergence and triumph of the Revolution itself. The students' critical understanding, however, took place on more than one level: they gained skills in reading novels such as *La muerte de Artemio Cruz,* known for its innovative techniques, displacement of space and time, and elevated diction mixed with regionalisms and México's "taboo" word, as analyzed by Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950).

Part Two sets off with an essay by Aurora Díez-Canedo on Mariano Azuela, his novel *Los de abajo*, and their reception and impact on Spanish writers. The reader's attention is drawn to five reviews of *Los de abajo* published in Madrid newspapers in the years 1926–1927, followed by the analysis of the political background in Spain that led to such positive reception. Acknowledged immediately by Spanish critics were Azuela's style and the novel's social content, read as a distant account that had a noticeable association with "Spain's problem" in its tale of a dictator, land bosses, and insurgent peasants, thus mirroring Spain's conditions of injustice and social inequalities, especially in the Spanish countryside. Ironically, writers of contrasting political backgrounds hailed Azuela's novel, among them Ángel Pumarega (affiliated with Spain's Communist party); Fabián Vidal (pseudonym of Enrique Fajardo Fernández, later exiled in México) who advocated the rights of *campesinos* in Andalucía, exploited by the region's *caciques*; and by Ernesto Giménez Caballero, who would later turn fascist and support Francisco Franco. Díez-Canedo underscores the "exoticist" biases of Spanish intellectuals who viewed Mexican peons oppressed by the Porfirian regime as essentially an ancient people, primitive and pure, hence with a "genio creador." Admired by Spanish writers of different and opposing political views, Azuela's novel

bridged the Atlantic and revealed the similarities in Mexican and Spanish-decaying authoritarian governments. Azuela's reception was clearly and inevitably allegorical: Spanish reviewers read into *Los de abajo* the future of the monarchical rule of Alfonso XIII and the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). In the concluding part of her essay, Díez-Canedo tells the story of this dictatorship and of how it would eventually embroil Spaniards in a Civil War (1936–1939), leading to the fall of Spain's Second Republic, to the consolidation of Fascism in Spain under Franco, and to the exile of Spanish republicans who sought asylum overseas, many of them in México.

Michael Abeyta pulls together history, philosophy, and subaltern studies as theoretical correlates to a spirited critique that assembles under a magnifying lens Martín Luis Guzmán's personal chronicle *El águila y la serpiente* (1928); Mariano Azuela's literary criticism ("*Algo sobre la novela mexicana contemporánea*," 1950); and the manner in which words such as "beast" (*fiera*) and "jaguar" mark the binary opposition *sovereignty/subaltern* in Guzmán's political and philosophical representation of "subaltern revolutionaries" such as Francisco Villa. Abeyta glances at Azuela's positive commentaries on Guzmán's "painterly metaphors" done in narrative portraits of Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregón, and Villa, and begins to weave an interesting and "deconstructive" critique of the vast gap that separates Villa from *letrados* and *Arielistas* like Guzmán, who felt fascinated and at the same time repulsed by the Centaur of the North. Abeyta questions these categories of animality because of their symptomatic ties to prejudices that defined the Porfirian society and its *letrados*, a governing and dominant elite that Mexican rebels fought against during the Revolution. The argument is an interesting one, particularly if one were to transfer Abeyta's theoretical model from its South Asian and postcolonial application to México's own historical terrain where one could examine Guzmán's use of *fiera* and *jaguar* from two different angles.[2] The first could be in terms of class,

[2] The metaphors of animality or savagery used to describe Francisco Villa are not the ideological fixation of Mexican *letrados* alone; John Reed, for instance, constructs Villa's profile along similar terms (civilization/barbarism) but with layered meanings that cannot be reduced to negative or one-dimensional terms. In the chapter titled "The Rise of a Bandit," Reed introduces his Anglo American readers to Villa as follows: "Villa was the son of ignorant *peons*. He hadn't the slightest conception of the complexity of civilization, and when he finally came back to it, a mature man of *extraordinary native shrewdness*, he encountered the twentieth century with *the naive simplicity of a savage*" (111, my emphasis). Reed admired Villa and followed him in the fall of 1913 as war correspondent for

education and urbanity as coexisting and determining factors in social hierarchies well established from the Rio Bravo to the Rio de la Plata, thus from Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's days to México's post-revolutionary era—and arguably with similar social prejudices alive and well to this day. The difference can be profound, let's say, in a simple assertion such as "¡*No se mueva*!" and its Mexican rural equivalent '¡*Anda, pos y que te me queres ir*!" (quoted by Abeyta from *El águila y la serpiente*, 108 *)*. "Beast" (*fiera*) and "Jaguar," therefore, could be read as registers of class dynamics that function according to Latin America's paradigmatic binary opposition *civilization/barbarism* in which the first is associated with the city, industry, commerce, and literacy (modernity itself), and the latter with the countryside, illiteracy, and a pre-industrial stagnant village life, as fully represented in *Al filo del agua* (1947), by Agustín Yáñez. The second point of entry into Abeyta's essay, and one that would deal directly with Guzmán's *aesthetic of poetic exaltation* (to borrow Guzmán's own words, I: 323–324), could be pressed to generate two or more questions that are nonetheless intertwined: on the one hand, Guzmán's use of terms such as *fiera* and *jaguar* to name the essential features of Francisco Villa's character (hence as metaphors for courage, insight, ruthlessness, and so forth); on the other, the generic classification of *El águila y la serpiente*, traditionally read (wrongly, I think) as a novel.[3]

Metropolitan Magazine. Reed's articles were published in 1914 in book form under the title *Insurgent México: With Pancho Villa in the Mexican Revolution*. One cannot tag Reed's politics as reactionary or right-wing; by 1917, Reed was in Russia participating with fervor in the Bolshevik Revolution.

[3] *El águila y la serpiente* belongs to the generic form of the chronicle, therefore as an eye-witness account of the author's participation in the Mexican Revolution. Its colonial precedent in México is none other than Bernal Díaz del Castillo's *La verdadera historia de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1632); however, Guzmán's "chronicle" transcends its generic limits due to his intuitive and perceptive interrogation of "reality" itself and its mimetic representation, from the very personal subjective conditions (idealism, fear, awe, horror) to the national events and factional rifts that are being reconstructed and narrated. Guzmán's *aesthetics of poetic exaltation* ("*la más escueta realidad…con el toque de la exaltación poética*") is the writer's leap of faith toward a particular experience that borders on the sublime and on the limits of expression, therefore on the structural boundaries of writing itself. This is the critical point in *El águila y la serpiente* where Guzmán feels the need to disclose and clarify his own poetics of the chronicle-beyond-itself, exemplified in the anecdote titled "La fiesta de las balas," an account that concludes the first part of *El águila y la serpiente* and one of the most anthologized tales of the Mexican Revolution. The historical moment chosen by Guzmán is October 1, 1913—the date of Francisco Villa's triumphal entry into

In their noticeable differences as writers, Mariano Azuela and Martín Luis Guzmán were also the subject of spiteful and discordant debates among Mexican literary critics, as the essay by María de Lourdes Franco Bagnouls reminds us. Her focus of attention is threefold: first, on the generation of poets—Jaime Torres Bodet, José Gorostiza, Xavier Villaurrutia, Salvador Novo and, among others, Jorge Cuesta—who founded the avant-garde literary journal *Contemporáneos* (1928-1931); secondly, on the 1932 polemic that raised the question of the literary avant-garde and its crisis in México; lastly, on the *Contemporáneos* poets and their emphasis on *revolutionary* formal and poetic features of the novel that have little or nothing to do with the anecdotal levels of the narrative, judged as subject to convention, imitation, and formulaic repetition. The polemic was preceded by an article published byTorres Bodet in the journal *Contemporáneos* (September 1928) describing Mexican literature as bifurcated, Janus-like, and branching out into two different and irreconcilable literary currents; on one side, from the Mexican Revolution, thus the repeated tragedies, the fresh blood, and rough profile of its expression; on the other, visible in path-breaking directions signaling something new in Mexican letters. Torres Bodet claimed that the first current was represented by Azuela; the second, by Guzmán, who had published *El águila y la serpiente* in that same year. Due to its avant-garde temperament, this generation of writers operated

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the wealthy city of Torreón (Coahuila), Villa's sudden rise to notoriety after the defeat of the pro-Huerta army and allied Orozquistas, and the latter's execution as prisoners of war (for a summary, *see* Katz 215-221). As Guzmán prepares to "report" on this incident—in itself an allegory of the brutalities of war—he assesses Villa's exemplary rise to glory from his triumphs in Ciudad Juárez and in Torreón, musing over what will eventually illustrate Villa's deeds (historical facts or legend?): those that adhered to reality's objective and succinct details ("la más escueta realidad"), or the ones that made possible essential revelations through poetic exaltation ("exaltación poética," I: 323-324) that brought writing closer to the "truth" of history. Guzmán chose the latter to write the subliminal and thus extraordinary personal experiences while he served under Villa, recalling him as follows: "Verlo así era como sentir en el alma el roce de una tremenda realidad cuya impresión se conservaba para siempre" (I: 324). Guzmán's *aesthetic of poetic exaltation* closes the first and second parts of *El águila y la serpiente*, hence with two culminating and symmetrical experiences that recall Villa's rise and triumph (part one), and Guzmán's apprehensive and nervous departure (part two) shortly before Villa's major defeats in Guanajuato. Guzmán's concluding portrait of Villa is grand and almost metaphysical, as if he had been in the presence of a mythical hero's incarnation that inspired contradictory emotions of wonder, veneration, and terror (I: 495-496).

according to principles of critique, dissent, and solely on their individual judgment, therefore the response by Xavier Villaurrutia (1903–1950) not only challenged Torres Bodet's judgment on Azuela as a writer but, more important, it created a transcendental and defining moment in the avant-garde poetics of this generation. According to Villaurrutia, the novels *Los de abajo* (1915) and *La Malhora* (1923) by Azuela—but more so the second one—were revolutionary because of the manner in which their formal innovations superseded Mexican novels of the past. Beyond the storyline and themes of the Mexican Revolution in Azuela's novels, Villaurrutia looked into Azuela's style and form, expressed in flashing sparks of dialogue, rapid strokes of the brush from which the strong profiles of his characters and the authenticity of their historical environment press themselves in the reader's memory. This generation of writers, known for their independent and international interests, would serve as the bridge to other future generations of Mexican poets and novelists, such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes.

In the opening essay of Part Three titled "Centennial Studies on *Los de abajo,*" Fernando Curiel Defossé wields his powers of wit and irony to play with words that one may associate with metaphors of congested travel (*tráfico*), of being on the road (*tránsito*), or on a travel plan with flagged places to visit (*itinerario*). In this journey-directed essay, Curiel Defossé proposes a plan of study that probes into the Mexican novel itself as a genre, urging us to rethink the place occupied by Mariano Azuela in Mexican literature, and to question the manner in which the novel of the Mexican Revolution and Azuela have been classified and institutionalized by historians and literary critics. The historical map includes three determining eras in Mexican political history—Independence (1808–1821), Reform (1859–1863), and the Mexican Revolution (1910–present). Curiel Defossé claims that it's time for a different and actualized history—from the perspective of the twenty-first century—of the Mexican Revolution, but no longer based only on Great Events and dates of commemoration (1810, 1910, 2010), but rather on the nation's contradictions, rifts and chronic problems that have remained unresolved. One of his recommended tasks is the critical study of the rivalry and polemics between literary cliques that periodically turn against each other, including quarrels that lead to the blacklisting of writers, such as Jaime Torres Bodet, Agustín Yáñez and, among others, Martín Luis Guzmán, who have been the victims of *la Guerra Sucia de los 70s* (the Dirty War of the 1970s) because they either supported presidential orders, or held government posts under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970), therefore negatively associated with student protests and their repression

in Tlatelolco on 2 October 1968. Curiel Defossé considers such rancorous actions to be pernicious and undeserved when writers of such importance to Mexican literature are repressed and erased from memory. This is no gesture that would place art over politics; it appears to be the conviction and certainty that literature and the arts move only under the force of contradiction and not by a clique's censorship or a party-line consensus. Curiel Defossé proposes that in the twentieth century alone the bridges linking the shores and marking the breakthroughs in Mexican literature could run from *Los de abajo* (1915) and *El águila y la serpiente* (1928*),* to *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), novels with revolutionary features not necessarily in their content or storyline, but in their innovative formal devices. The separation of form and content is an implicit critical point that calls for discussion and clarification, but for now I take Curiel Defossé's stand on this matter to mean something like the merging of form and content, such as the innovative moment in the novel of the Mexican Revolution when one perceives flashing sparks of dialogue and rapid strokes of the brush that Villaurrutia locates in Azuela's "revolutionary" writing. In the spirit of Azuela's courage and generosity toward José Vasconcelos—a maligned writer who, according to Azuela, had sown winds and now was harvesting fierce storms (III: 701)—Curiel Defossé also remembers and praises writers who have contributed to Mexican literature and who thus deserve his acclaim and deepest admiration.

Jacqueline Zimmer's essay develops a close study of the Novel of the Mexican Revolution with an analysis of Azuela's *Los de abajo* and Carlos Fuentes's *Gringo viejo* (Old Gringo, 1994). The critical emphasis is on prominent characters such as Demetrio Macías and Tomás Arroyo, and on their sense of reigning injustices and desires for community as paramount in their involvement in the Mexican Revolution. Zimmer directs the reader's attention to the myth of the revolutionary community in these novels separated in time for almost eighty years, thus tacitly tracing an important chapter in México's literary history. The question that drives Zimmer's study is how such a myth relates to the failure of the Mexican Revolution in its quest to improve the lot of agrarian populations. The theoretical model is taken from French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, whose differentiation between the "mythical community" and the "thinking community" is, according to Zimmer, at the center of the Revolution's failure, and of Azuela's and Fuentes's novels' depiction of characters who are unable to reconcile their personal interests with the ideals of the Revolution. Zimmer explains Nancy's meaning of a mythical community as nostalgia for an original collective harmony that has been lost, therefore as the viewpoint of a thinking community that ideologically

represents a modern society of self-interested individuals. Nancy's ability to overturn anticipated meanings in his theorizing occurs with the entry of the concept of "being singular plural," equivalent to different individual identities transformed and affected by their relations and interactions with other singularities, thus keeping identity fluid and ongoing. The inability of both Demetrio Macías and Tomás Arroyo to feel close to anything resembling "being singular plural" turns the habitual notion of the failed Mexican Revolution into an unexpected and provoking analysis in Zimmer's essay.

Yunsook Kim targets two areas of analysis in Azuela's novel *Los de abajo*: first, the neglect and silence by critics toward *Los de abajo* for more than twenty years based, for the most part, on the novel's allegedly generic confusion due to its subtitle ("Cuadros y escenas de la revolución actual"), made evident in the novel's fragmented composition into *cuadros* (paintings, pictures), and *escenas* (dramatic scenes). Kim reminds us of how such neglect resulted in Azuela's depression and decision in 1923 to burn many of his manuscripts and never to write again. The second area corresponds to the slow but eventual "discovery" of *Los de abajo* in 1924, leading to the comprehensive reading of *Los de abajo* by Luis Leal in 1961, who declared that this novel contains its own organic unity. It is at this point that Kim introduces an *ethical* reading of *Los de abajo* that had not been proposed before. She finds the novel's unity in the system of internal relations between characters that are not necessarily *organic* (Luis Leal) but *ethical*, qualifying characters such as Demetrio Macías as one of *los de arriba* because of social and moral values that are positive (therefore regardless of social or class standing, as is frequent in criticism of *Los de abajo*), whereas *los de abajo* are not necessarily society's "underdogs" but rather characters who behave according to social and moral values that are not positive, such as *el güero* Margarito. Kim's reading is consequently an ironic reading of *Los de abajo* in which morality places characters in oppositional ethical relations (*abajo/arriba*) and, from Azuela's perspective, itself the anchoring ground of what he is best known for: the critic of postrevolutionary Mexico, and its social climbers and turncoats who thought of the Mexican Revolution only in terms of opportunities for material benefit.

Amber Workman's essay looks at *Los de abajo* from an angle associated with ancient war themes of devastation: pillage, looting, and stealing. In Azuela's novel, however, such themes seem to simultaneously advocate the literal as well as symbolic destruction of the Porfirian regime and society, and (from Azuela's disillusioned viewpoint) the Revolution's failed attempt to create a new social order. Workman's theoretical

approach to *Los de abajo* utilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotopes (time-spaces) as markers of the temporal-spatial sites in which these acts take place, resulting in an analysis of Azuela's historical novel from the perspectives of both "novel time" and "historical time" in which the narrative impetus that propels the fictional Demetrio Macías leads directly to the merging and blending with historical events (e.g., the 1914 Battle of Zacatecas, the Convention of Aguascalientes, and Villa's defeats in Guanajuato in 1915), and with figures such as Pánfilo Natera, and references to Francisco I. Madero and Francisco Villa. The proposed chronotopes that serve as theoretical refractions into *Los de abajo* are the road, the domestic space, the abandoned church, and the train. Studied in this manner, pillage, looting and stealing in *Los de abajo* are read as concrete illustrations of tensions in revolutionary México between social classes, combats against the old regime, and the attempts to build a new order. According to Workman, the narrative emphasis on pillage and looting is none other than Azuela's own disappointment with the revolutionary cause.[4]

[4] In his prologue to *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, Friedrich Katz looks into the three legends that have shaped the way people conceive of Villa's identity as a Mexican revolutionary: namely, the white, the black, and the epic legends (1–8). Shrouded in such discursive variants, Villa and the legends that define him turn into commodities consumed in the marketplace of fixed ideas not only of Villa, but also of Azuela and Guzmán, including other writers of the Mexican Revolution. Out of the prejudices of past generations, Villa emerges in Katz's book not simply as a bandit or Robin Hood, but as someone strongly rooted in the values of honor, courage, loyalty, and the ethical standards that evolved in military colonies in northern Mexico after years of fighting against Apaches (31, 39). Katz's scholarship does not produce a reductive image of Villa; on the contrary, he traces the changes in Villa's attitude during his rise to celebrity status (303), his moments of hubris and self-confidence (493), and his moral crisis after the two decisive defeats by Alvaro Obregón's army in 1915, leading to a downward psychological and moral spiral described by Katz as follows: "Villa's attitude began to change in 1915 […] Money, wealth, and the lure of the good life were not the reasons for Villa's moral decline. He had for many years had scope to accumulate enough money to become a millionaire and lead a comfortable life in exile wherever he chose. It was an opportunity he did not take […] He did not feel that the people who turned against him had betrayed great abstract principles such as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or 'the cause of socialism'; rather, he felt in a more traditional way that they had broken a kind of covenant that both sides were obliged to honor" (624). Katz notes that this is only Villa's assessment of his defeats and losses as of 1915. However, revolutionaries closest to Villa, such as Julián Medina (under whose banner Mariano Azuela joined the Revolution), Felipe Angeles, and Tomás Urbina (one of Villa's close allies), soon began to distance

Part Four of this volume was reserved for studies on Mariano Azuela and Nellie Campobello. This section is launched by Kristine Vanden Berghe whose main purpose is to analyze how Nellie Campobello managed to construct her image through self-portraits in interviews, writings, and in public statements. To this end, Vanden Berghe follows three critical directions: first, to observe closely the *ethos* or image that she created in her narrative or oral statements with the purpose of winning the backing and regard of her readers or listeners; second, to study Campobello's "posture" (with the inevitable pun on "posturing" and "posing") in both its rhetorical as well as sociological dimensions as found in her non-fiction writing. It is at this level that Vanden Berghe critiques Campobello's judgments against, or on behalf of novelists of the Mexican Revolution (Mariano Azuela and Martín Luis Guzmán, respectively), most of whom she claimed never to have read; third, to argue against the conventional view that considers Campobello's writing to be *sui generis* and thus unclassifiable, claiming instead that her prose fiction manifests possible links to major novels of the Mexican Revolution. Beyond the obvious emergence of what evidently has become, since 2000, a Campobello cult, Vanden Berghe points to her contradictions and misrepresentations, such as her contempt toward luxury and city life, yet with a predilection for expensive jewelry and an elegant wardrobe; a staunch defender of the truth, yet known for her untruths, features that contrast with her contention that her writings were "real," based on personal experience or on memory itself, thus true to fact.[5]

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themselves, break with, or to double-cross him (732). Guzmán, and for that matter also José Vasconcelos, championed a modern world of ideas and ideals—democratic, representative, national—and, as such, could not embrace the regional and *cacique*-like ways of México's rebels who represented México's countryside, nor the dictatorial proclivities of Venustiano Carranza. Exile became their only option.

[5] The general belief that perception through one's senses and judgment suffice to access "reality" and the "thing in itself" led Campobello and other writers of her era (including the early Azuela) to the conviction that subjective perception allowed writers to enter into a social and historical totality. In his 1950 lectures delivered at the *Colegio Nacional*, Azuela presented his lengthy and insightful studies of major European novelists—Balzac, Flaubert, Galdós, Proust, Zola—and, while doing so, displayed his intellectual curiosity and growing consciousness of theory and the dialectical questions within realism itself. In the opening pages of his wide-ranging study of Zola ("la escuela naturalista"), Azuela questioned naive associations between the real, the ideal, and the phenomenon in art: "Lo real es tan legítimo en el arte como lo ideal, pero ni uno ni otro caminan nunca, ni pueden caminar, aisladamente. Sin llegar a la doctrina hegeliana que identifica la idea con

The essay by Florence Olivier is a tightly organized analysis of *Cartucho* (1931) that manages to incorporate Mexican literary history into a tripartite process, beginning with the two established moments that define it from Azuela's generation to Carlos Fuentes and the Boom generation, followed by the third moment that would correspond to the rereading and rediscovery of Campobello in 2000. Campobello's "eccentric" status from such a history is explained as follows: first, she was a woman in a genre dominated by male writers, most of whom were ideologues or politicians who wrote memoirs, or military men who wrote novels and, on occasions, male novelists who penned memoirs of leading revolutionaries. Secondly, Campobello's eccentricity and marginality stem from her narrative vignettes that clearly do not follow the novel's generic criteria, or the model established by large murals representing the nation, instead narrowing her collective memory and fragmented storytelling technique based on her region: northern México (Chihuahua and Durango). Olivier, the French translator of *Cartucho* (*Cartouche,* 2009), outlines the major thematic and formal features that illustrate Campobello's exalted "eccentricity" and explains the radical transformation in México's literary canon that took place in 2000 after important publications by Elena Poniatowska and university lectures by Margo Glantz. According to Olivier, one of the theoretical sources that greatly influenced Mexican literary critics in their reappraisal of Campobello's status was Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (*Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, 1975). One could argue the point that the appropriation in 2000 of Deleuze's and Guattari's conceptual model (contemporaneous with the 1970s, the war in Vietnam, the rise of Ethnic Studies in the United States, and so on) was not a timely choice, hinted with subtlety but noticeable in Olivier's reasoning ("pese a las resonancias setenteras de ciertos términos"). The placement of Campobello's work at the center of the literature of the Mexican Revolution is thus not only a classificatory irony (marginal yesterday, at the focal point today), but also a diagnostic of how alive and well are the literary polemics and the critics' opposing viewpoints that determine who leaves and who stays in the nation's literary pantheon.

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el fenómeno, considerando el segundo como simple manifestación de la primera, puede afirmarse con seguridad absoluta y como principio de sentido común que sólo en los géneros falsos y artificiales se concibe la separación de lo real y lo ideal en el arte. El realismo puro nos llevará a la escuela prosaica del siglo pasado" (III: 838). Guzmán's aesthetic of "poetic exaltation" (1928) is an early breakthrough from the nineteenth-century commodified "realism" that Azuela eventually abandons with no regrets just prior to his death in 1952.

Ute Seydel's essay compares Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo* and Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho* in terms of their ambiguous or mythic representation of Francisco Villa, the former from the standpoint of Azuela's personal experiences as a medical doctor in Villa's army and, Campobello's, from domestic and public spaces that serve as sources for *Cartucho*'s 1931 edition (thus not the1940 revised version). The study branches out toward questions of said representations of historical figures (Villa), or of fictitious characters, such as Demetrio Macías in *Los de abajo*, and the mother in *Cartucho*. Thus framed, Seydel's approach is not only on narrative representation—mythic or literary—but also in terms of characterization as it involves the behavior and attitudes of actants in a class-divided setting composed of the peasantry in Campobello's narrative, and of revolutionary men and women from the countryside and members of the alleged liberal middle class that populate Azuela's novel. The figure of the mother in *Cartucho* is portrayed as the embodiment of support toward the weak and powerless peasantry, a protective figure that stands—as Seydel asserts—in direct mythic symmetry with Francisco Villa among the peoples of Chihuahua and Durango, contrasting with the ambiguous representation of Villa by Azuela in *Los de abajo*. This essay's conclusions are productive and fully functional in terms of the supplementary questions that Seydel brings to the reader's attention; for instance: since Luis Cervantes is a student of medicine and a journalist, he must be a self-portrait of Azuela himself; moreover, given that Alberto Solís falls prey to disillusionment and frustration with the Mexican Revolution just before he dies in the midst of battle, he must be Azuela's voice—disenchanted with the rapacity and wanton violence of the Revolution—therefore prefiguring the work of Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz, and other intellectuals who attempted to describe the essence of *lo mexicano* (Mexicanness).[6] Taking a couple of these points retroactively,

[6] For a more differential approach, the word "essence" could be rewritten as "inferiority complex" as examined by Samuel Ramos in *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México* (1934), written with an underlying critique—in other words, discernment and independent judgment—of Plutarco Elías Calles's 1928–1934 "Maximato"; on the other hand, Octavio Paz's analysis in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950) is a critique of Mexican "official" history, and openly differing with groups such as "Hiperión" whose members attempted to establish the grounds for a Mexican philosophy under the mentorship of Spanish philosopher José Gaos. As is well-known, Hiperión members produced spell-binding readings of Martin Heidegger and his philosophical concept of "ontology" as the question of Being, but with a focus on *el ser del mexicano*. For a fuller development, *see* my essay on Octavio Paz (2007), and my introduction to a polemic between Samuel Ramos and Emilio Uranga (1981).

selectively and briefly, one could recall the fact that Francisco Villa led armies that fought under the banner of different leaders, therefore with rebels fighting not necessarily under Villa's orders (Katz, 297). As is well known, Azuela joined the Revolution under Julián Medina whose interests rested on Jalisco's agrarian reform--not one of Villa's interests. Strictly speaking, Azuela was not a Villista (and, as documented, Medina had growing doubts about Villa as well); at heart, Azuela remained a *Maderista* who enlisted under Medina's leadership in order to fight against Victoriano Huerta—Madero's assassin—then continued in the Revolution due to his long-lasting mistrust of Venustiano Carranza.[7] In relation to Luis Cervantes, this fictitious character is not Azuela's double; on the contrary, he is a recurring type in Azuela's novels (and hardly representative of the "Mexican *liberal* middle class) who appears under different names but with shared social-Darwinist ideologies and similar "opportunist" proclivities (the object of contempt in Azuela's narrative), specifically exposed in Andrés Pérez in the novel with an eponymous title (1911), as well as in Pascual in *Las tribulaciones de una familia decente* (1918), to name only two instances that temporally frame the writing and publication of *Los de abajo* (1915).

Part Five, titled "Mariano Azuela and the Narrative Representations of Mexican Colonialism and Revolution," begins with an essay by Marten van Delden on Carlos Fuentes and his life-long reflection and treatment of the theme of Revolution in his novels, short stories and essays. Van Delden's thematic overview has a wide-ranging scope that includes Fuentes' publications spanning five active and prolific decades, from *La región más transparente* (1958), to *Federico en su balcón* (2012), Fuentes' posthumous novel. The story told by van Delden is of lost illusions, therefore Balzacian and teeming with ambition, vitality, and Fuentes' rare intellectual curiosity and critical position toward Mexican cultural history, world civilizations, and global politics. Van Delden claims that the national era that was of paramount importance to Fuentes

[7] Remembering how he got involved in the Revolution against Victoriano Huerta, Azuela wrote: "Formando parte, como médico, de las fuerzas revolucionarias de Julián Medina, compartí con aquellos rancheros de Jalisco y Zacatecas—ojos de niño y corazones abiertos—muchas de sus alegrías, muchos de sus anhelos y muchas de sus amarguras […] En Guadalajara nos llamaban convencionistas; pero un día amanecimos en Lagos y nos dijeron que éramos villistas. Así como se le cambia la etiqueta a una botella […] El general Medina no se sentía seguramente muy a gusto cerca de Francisco Villa y le prometió recuperar Guadalajara con el puñado de sus hombres. Villa le dio armas y parque, y Medina consiguió su objeto" (III: 1268).

was the Mexican Revolution, generally approached from varying celebratory or satirical angles, the former in terms of the Revolution (spelled in upper case), and the latter aimed at its postrevolutionary aftermath. Fuentes's writings resulted in novels of ideas in favor of Revolutions (Mexican, Cuban, Nicaraguan, among others), followed by his disenchantment with revolutions both at home and abroad. Fuentes's insistence in perceiving the Mexican Revolution behind the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions was based on the belief that such historical events manifested the multicultural totality of a country (many Mexicos, many Cubas, many Nicaraguas), therefore as revolutions that made the nation's heterogeneous pasts contemporaneous with each other, dragging with them their enduring inner conflicts and contradictions with possibilities for mutual recognition and self-discovery. Van Delden tracks Fuentes's changes in attitude toward revolutions with visible turning points in *Los años con Laura Díaz* (1999*), La voluntad y la fortuna* (2008)*,* and *Federico en su balcón* (2012), novels in which Fuentes reflects, respectively, on civil wars and revolutions in the twentieth century; depicts Mexico City in the early years of the twenty-first century as it undergoes a political crisis of legitimation; and exposes a revolution in an unnamed country terribly gone awry. In these novels, characters are often found reading Azuela's *Los de* abajo as if to better prepare for their own disenchantment.

Michael Nava looks at the Mexican Revolution as a writer and author of *The City of Palaces* (2014), a novel that took ten years of research in addition to the complex task of fictionalizing the era of Porfirio Díaz and the Revolution that toppled his regime. The temporal framing of the narrative is 1899–1913, hence the fourteen years that mark the zenith and decline of the Porfiriato, the triumph of Francisco I. Madero's Revolution, and the latter's assassination. Wishing to organize his novel according to causes and their effects, Nava addresses the scandalous inequality that separated the Porfirian elite from the majority of Mexicans, specifically the nation's native Indians. He contests the notion that the Mexican Revolution was the first great peasant revolution of the twentieth century on the grounds that most of the revolutionary leaders were not peasants but representatives of propertied and affluent classes—Madero, Carranza, and Maytorena—whose main objective was merely to replace the Porfirian elite and not necessarily to ameliorate the social and economic inequalities in México. Nava recreates the ideological foundation of the Díaz regime and its *científicos*, the dictator's policies of modernization, and Díaz's motto of "Liberty, Order, and Progress" that meant favoritism toward immigrants of European origin and the repression of indigenous peoples

who had inhabited México for thousands of years. The "Indian problem" thus turns into Nava's major narrative focus, with his protagonist Miguel Sarmiento returning to Mexico after having lived in Europe for ten years. With his homecoming, a voyage of self-discovery begins, first through a culture shock when witnessing the racial and social inequalities in Porfirian México, followed by conversations with his cousin Jorge Luis who is a dark-skinned *mestizo*. Nava comments on his novel's conclusion portraying Sarmiento's involvement in Madero's 1910 Revolution. An award-winning Chicano novelist, Nava brings the Mexican Revolution north of the Río Bravo with stories of affluent Mexicans who took sides with *los de abajo* and together not only changed the course of Mexican history, but the national identity of Mexicans themselves.

Heribert von Feilitzsch's essay guides the reader toward untrodden paths in the history of the Mexican Revolution, first by linking the lives of Mariano Azuela and Arnold Krumm-Heller in terms of their similar backgrounds (physicians, prolific writers, participants in the Revolution on the side of Madero), then clarifying their separate destinies after Madero's assassination in 1913 (Azuela on Villa's side, and Krumm-Heller in Carranza's service), followed by the essay's leading purpose: to shed light on Krumm-Heller's life and work, presently forgotten, buried under old footnotes, and thus untold. With uncommon skill, Feilitzsch takes us through Krumm-Heller's fascinating, extraordinary, and ultimately bizarre life from his birth in 1876 in southern Westphalia, Germany, to his 1893 immigration to Chile, his passion for Inca and Mesoamerican civilizations, and full entry into the occult: for instance, his readings of *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), by Helena Blavatsky; his leadership of the Order of the Rose-Croix in Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia**;** his role as Grand Wizard of the Mexican freemasonry and, in 1905, his friendship and eventual political support of Madero, a fellow freemason who, as President of México, granted Mexican citizenship to Krumm-Heller. He became Madero's personal physician and served under his German compatriot Felix Sommerfeld in the Mexican Secret Service. In 1912, Krumm-Heller became an agent in México's German legation, turning spy in the service of Germany after the assassination of Madero and with increasing espionage activities during the years of the Great War (1914–1918). Feilitzsch studies in detail the outcome and fate of the Mexican Revolution and, more specifically, Germany's influence during the times of Madero, Huerta, Villa, and Carranza—with most of these documentary evidences buried in dusty German archives, and unknown to the majority of readers of México's revolutionary history. Feilitzsch's essay is unmistakably more than just the biographical account of an eccentric and yet astonishing

German medical doctor, occultist, revolutionary, and spy; it brings to our attention little-known facts relative to Mexican-German relations in 1905–1920, evidence that clarifies the international web of relations in which Mexico was caught during its Revolution—and, by implication, before and after—repeatedly serving as the terrain where an international symbolic war was waged over imperial interests engaged in espionage, sabotage, and distracting conflicts (e.g., Madero's murder, planned in the U.S. embassy in Mexico City by Henry Lane Wilson and Victoriano Huerta; the German embassy in Mexico and its attempts to entangle the United States in a war with México so as to keep the former out of the Great War, and so on). From such a possible reading, one could work out the significance of Feilitzsch's research at least on two fronts: first, it suggests that the conventional historiography of the Mexican Revolution has been questioned for the wrong (for being incomplete) reasons. In other words, it was not necessarily the failure to achieve the ideals of the Revolution; in reality, it was never only national: it was influenced by international interests from the start.[8] Second, Feilitzsch tells a story with a subtext: his meditation on German history as he follows Krumm-Heller toward his final destination ("the depths of dark occultism and racial bigotry") in his eventual support of Hitler and Nazi elite schools, the waving at his home of a swastika flag, his ideas of racial inequality, and his belief in the superior Aryan race. Feilitzsch's resolve to shed light on early twentieth-century Mexican-German relations that remain, for the most part, tucked away in dusty archives and random footnotes, is an important contribution to our understanding of the past; and a revealing exposure of the global web in which the Mexican Revolution was caught.

Ariel Zatarain Tumbaga's essay moves the narrative worlds of Mexican novelists José Rubén Romero and Martín Luis Guzmán by first locating his critical Archimedean spot on questions of indigenous identity,

[8] *See* Stephen Niblo's documented evidence on how the "mingling" of Mexican elites with U.S. economic and political interests during the presidencies of Manuel Avila Camacho (1940–1946), and Miguel Alemán (1946–1952), resulted in what he defines as the forces "that changed the course of the Mexican Revolution" (221). He adds: "The new president, Miguel Alemán, was certainly one of the politicians most deeply involved in creating links between the U.S. and Mexican elites. From his early days in Hollywood, throughout his presidency, and even after he left office, he pursued that goal. He moved from the presidential office to head the Tourism Department for the remainder of his active life, which enabled him to offer the pleasures of Acapulco to powerful contacts. A constant stream of corporate leaders passed through Alemán's Acapulco, cementing deals while enjoying the good life" (222).

modernity, and race. The analysis focuses on Romero's *Apuntes de un lugareño* (1932), and on his "Orientalist" depictions of the native Purépecha people of Michoacán, then turns his attention to Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* (1928), with special attention to the latter's alleged Social Darwinist characterizations of the Yaqui people of Sonora. The interpretive results yield an anticipated ambiguity in which these Mexican writers portray aboriginal peoples of Mexico as both irredeemable "Others" and yet as an integral part of the Mexican Revolutionary identity, particularly in the case of the Yaqui people who fought under the leadership of generals from Sonora, such as José María Maytorena and Alvaro Obregón. Zatarain Tumbaga's weapons are irony and satire, alluding first to an iconic photo of Villa and Zapata in the presidential seat surrounded by revolutionaries whose faces are dark, light, and in-between, therefore the personification of Mexico's ethnic cardinal points and, as such, a symbolic snapshot of a multiethnic nation. Zatarain Tumbaga questions why Romero and Guzmán exemplified Mexico's indigenous peoples—Purépecha and Yaqui—in zoomorphic and colonial discourses. He claims that such authorial prejudices are deeply rooted in Mexico's nineteenth-century colonial and racial ideologies. Mariano Azuela is also included among other racist Mexican writers (and Zatarain Tumbaga comes well-armed with references to works by different critics, from Joseph Sommers to Max Parra). The ironic approach is fruitful in the way Zatarain Tumbaga points to contradictions in Romero as well as in Guzmán, given that both got tangled in "a conflicting web of meaning," namely: the first does not make up his mind regarding the Purépecha—are they the Oriental splendor of the Americas, or the vanishing people of an archaic Mesoamerican past? The second's ambiguity is positioned in the chapter "De Hermosillo a Guaymas" (*El águila y la serpiente*) in which the Yaqui soldiers are portrayed, on the one hand, as "instinctual" and "bloodthirsty" for shooting randomly at cattle ("target practice") as the train follows its northern route and, on the other, as a "bellicose" but disciplined warriors fighting under Obregón. To his credit, Zatarain Tumbaga addresses historical and social contradictions that marked the literature and the political process of the Mexican Revolution itself, and then provides answers. For example, the "constant tension" between Indigenous peoples and Mexicans in the Revolution was the result of opposing interests in which the Yaqui expected to recuperate their ancestral lands (fundamental to their tribal objectives). The political directions of the Revolution, however, were *national* in Madero, Carranza, Obregón, Calles and those who followed. As a result, the problem did not only include race and coloniality: as Katz reminds us, the major

differences that distinguished revolutionaries such as Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata from Venustiano Carranza were their regional preferences as opposed to the nationalism of the latter (Katz, 387, 391, 618, 808). Moreover, let's not forget that Guzmán was born in Chihuahua, therefore with a centuries-long history of military colonies that fought against Apaches and other justifiably rebellious Indians. Katz himself situates Chihuahua's "exceptionalism" in the warrior's pride of local peoples in their history of battles against Apaches. Let's not forget as well that although it's fashionable to sing the praises of Campobello's *Cartucho*, it contains memories of social prejudices against native peoples during the Revolution, illustrated in the "zoomorphic" metaphor used toward a Yaqui soldier in the story titled "*Por un beso*" in which he is called a "*chango*" (a monkey), and is executed for desiring a kiss from Luisa (71–72).

Julio Puente García closes this volume with a comprehensive overview of an emergent generation of Mexican novelists nestled on opposing trenches: on the avant-garde side, "*El Crack*" (no punning on drugs, but resonant with the "Boom" of the preceding generation), who claim in their 1996 manifesto that art should break with tradition, reject the notion of "models" (forget Juan Rulfo and company), and admonish writers not be limited to national themes. On the "regional" and rival group stand writers known collectively as *Narrativa del Norte* (Narrative of the North [of México]), with David Toscana as a leading member and one who ridicules the "cosmopolitan" Crack writers on the claim that literature should be anchored on the writer's circumstantial and conflictive world.[9] Members of the Crack include award-winning novelists and essayists such as Ignacio Padilla and Jorge Volpi (among others) who, tired of an established literary canon in Mexican letters (nationalist, parochial, regional), declare direct lineage back to the generation of Mexican writers associated with the literary journal *Contemporáneos* (1928–1931), to Fernando del Paso, and to the international range in Carlos Fuentes's novels and essays. Puente García selected Toscana and his novel *El último lector* (2005) as the centerpiece of the critical response to the manifesto and writings of the Crack writers. Known for his satiric bent and unusual mix of talents that merge the novelist, the literary critic, and the theorist, Toscana argues for a return to regional literature (the concrete, the specific, the local) but with national and universal implications. As if to muddy the waters (and with his own talents in irony and sarcasm), Volpi published in 2006 an article in *Revista de la Universidad de México*

[9] *See* also Iliana Alcántar (231–246).

proclaiming that Latin American literature exists no more—in other words, it is dead. As a symptom of globalization, the quarrel flares over time and space: on one side, the urban and the international; on the other, the regional and rural. What is missing is the nation. This might explain why Carlos Fuentes, in a book he published ten months before his death, devoted one chapter to the Crack group, tacitly handing the torch to them as the rightful heirs of the Boom generation. In spite of his prestige and force of argument, Carlos Fuentes does not have the last word: Puente García argues strongly in favor of the poetics and regional stance of *Narrativa del Norte.*[10]

Although Carlos Fuentes does not have the last word on the Crack generation, his book *La gran novela latinoamericana* is the work of an 84-year old writer who appears to be energetic, imaginative, and with a capacious memory. His references to Mariano Azuela and *Los de abajo* appear frequently throughout a book that covers from pre-Columbian cultures in the New World to Mexico's post-Boom generation of writers, thus aspiring to a totality of the Americas in its fourfold focus as cultural history, literary history, literary criticism, and theory. Paraphrasing Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman, Fuentes asserts that America was not discovered, instead it was "invented," thus imagined, desired and, by definition, made New. Europe thus locates in the New World—says Fuentes--the target and channel for its excess of creative energies associated with the Renaissance, based on an expanded rationale of what is "real": the liberty to act over *what is*, *what should be*, and *what could be* (19). This Renaissance rebellion against the fatalism of the Middle Ages achieved its artistic personification in Leonardo da Vinci (17) who, as an artist, embodied the spirit of modernity in the sixteenth century. Fuentes writes that "what should have been," on the contrary, was expressed by Bernal Díaz del Castillo in his *La verdadera historia de la conquista de la Nueva España*, resulting in the first *épica atribulada* ("troubled epic") as testimony of the fall of Tenochtitlan (43), the Troy of Texcoco. This troubled epic-- claims Fuentes--with its historical sense of defeat and disappointment is the rule and not the exception in human history, and the truest writing of the Americas in works by William Faulkner, Rómulo

[10] In Fuentes' words: "La del crack es la primera generación literaria que se da un nombre propio después del boom […] El grupo del crack culmina, en cierto modo, la reivindicación del derecho a la diversidad que Elizondo cobró en Farabeuf. Críticos de lo inútil o rebasado, reclamándose por ello mismo continuadores de una 'tradición de la ruptura', exigentes sabedores de que hace medio siglo hubiesen sido quemados en el Zócalo [por] una sociedad política que no se resigna del todo a abandonar usos y costumbres pretéritos y arraigados" (360).