

The Only Way: *Congregación* and the Construction of Race and Land in Mexico, 1521-2017

by

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Dedication

For the Zapatista who told me nearly ten years ago that they did not need more academics telling them about themselves, but “someone who will investigate the state and their *Ciudad Rural Sustentable*, and other projects like these.”

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Abstract

In 2008, the Mexican government unveiled the Sustainable Rural Cities, a project to concentrate “dispersed populations” living in the “high risk lands” of Chiapas. Marketed as a novel idea, the Sustainable Rural Cities were remarkably similar colonial *congregaciones*, which sought to convert and care for indigenous people—and to exploit their labor and land—in the wake of the devastation of the Spanish conquest. In fact, the 2008 project in Chiapas was only the latest in a long series of post-independence development schemes to revive this colonial model. In both its material and ideological forms, congregación has figured centrally in key moments of Mexico’s national development. This dissertation, “The Only Way: *Congregación* and the Construction of Race and Land in Mexico, 1521- 2017,” examines the evolution and variants of congregación through its historical and literary realizations, from the colonial era to the present day.

“The Only Way” brings Foucault’s notion of pastoral power into conversation with Critical Race Theory and the Environmental Humanities to show how congregación alienated “nature” from “society” as a means of advancing capitalist modernity. I demonstrate how the Spanish view of the indigenous Americans as “dispersed” over the landscape played a major role in racializing them as “Indian”—that is, subjects in need of constant religious and (agri)cultural conversion. In what I call the race/land remedy, elite imaginations viewed the Indian and their land as mutually constitutive, sharing an essence that, if properly harnessed by the state, could make them all more productive. The resulting “Indian” subjectivity suspended them between “nature” and “society,” making them perpetual targets for transformation and primitive accumulation. This unstable construction made indigenous populations, and later those rendered simply as colorblind “dispersed populations,” the

constant targets of pastoral power wielded through variants of congregación.

“The Only Way” charts continuity and change in the race/land remedy over four distinct historical moments. The first chapter analyzes Bartolomé de las Casas’s writings to argue that, despite his reservations about the colonial project, his proposals for resettling the Indians paved the way for Vasco de Quiroga’s *pueblos hospitales*, enshrining congregación as a means of “putting human and non-human nature to work” for the incipient capitalist state. The second chapter uses two nineteenth-century novels, *El monedero* by Nicolás Pizarro and *Navidad en las Montañas* by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, to show how secular liberal elites grafted utopic socialism onto the model of congregación to create model agrarian villages intended to modernize the countryside. When read as didactic proposals for agrarian reform, they expose liberals’ embrace of Mexico’s Catholic colonial heritage, refracted through Enlightenment ideals about natural science and New Spain’s nascent agricultural capitalism. The third chapter shows how the ejido, the twentieth-century institution of land reform, also called upon congregación for its ability to usher Mexico’s peasants away from communal farming to private property. Through José Revueltas’s *El luto humano* and Rosario Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas*, I show how violence underwrote pastoral power and the race/land remedy during the so-called “Mexican Miracle” of the mid twentieth century. The final chapter examines the Sustainable Rural Cities which I approach through documentaries, ecotourism promotions, development documents, and government propaganda. Together, these diverse sources generate a racialized discourse of criminality and underdevelopment coupled with dispersion, working to re-territorialize Mexico in the name of “Green Capitalism.”

Introduction

Congregación and the Foundations of Race and Land

Vivian los indios en su gentilidad en pueblos diferentes unos de otros, con diferentes nombres, diferentes señores, diferente gobierno, diferentes ídolos, y diferentes lenguas, y todo tan distinto como una señoría, o reyno de otro, y a causa de no se ordenar los pueblos por calles y barrios como en Europa, estaba aquí una casa, acullá otra, a otro trecho otra, sin correspondencia alguna, y por esta razón un lugar de quinientos y de menos vecinos, que en aquellos tiempos era muy pequeño, ocupaba una legua de tierra, de donde procedía ser ellos entre si mismos poco sociables, antes continuamente andaban en guerras, bandos y diferencias unos con otros. Entraron los religiosos, y hallando los lugares en esta disposición, no podía doctrinar ni administrar los sacramentos a los naturales, sin mucho trabajo, y cansancio, así por la distancia de las casas, como por haber muchas veces entre ellas cuevas, ciénagas, barrancas, ríos, y otros malos pasos...comenzaron los padres a tratar de juntar los pueblos...para esto hicieron primero una planta, porque todos fuesen uniformes en edificar...Hecho esto faltaba lo principal, y era, que los indios quisiesen mudarse, porque esta nación ama mucho sus chozas, sus naturalesas, el monte donde nacieron, la barranca donde se criaron, y por malo, seco, y estéril que sea el sitio que el indio una vez conoce, es muy dificultoso de arrancar de allí.

--Fray Antonio de Remesal

The version of events presented above was already a standard narrative by the time of its publication in 1619, enduring in one form or another until present. Fray Antonio de Remesal chronicled the conversion project undertaken in Chiapas, now Mexico's southernmost state, over the previous century by Bartolomé de Las Casas, explicitly linking the question of indigenous land use to the practice of spatial concentration. A crucial point of departure for this project is the simple fact that when the Spanish arrived in the New World, they came not only with their own logics and goals, but flora and fauna, which ultimately caused them to approach, and then fundamentally change, the land and the people living on it. The agri(cultural) demands of the Spanish led them to propose *congregación*, the practice of concentrating "dispersed" Indigenous populations into planned towns, as a response to what they felt were uncivilized people dispersed over abundant, but unruly,

lands. The concentration of the indigenous described here by Remesal moved from the peripheral “Gobernación de Chiapa y Guatemala” to the core of the Mexican nation. The difficulty of displacing the indigenous and changing their ways of inhabiting the land, a fact which with the passage of time, consistently contributed to the racialization of the Indian as a subject that needed to be recast into a more legible mold, would occupy elites for the next 500 years.

In 2008, the Mexican government unveiled the Sustainable Rural Cities (CRS), a project to concentrate “dispersed populations” living in the “high risk lands” of Chiapas. By inspiring a “change of life” among rural peoples, the development project also hoped to open their land for investments in agribusiness, ecotourism, and carbon offset credits. Marketed as a novel idea, the Sustainable Rural Cities were remarkably similar colonial *congregaciones*, which sought to convert and care for indigenous people—and to exploit their labor and land—in the wake of the devastation of the Spanish conquest. In fact, the 2008 project in Chiapas was only the latest in a long series of post-independence development schemes to revive this colonial model. This dissertation examines the evolution and variants of congregación through its historical and literary realizations, in the colonial era, the nineteenth century, the twenty first century, and the present day. Through tracing the many lives of colonial *congregación*, this project also shows how ideas about concentration and dispersion were intimately tied to the mutual construction of race and land in Mexico.

In what I call the race/land remedy, elite imaginations viewed the Indian and their land as mutually constitutive, sharing an essence that, if properly harnessed by the state, could make them all more productive. I demonstrate how the Spanish view of the indigenous Americans as “dispersed” over the landscape played a major role in racializing them as “Indian”—that is, subjects in need of constant religious and (agri)cultural conversion. The resulting Indian subjectivity suspended them between “nature” and “society,” in an unstable construction that made indigenous populations, and later those rendered simply as “dispersed populations,” the constant targets of a racializing pastoral

power wielded through variants of congregación. The race/land remedy is consistently exercised spatially and in tandem with the evolving needs of a colonial and postcolonial capitalist nation state, fundamentally reorganizing human relationships, ideas, and uses of the land.

Congregación was one of, if not the first, racial project to mutually articulate race with land, the parceled and propertied understanding of nature undergirding so much of Mexican history. Congregación's racializing force cannot be understood without the construct of dispersion, a problem made so only because of its concomitance with ideas about land use. Mexican elites believed capitalist progress could be achieved time and again through the race/land remedy of congregación for its power to harmonize a racialized indian people with lands to which they were essentially tied. This tie to the land—a non-alienated relationship forced into an essentialist and racial characteristic of indigenous peoples—paradoxically needed to be broken to implement capitalist organizations of nature, but it also needed to be repaired, elites thought, to respect the essence from which Mexico's agrarian modernity might arise. Congregación has—in ideology and in actuality—been called upon to sever and then re-suture this supposed essence, an impossibility that lies in the need to imbed and expand capitalist natures vis à vis the alienation of human society from nature, but perhaps even more so in the falsehood of a race/land essence that hides these processes of colonialism and capitalism. In doing so, the project brings Michel Foucault's notion of power, particularly pastoral power, into conversation with eco-Marxism, Marxist feminism, World Ecology, and Critical Race Theory to show how congregación alienated “nature” from “society” as a means of advancing capitalist modernity. My understanding of race and political ecology is outlined in what follows, and a more detailed development of Foucauldian power and political economy as they relate to colonialism appear in chapter one.

Denaturalizing Race

The timeline of colonial *congregación* has been a question of some debate, but Daniel Nemser makes a strong case against conceptually dividing colonial *congregación* into two phases, one earlier, less effective by the religious orders and one later, more successful civil round. Besides the fact that it creates a problematic distinction between the colonial Church and state, leaves out major projects such as Vasco de Quiroga's *pueblos-hospitales*, or that the first *congregaciones* did in fact have lasting impacts on colonial settlement patterns, it overlooks the way that *congregación* "was enacted continuously, if intermittently and unevenly, over roughly the first century of colonial rule, from about 1530-1635" (28-29). Building on this, I argue that the earliest formulations—both material and ideological—of *congregación* and dispersion were so impactful that not only did they endure over the first century of colonization, but they reappeared "intermittently" in the late colonial period as a response to ecological and population crisis, in the nineteenth century as a means of nation building, in the twentieth during land reform, and most recently in the twenty-first in its most uncanny manifestation yet, the *Ciudad Rural Sustentable*.

The "Indian" did not exist until Cristopher Columbus accidentally landed in the New World. As is well known, the colonial project reduced diverse cultures and linguistic groups into a homogenous whole. The massive reorganization of identity and difference that fueled the colonial project made it possible to differentially subject the natives to the violent needs of a Catholic empire. Over the course of the early colonial era, what it meant to be Indian was formed not just by theological and legal debates, but by material spatial practices like *congregación*. I do not mean to suggest, however, that the notion of an Indian race was created *solely* by *congregación*. Without some racialization prior to *congregación*, such as Columbus's initial mistake, the Spanish would not have been able to suggest separate spatial arrangements and forms of government to dominate and convert the Indigenous. Rather, a study of *congregación* sheds light on colonial racialization and suggests that

congregación imposed lasting conditions of possibility from which race functioned as a primary mechanism of power in Mexico.

Recent work on race in Mexico has turned toward material understandings of race. Generally, it focuses on how race works through and with space, territory, or geography, emphasizing its immanent recourse to segregation. This project is indebted to two recent frameworks that bring space to the question of race: Nemser's work on colonial Mexico and Joshua Lund's work on post independence Mexico. Nemser argues that *congregación* is an "infrastructure of race" that "reconfigured colonial space and racialized the bodies that inhabited it." (18).

Infrastructure helped realize the spiritual and royal colonial project but it was also its product. It directed the way the New World became divided and connected, and how people and things became both contained and made to travel across this newly territorialized space. Material lines were drawn by elites to define spaces of exclusion and inclusion, often in the name of maintaining a cohesive colony or nation state. "Racial mixing" was an unavoidable, and at times even desirable, element of empire and state consolidation, but the quest and creation for hierarchical and divided spaces ultimately remained. Any such idea of actual "racial mixing" is of course but an offshoot of the fiction of race, but an operable one for empire nonetheless. In observing how infrastructure "tends to cohere around the accretions that precede it," Nemser writes:

perhaps the large-scale technical systems of nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernity that so dazzle contemporary scholars should not be detached from the historical foundations on which they rest. To repurpose Marx's famous dictum, these infrastructural pasts weigh like a nightmare on the circulation of the present. They are a powerful reminder that certain material structures and practices can endure the vicissitudes of history and politics. And if race itself has an infrastructural function, it may continue to operate in this way as well. (20)

By considering the colonial era as a nascent modernity, several trends in Latin American studies become problematic. For example, the rise of "decolonial" thought has left the historical specificity

of capitalism by the wayside in favor of the generalized and often vague “modernity.”¹ On the other end of the spectrum, the discipline of history has made important contributions to how we understand race as it has operated in daily life, showing how racial categories were often flexible or negotiable. However, racialization was obviously powerful enough to endure through the present day, and micro-histories sometimes run the risk of minimizing the structural violence and domination at racialization’s heart (9, 11). Yet other scholars argue that race is an inappropriate category of analysis during the colonial era and that race is intimately linked to biological understandings that emerged during the nineteenth century. Following María Elena Martínez and Nemser, these positions are ahistorical and overlook the way culture and religion have always factored into racialization, even in the nineteenth century (the supposed birth of “scientific racism”). As is evident by the current resurgence and heightened visibility of white supremacist groups across Europe and the United States, biological racism is but one of the many tools of racial domination from which those in power may draw. It seems to me that so long as race exists as a category of classification and method of domination, culturalist and biological notions of race will create one another in a dialectical fashion.

In the wake of scientific consensus rejecting the existence of biologically distinct and identifiable races, common trends regarding thought on race are first; to assume that since race does not naturally exist (beyond superficial aesthetic differences among bodies), it can be overcome through education, good will, tolerance, aesthetic representation, and physical representation (i.e. multiculturalism); and second; that race is a representation that glosses a conflict over something else (jobs, class, land). While the liberal multicultural framework of inclusion and representation is

¹ This is not to say that modernity should never be used as a category of analysis, but rather when it is employed decontextualized from the rise of capital, it loses meaning. It also makes unclear what exactly is problematic or even perhaps positive about modernity and more importantly, where or for whom, if it is not immersed in a discussion of capitalism.

sometimes helpful in providing opportunities and visibility to those most affected by racialized oppression, it also presents serious limitations and often works at the service of racial capitalism, the importance of which I will address in a moment. It may acknowledge that race does not biologically exist, but multi-culturalism—even if unknowingly—continues to uphold race-as-culture as a valid mechanism for social organization, that is, it does not challenge race as a way of classifying, describing, and ordering humans. Racism, while reprehensible to be sure, is first and foremost a symptom of race, a construction of history that under different conditions, may not have existed at all. The second line of thought privileges structure, but scholars like Omi and Winant maintain a dialectical view through their concept of racial projects, of which *congregación* could be considered an example:

An alternative approach is to think of racial formation processes as occurring through a linkage between structure and representation. Racial projects do the ideological “work” of making these links. *A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.* (56)

This project seeks to move away from the former as it has been used in previous critical analysis in Latin American cultural and literary studies, and take up the latter, connecting structure to representation.

I follow Lund, then, “to systematically “read race,” over “an interest in “reading for racism.” Similarly, critical analyses concentrated on *mestizaje* tend not to question race itself, but submit that Mexican history is defined by the painful and often violent coming together of two (or more) actually (even if “just” or “only” culturally) existent races. It does at this point, however, bear acknowledging that physical difference obviously matters, especially for the thousands of vulnerable black and brown bodies that have died at the hands of police and the modern carceral and police state.² Lund’s three “working assumptions” are helpful here:

² On this point see Nemser, forthcoming, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s influential book, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. UC Press, 2007.

First, race is a theory of the organization of human difference that, even with the best of intentions, hides (or reveals) within itself a structure of hierarchy. Second, race is dependent on an aesthetic vision of the human species; it is tied to beauty, form, representation, and narrative. Third, race is productive of group identity. That is, it can pull people together and form networks of solidarity. But because it is ultimately governed by a hierarchical impulse, race always returns to segregation. (xiv)

The questions at hand, then, are *why* did it come to pass that black and brown bodies could be identified, “let die”—to borrow a phrase from Foucault, or murdered with impunity rather than say, short or tall bodies, and *how* was this made possible by segregation and the creation of aesthetic representations and narratives? What can be said in the case of Mexico where colorism operates, but is not always a determining factor in racial hierarchy premised on segregation? Again, Lund responds to these questions: “My contention is that race becomes meaningful in the real world only as it operates at the historical division of material resources and the institutional vigilance over that division” (xiv). The *casta* system, multiculturalism, and scientific racism are all systems that made race legible, but taking these discourses at their word does not help us to understand *how* race works as a function of power, dividing resources along racial lines. In the last instance, then, race is fundamentally about land. To be clear, however, my intention is not to reduce racialized conflict to a Malthusian paradigm of resource squeezes, but rather to challenge the logics that would have us believe there is not enough to go around.³ Adapting Foucault’s insights on race war, even in times of apparent peace, an ongoing war simmers beneath the surface with processes so often considered external to capitalism (primitive accumulation and social reproduction) at its core. Lund’s definitions of race consider it ultimately in terms of territory (the demarcation of *space* and who controls it),

³ See Moore on Neo-Malthusianism in left ecology: “They are neo-Malthusian because they reproduce Malthus’s original error, which was less about population than it was about taking the dynamics of nature out of history. In this scheme, limits are external—rather than co-produced.” He continues, “The view that resources are things unto themselves—and that the limits of capitalism are external constraints rather than internal contradiction—is of course not new to our era” (43).

insightfully tracing its innate relation to questions of sovereignty, liberalism, nation, and capitalism (primarily through modes of production) in Mexico.

The term racial capitalism emerges as a shorthand for the interdependent relationship between capitalism and racialization and appears throughout this project. Cedric Robinson popularized the term in 1983 in his path breaking *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. According to Robin D.G. Kelley, “Marxism also failed to account for the *racial* character of capitalism...Robinson encountered intellectuals who used the phrase “racial capitalism” to refer to South Africa’s economy under apartheid. He developed it from a description of a *specific* system to a way of understanding the *general* history of modern capitalism.” Robinson, deeply critical of Marxism (particularly reacting to its orthodox expressions), emphasized that race had in fact emerged out of European feudal ethnic identities, and throughout his work, he often looked outside of the parameters of Marxism and even capitalism. This was a tendency that helped Robinson correct for reductionist readings of political economy, race, and revolution.

However, this project *does* highlight the centrality of capitalism as understood through Marxist inspired thought, and in large part my ability to do so is indebted to all of the scholars like Robinson who have worked so hard to expand Marxist analyses to include race and gender. Along these lines, I choose a framework that asserts that the Spanish conquest and the Colombian Exchange mark a foundational moment in the ability to consummate capitalism via racialization and organizations of nature. Undoubtedly, prior systems like *Limpieza de sangre* in Spain traveled across the Atlantic and mutated into racial colonial categories, as María Elena Martínez painstakingly showed. However, the scale of the genocide, terror, exploitation, and immense appropriation of the natural world’s wealth, and all of their attendant and constitutive ideologies, were forces in their own right that determined a distinctive colonial “world system.” After Kelley then, when I invoke racial capitalism here, it is to highlight the simple fact that the “general history,” the tendency of capitalism

in Mexico, even its most contemporary elements, cannot be understood without racialization and colonialism. Racial capitalism is also clearly inextricable from gender, another category of analysis which crops up throughout the project, most often through discussions of primitive accumulation, alienation, and social reproduction as they also relate to race. Regrettably, there will be places where its absence is felt more strongly, but the project's main goal is to maintain the centrality of race as a category of analysis.

The spatial and geographic understandings of race are fundamental to this project, but I develop analyses of land by broadening them to include the way conceptions of nature have contributed to racialization in Mexico. As Jason W. Moore asks, “when geographers say *space*, may we not also say *nature*?” (11). Otherwise, one risks again painting the indigenous and their lands as victims of primitive accumulation and exploitation without sufficiently linking these process to understandings of nature that guide ideas about space, race, and vulnerability. If *congregación* and the Spanish preoccupation with Indian dispersion were essential to racialization in Mexico, and as this project shows, they appear in every century thereafter, it is necessary to trace how *congregación* and narratives of dispersion became linked to land. In order to situate land historically as well, one must also consider the idea of nature under capitalism. Conflicts over land refer to a great many things; not least of which include natural resources, arable land, territory, modes of production, and ideologies about land use. All of these, however, concern the modern idea of nature, which according to Raymond Williams:

is perhaps the most complex word in the language. It is relatively easy to distinguish three areas of meaning: (i) the essential quality and character *of* something; (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings. (219)

He notes how the expansion from sense (i) to senses (ii) and (iii) marks a historical development in which nature moves from the specific singular to the abstract plural sense.⁴ “This is structurally and historically cognate with the emergence of *God* from *a god* or *the gods*” (220).

Williams three senses of the word nature highlight the concept as a social construction *and* a way to think and reference the “inherent forces” and the “material world,” and it is this interplay between the two that I wish to maintain throughout. However, there is a vigorous debate within the “Green Left” regarding how to think, speak, and respond to climate change and capitalism. It revolves around whether or not one should privilege a de-ontologized notion of nature as a social construction (sometimes framed as “second nature,”) *or* as an inherent force that though inextricably intertwined with humanity or “society,” does maintain a certain degree of autonomy that should be heeded. In other words, should we be speaking of “Nature” and “Society,” or just “nature”?

First, it is helpful to foreground Marx’s introduction of “metabolic rift,” an original insight from Capital which noted capitalism’s nutrient depletion of the countryside to sustain the city:

Capitalist production collects the population together in great centres, and causes the urban population to achieve an ever-growing preponderance. This has two results. On the one hand it concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil. Thus it destroys at the same time the physical health of the urban worker, and in the intellectual life of the rural worker. But by destroying the circumstances surrounding that metabolism, which originated in a merely natural and spontaneous fashion, it compels its systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production, and in a form adequate to the full development of the human race...Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker. (637-8)

⁴ Williams’ definition in Keywords appears as follows: “**Nature** comes from fw [forerunner of a word] *nature*, oF[old French] and *natura*, L[Latin], from a root in the past participle of *nasci*, L—to be born(from which also derive nation, native, innante, etc.). Its earliest sense, as in oF and L, was (i), the essential character and quality *of* something. **Nature** is thus one of several important words, including *culture*, which began as descriptions of a quality or process, immediately defined by a specific reference, but later became independent nouns. The relevant L phrase for the developed meanings is *natura rerum*—the nature of things, which already in some L uses was shortened to *nature*—the constitution of the world.” (Williams 219)

Not only does capitalism destroy the soil and the worker, the two things it must tend to if it is to reproduce itself, but it also creates staunch lines between the urban and the rural, and by preventing a sustainable exchange (the metabolism) between the two, an ever-wider rift develops that refers to the alienation of the worker from the land and an actual nutrient depletion. The urban becomes the driving force of what Marx calls “society,” which both causes and depends on a metabolic disturbance between man and earth.

Those more closely aligned with eco-Marxism, such as John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, Carolyn Merchant, and Andreas Malm contend that while humans are obviously part of nature, it is important to speak of nature *and* society, because these are the real abstractions on which capitalism depends (and itself creates), and because many elements of nature clearly pre-date humanity (gravity, hurricanes, the sun, petroleum, water, etc). What is evident in Marx’s formulation is first and foremost, alienation, or a capitalist system of social relations that does not recognize the autonomy of neither human labor nor the processes of nature which allow for replenishment. Volumes I and III of *Capital*, as well as parts of the *Gundrisse*, are rather clear that capitalist value is complicated, but that there is something particular to human labor power, while animal labor is more akin to that of machines and nature *appears* as a “free gift” to the capitalist.

Moore, in turn, argues that capitalism is itself a “way of organizing nature,” and that “Capitalism as *world-ecology* is therefore not the ecology of the world, but a patterned history of power, capital, and nature, dialectically joined” (9). Environmentalism has fallen short by replicating the ontological split treating humans and nature as pre-existing “Cartesian” dualities—“Nature” and “Society” — that in fact were produced by capitalism.⁵ Instead, he calls for a theoretical framework

⁵ Nature and Society are capitalized in Moore’s work when referring to the historical and “Cartesian” distinction between the two. When referring to his preferred universal notion of nature, in which there is no “society” apart from “nature,” Moore leaves the word in lowercase. I follow this same practice throughout, leaving nature in lowercase when advocating for a more nuanced understanding (while also leaving some room for autonomous aspects of nature), and capitalizing it when speaking of elite representations of an instrumental nature as conceived wholly apart from society.

using what he terms the *“oikeios”*, “the creative, generative, and multi-layered relation of species and environment” and “the relation through which humans act—and are acted upon by the whole of nature—in our environment-making” (4). His work is guided by two main questions, “First, how is humanity *unified* with the rest of nature within the web of life? Second, how is human history a *co-produced* history, through which humans have put nature to work—including other humans—in accumulating wealth and power?” (9). Departing from narratives of capitalist crisis and destruction, Moore also asserts that “capitalism has survived not by destroying nature (whatever this might mean), but through projects that compel nature-as-*oikeios* to work harder and harder—for free, or at a very low cost” and the impending crisis lies not in nature’s destruction per se, but in the fact that “Today, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get nature—of any kind to work harder” (13). Moore has characterized this as the “tendency of the ecological surplus to fall,” which I engage in Chapter Four.

Other debates currently unfolding across Marxist ecology challenge Moore’s nature-as-value-producing perspective. They have to do with a critique of Moore’s particular brand of “monism” as it relates to collapsing the distinction between capitalist work as work/energy, and labor, or activities that produce value for capital. What is at stake are the political implications for different crisis theories. Malm takes inspiration from Autonomist Marxists (like Antonio Negri) to contend that what links humans and nature is not labor as such, but their relative autonomy:

Here, autonomy denotes not a moral capacity [in the Kantian sense], but an ontological fact that capital has to wrestle with throughout its history. It is that fact that binds labour and nature together from the perspective of capital: as something that came before it, could go on perfectly well without it, does not need it for existence and might one day refuse to cooperate, whether as a crop failure or a mass resignation” (Kindle Locations 2857-2860).

However, despite critiques by the collective Out of the Woods and others, an open question remains as to why Moore has never addressed the dialectical potential in the “monist” Baruch de Spinoza’s thought on nature (“God is nature”) into his theorization. For other historical reasons, which are in part explored here, I am also hesitant to replicate Moore’s affirmation that the Nature/Society split is in fact “Cartesian.” Upon developing the project further, this question will be explored in greater detail.

More importantly, some argue that the political orientation of Moore's crisis theory surmises that capitalism will exhaust itself before the climate or humanity, in so far as it is losing its ability to reproduce itself cheaply enough. This crisis for capitalism and capitalists; however, does not account for the those who are suffering and will suffer most in our planetary demise. This has specific consequences for racial capitalism, social reproduction, "disposable" surplus populations, and possible political responses.⁶

This project foregrounds the fact that Nature and Society, like race, are real abstractions that have material consequences.⁷ Nevertheless, there is still something to be said for combining the appropriation of nature with the exploitation of human labor. At times, it seems helpful and productive to also see Moore's formulation of "making nature work harder for cheaper" as a kind of shorthand for a variety processes that ultimately contribute to both capitalist value formation and profit. Moore, however, is not the first to assert some of these ideas, but I privilege aspects of his work (and depart from others) for its engagement with social reproduction theory of Marxist feminism and world systems theory—two frameworks which more fully attend to the question of race, colonialism, and notions of land, which often depend on relations outside the wage relation. Further, Moore argues that modern race, gender, and class relations were born of "early capitalism's primitive accumulation—an audacious movement of environment-making if there ever was one" (9). At other times, distinctions between advances in productivity (through technology) that make

⁶ Of the 2010 floods in Pakistan, "one of the worst climate-induced agricultural disasters in recent years, during which 2000 people were killed and some 10 million displaced..." Malm asks, "Did this in any way translate into a downward pressure on the rate of profit? Or were the victims primarily people so poor and peripheral to the central circuits of capital as to not even have a wage, their misfortune worse than that of a productive worker?" (loc 2762, Kindle Edition). Malm also notes that scarcity can of course make profits rise and that there are still frontiers to be mined, such as the arctic, the deep sea, or even outer space. For the cases that appear in this dissertation; however, Moore's thesis, which foregrounds the dangers in increased production and the need to remake environments," convinces.

⁷ "Understanding the concrete conditions that might give rise to a future "socialist ecology" (or, for that matter, a communist or anarchist one) requires attending to the changing ways that Nature and Society (and Culture, Humanity, etc.) operate as real abstractions rather than ideological constructs in contemporary capitalism. This endeavor would be entirely consistent with the world-ecology framework, but would also require conceptual and political resources that lie beyond its purview" (Nelson).

exploiting nature cheaper and the exploitation or expropriation of un(der)paid human labor should be made more clear.

Nature and Society, as this project shows, is also not as fixed of a trans-historical division as sometimes claimed. Very often, Spanish, and later Mexican elites, racialized people and lands in a way that played off the Indian's suspension between Nature and Society, and it is worth identifying when elites claimed to maintain a separation and when they sought a supposedly more evolved harmony between the two, itself a legacy and reinstatement of racialization. In later moments, it is important to attend to how ideas about a Nature outside of humanity, and the need to conserve it, have also been used to dispossess and oppress racialized populations. Marx's original notion of rift, or the idea that capitalism actually does kill human and natural life, seem important to maintain as we also seek to understand the ways that capitalism also "makes life live." However, this project also seeks to displace the urban as a stand-in for "society" or as the necessary site of historical "motive power." In sum, the strength of Marx's concept of alienation to address the Nature and Society debate is that it recognizes the dialectical relationship between human society (both urban and rural) and nature, the relationship between the two as both distinct (and autonomous) and as a totality (and interdependent). This dissertation maintains these distinctions while drawing on Moore's insights, but the actuality of the debate across recent scholarship in the environmental humanities merits sustained critical attention and reformulation.

In addressing this ambivalence between Nature and Society as it relates to race, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* has similarly approached this question through the concept of "heterotemporality." Saldaña-Portillo explains that the centrality of the Indian/*indio* shaped both Mexican and North American nationhood and argues that the idea of *indio*—despite homogenizing various indigenous groups— is a historically heterogeneous construction:

The point is not simply that the terms *Indian* and *indio* fail to index the rich heterogeneity of the thousands of indigenous peoples in the United States and Mexico, but rather, that there were multiple *generic* “Indians” and “indios” deployed over time, with these generic concepts morphing as required by the acquisition of space by Spanish and Anglo-American colonialism, especially during moments of colonial or national crisis. (Saldaña-Portillo, 8)

Thus the meaning of Indian changes over time while also remaining connected to its prior formulations, somewhat related to Nemser’s discussion about the importance of previous infrastructural networks. I thus show how dispersion is a historical constant for Mexican elites, while asserting that the concept of race, and its relationship to nature, “heterotemporally” shifts over time and even within it.

This project employs a combination of these theoretical frameworks, and it could not have done so without a consideration of cultural representations alongside material analyses to explain why dispersion and congregación set such deep roots in Mexico. In the chapters that follow, I offer close readings of “non-fiction” texts like colonial documents or government propaganda as well as more contemporary novels since this is one of the many modes through which *congregación* is made visible. The more traditionally literary works also serve as a guiding scholarly light, indicating the historical and theoretical connections between seemingly different moments, showing how ideas about race and land have never escaped their colonial foundations. In so many ways, literature has been the glue of this dissertation, not only because it takes center stage in the “middle” chapters (two and three), but also because, at different moments and in different works, it offers a window into and a critique of elite views. Sometimes didactic and sometimes speculative and reflective, literature combines and reorganizes history to create narratives in unexpected ways that inspire new modes of thought, new genealogies, and new possibilities. For example, although Foucault theorized different forms of power, “genealogically” traced onto historical moments, this project finds that the earliest days of the conquest laid the groundwork for pastoral, disciplinary, and biopower,

challenging traditional ideas about how and when “race” emerged and adapted as a mechanism of domination inexorably tied to ideas about nature and nature itself.

In the sixteenth century, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga employed a pastoral power that articulated race and land together, made possible by colonial views regarding nature that then heterotemporally reappeared in every century thereafter. Nineteenth century Mexican elites were aware of the scientific notions of race, which emerged from and distorted Darwin’s theory of evolution and Gregor Mendel’s early discovery of genetics. However, heavily influenced by French physiocrats, intellectuals who emphasized the importance of an agrarian based modernity, and the competing racial theories of Lamarck, Mexican elites adopted more mutable notions of race to assert their ability to achieve a capitalist modernity. In the twentieth century, reform era liberal and Porfirian ideas from the previous century seeped into the post revolutionary intellectual’s constructions, too, and fundamentally shaped land reform. In the twenty-first century, Mexican elites articulated a more explicitly biopolitical frame, speaking of “poblaciones dispersas,” represented by statistical parts of a whole into which they might someday be integrated to be made to “live better.” At first glance, dispersed populations might seem like a de-racialized rhetoric, but as this project shows, the elite notion of dispersion has long served as a racialized code for peasants.

I ultimately argue that the present re-territorialization of Mexico, particularly in states such as Guerrero and Chiapas, heterotemporally engages colonial notions of dispersion and an evolving notion of the race/land remedy. Where Las Casas sought to save people for a heavenly collection of souls that required a certain organization of life on Earth, the Mexican state now seeks to dispossess peasants from their means of production for the accumulation of capital, while also keeping them subjected to state power. By claiming that disperse populations’ ways of inhabiting the land, or simply their very presence, destroys pristine Nature, the state and its capitalist allies are able to maximize racialized labor power by leveraging essentialist discourses of nature, undoubtedly making

it work harder for less, to extract water, oil, gas, precious metals, and minerals, promote eco-tourism, build hydroelectric dams, or produce food at an industrial scale. No matter the representative forms that constructions of race take (“scientific,” “cultural,” or a hybrid of both), essentialism is at the heart of all racial thought. Through the words of Williams, “the essential quality and character of something” becomes linked to “the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both,” and “the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings.” Each chapter seeks to relate changing notions of race and land to the historical specificity of *congregación*, particularly analyzing the way the practice is narrativized through a diversity of texts.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter lays the theoretical foundation for the way constructs of dispersion and *congregación* racialized the indigenous into Indians. I begin by putting Foucault’s notions of pastoral power into conversation with perspectives on early modern primitive accumulation to show how race and land became mutually articulated through *congregación*. It argues that Bartolomé de Las Casas’s early proposals to concentrate the indigenous into planned towns paved the way for Vasco de Quiroga’s later *Información en derecho* and *Reglas y Ordenanzas*, outlines for his *pueblo-hospitales*, tracing the evolution of *congregación*’s original crisis attenuating and salvific goals into its more economic and imperial goals. I conclude with texts from Las Casas co-religionists, such as the quote that opens this introduction, to show how these ideas remained potent into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and became enshrined as a racializing narrative with material force.

The second chapter bridges the late colonial period of the Bourbon reforms and the revolutionary era by examining two nineteenth century novels, *El monedero* by Nicolas Pizarro and *La navidad en las montañas* by Ignacio Altamirano, and their narrative construction of pastoral power and model agrarian villages. Both authors nostalgically longed for *congregación*, while also bringing into

the fold new historical formations such as utopic socialism to make nature “work” harder under an intensified capitalism. Their ideas about race were highly dependent on their views of nature, and together, they drew heavily on a mythic indigenous past to cast a future vision that reverberated into the revolutionary era.

The third chapter shows how post-revolutionary elites, like José Vasconcelos, also looked to congregación as a means of transitioning between “traditional” and “modern” land tenure regimes, and how authors Rosario Castellanos and José Revueltas questioned this agrarian vision. Revueltas and Castellanos interrogated the foundations of racial capitalism and its relationship to land and nature, exposing the limits of the post-revolutionary state.

Chapter four delves into the reappearance of congregación through the recent Ciudad Rural Sustentable development project in Chiapas. I show how the project was part of a larger plan to reterritorialize the region to more successfully accumulate capital and labor. It argues that the rhetorical use of dispersion, initially unattached to “Indian” in a colorblind fashion, signals a shift within racial capitalism and its need to rearrange organizations of nature and labor given an ever intensifying metabolic rift in the countryside. Close readings of the CRSs, development reports, ecotourism promotional materials, and other corporate and government documents, images, and statements concerning carbon credits and sustainability bonds as cultural objects guide this chapter.

By way of conclusion, the Coda reads recent theorization from the Zapatistas regarding the contradictions of capitalism together with Juan Villoro’s epic novel, *El testigo*. The novel engages Mexico’s post-revolutionary cultural and political trajectory while also commenting on colonialism’s latent force. Of particular interest in the novel is the dialogue between culture, through the archive and commentary on the writer/intellectual, and the Mexican landscape, through the *finca* and the desert.

Chapter One

The Materiality of Pastoral Power: *Congregación*, Race, and Land

To be sure, Nature/Society is not the only dualism, but it is the originary dualism. The separation of the peasant from the land and the symbolic separation of Humans and Nature were a singular process. The emergence of Nature as a violent, but real abstraction was fundamental to the cascading symbolic-material transformations of primitive accumulation in the rise of capitalism.

— Jason Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*

Introduction

The first Spanish accounts of the New World praised its abundance, but the colonial project quickly turned into a crisis of scarcity, particularly of the Indians themselves. Disease, violence, and unfettered extraction had nearly decimated the native population and their land. As a response to this crisis, New World elites, from crown to clergy, sought a more sustainable path toward empire. The Spanish believed that the main obstacle to native conversion and a prosperous colony was what they called “dispersion” -- that is, that the Indians did not live in dense enough population centers. If they could fix dispersion, a host of ills would be cured and colonization would proceed more efficiently. Modifying the tactics established during the *reconquista* of Spain from the Moors, Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas suggested that the Indians be concentrated into towns called *congregaciones*.¹

Las Casas drew up his plans for *congregación* after spending time in the West Indies, but it was in *Chiapa* as bishop that he finally implemented them upon finding a dispersed people in need. To the Spanish, the Indigenous of Chiapas and the Yucatan appeared nomadic and primitive, as city-

¹ *Congregación* is also known as *reducción* or *pueblo de indios*. “*Reducir a poblado*” refers to the process of creating a *congregación* or *pueblo de indios*.

less and stateless barbarians.² The Spanish understood civilized life as residing within a bounded territory, separating residential from agricultural space, thus creating a sharp urban versus rural distinction.³ City or urban life also facilitated the nascent capitalist forms of circulation. Food production and extraction occurred in a space apart from the city where goods were brought and exchanged by inhabitants.

Prior to the Spanish arrival, the Indigenous did tend to live less densely, having a more continuous flow between the home and agricultural plot. In part, these settlement patterns caused colonization to progress more slowly in Chiapas and the Yucatan than in Central Mexico, where *congregación* reordered long established Indigenous centers or gathered the Indigenous into segregated, but already existent, *barrios* on the outskirts of indigenous, now colonial, cities.⁴ In Southern Mexico, however, where demographic collapse hollowed out native settlements, congregaciones were often located on new sites in an effort to correct for what appeared to the Spanish as dispersion. Although many of these southern congregaciones were eventually abandoned due to disease and crop failure, leading to frequent resettlement throughout the colonial period, yet others exist today because the indigenous maintained some semblance of their precolonial land use patterns (Markman 50). The fluidity between movement and rootedness matched Indigenous communal, family, and land tenure structures in accordance with the diverse ecosystems of their environment. Dispersal often worked in their favor by providing security, access to land, and autonomy, and so while they did have markets and ceremonial centers, these communal spaces were

² Most Spanish colonizers never saw the great city states of the diverse groups known today as the Maya. Although the Spanish encountered the great Aztec and Incan cities, and this largely shaped colonial policy as this chapter will show in a moment, the seemingly more dispersed Indigenous of the Mexican south also greatly influenced colonial notions of race and land, and therefore policy, in an often overlooked manner.

³ See Jiménez Abollado on the debate regarding the decision to congregate the Indigenous directly beside or some distance from the mines. Although the belief in *congregación* was never questioned, the case is representative of the various positions at the time regarding the regulation of Indigenous family life, health, and exploitation.

⁴ See Farriss for an interesting reflection on the question of “pace” or time with regard to dependency arguments of stage and development (392-3). “The newly perceived needs and the new income-producing means have together done more to erode the cultural autonomy of the Maya than all the efforts of missionaries and Liberal reformers combined.”

often occupied only temporarily or occasionally.⁵ The Spanish interpreted these dispersed settlement patterns as incoherent and irrational. The Indigenous may indeed have been “dispersed,” but it was not without reason. It was simply a reason other than that of the colonial state.

In time, the Indian identity became synonymous with rural dispersion, connecting race to understandings of population distribution and land use. The preoccupation with dispersion, according to Foucault, originates with early Christianity and pastoral power. It is foundational to the axis of Western power/knowledge and the formation of the individual in relation to the population. Foucault traces the figure of the shepherd—who guides, cares for, and watches over his flock—and his evolution in Western political thought.⁶ Eventually, the pastoral power to individualize entered into an uneasy embrace with the state’s totalitarian and centralizing power. I situate *congregación* within what Foucault calls “[the combination] of these two games—the city-citizen game and the shepherd-flock game—in what we call modern states” (239). The political problem of the state is in “assuring the city’s unity,” whereas “the pastoral problem concerns the lives of individuals,” creating an internal contradiction (235). However, Foucault explains pastoral power in terms of land only to say that pastoral power guides a flock over a land rather than emanating from it. The racialized notion of dispersion, with the help of a missionary shepherd, demanded a pastoral power to help to articulate the flock to the “city-citizen game” of an emergent colonial state.

This chapter discusses how, through *congregación*, the early colonial state converted the landscape and people it encountered by fusing race with land, creating the race/land remedy. I show how the Spanish imposition of an Indian identity based on their paradoxical views of dispersion and segregation and integration were fundamental to the colonial project. An examination of *congregación* through the study of two influential colonial priests, Bartolomé de Las Casas and

⁵ See Farriss on Dispersal (206-214) and on lowland Mayan migration and settlement patterns, 127, 158-168, 212-213.

⁶ “Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason,” Tanner Lectures, 1979.

Vasco de Quiroga—demands a revision of Foucauldian theory by integrating discourses of pastoral power with the material changes of people’s relationship to the land. Congregación signals a transformation in pastoral power in which it also sought to fix people to a bounded and curated space that was in need of conversion as well. The pastoral power articulated in the south by Las Casas, who eventually rejected the colonial project, was subsequently appropriated by Quiroga to advance the objectives of the colonial state, laying the foundations for an expression of race, land, and power that would ultimately influence modern Mexico’s diverse regions.

My analysis connects Las Casas’s view with the Quirogan (or Franciscan) project, often seen as distinct phenomena. For many, Las Casas was either a thinker of Indigenous liberation or an unwitting agent of empire primarily concerned with religious conversion and a flourishing native colony. In turn, the Franciscans, with whom Quiroga was most closely aligned ideologically, had a “utopian and millenarian vision”, supporting the creation of dual Indian and Spanish republics with the expressed goal of eventually achieving a unified colony.⁷ This political distinction between the two figures, however, does not address the inherently economic aspects of religious conversion, many of which set the stage for political power, exercised spatially, that Las Casas advocated for and Quiroga implemented. In other words, religious conversion was never a purely spiritual process, even if the likes of Las Casas believed it was. In spite of their disparate judgments of the colonial project, both Las Casas and Quiroga planted the seeds for a colonial state contingent on the creation of Indigenous rural communities that sought to shape social reproduction in such a way that it contributed to the universal goals of the colony. Without the creation and maintenance of indigenous-racialized-as-Indian subjects, the colony had no *raison d’être*. What emerged, then, was the

⁷ Maria Elena Martínez suggests three different viewpoints were operative in the 16th century: Las Casasian, Franciscan, and that of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the famous adversary of Las Casas who supported total subjugation and segregation of the Indigenous. Her description accurately depicts how these figures saw themselves, but perhaps in spite of himself, Las Casas’s logic of colonial and spiritual power, as Alberto Moreiras has argued, greatly influenced the colonial political economy.

idea that a space suited for conversion needed to be created exclusively for a class of people called “Indians,” whose role was to cultivate the land in a way that promoted Christian community, salvation, good government, health, and economic stability.

In the pages that follow, I elaborate my use and understanding of dispersion as it relates to race, primitive accumulation, and power. Then, through an examination of Las Casas’s writings, this chapter builds out from an understanding of race that integrates pastoral power in relation to *congregación*. I proceed to an analysis of Quiroga’s *pueblo-hospitales* (*congregación* by another name) to show how his reformist approach to concentration and care of the Indians canonized the race/land remedy for the colonial state in Mexico. Finally, I conclude with Las Casas’s chroniclers, who wrote many years after his death, to show how the idea and practice of *congregación* persisted through the late colonial period.

The Co-Production of Race and Land

Before examining *congregación*, one must first turn to what it was trying to fix, dispersion. The question of dispersion is complex, but above all, it was a narrative that hid other material processes and realities. The Spanish projected dispersion onto the New World to make its people and lands legible, often because they simply failed to see the indigenous’ managed environments, and the complexity and recognition of indigenous knowledge regarding nature was lost in this representation. On the one hand, it is possible to speak of an “actual” dispersion to describe low population density, nomadic indigenous ethno-states, or certain planting methods, especially among the Indigenous to the south. On the other hand, these Indigenous practices were not the same thing as the Spanish notion of dispersion, which took on far greater meaning. In a very short time, dispersion came to stand in for a variety of potential ills embodied by the Indian, such as rebellion, idolatry, or even general misery. It defined the Indian, even those living in relatively dense

settlements in Central Mexico. Beyond seeing the New World as a kind of *tabula rasa* free for the taking, recurrent epidemics and violence in the decades following the initial conquest caused actual population density loss, further reinforcing Spanish perceptions. As Nemser has argued, the Spanish also projected the Mexican landscape as empty by failing to see indigenous infrastructures and land occupation.⁸ The Spanish, then, equated dispersion with irrationality. By rationalizing this “empty” space, “The reterritorialization of the indigenous population into rural cities paradoxically contributed to the emergence of an increasingly deterritorialized “Indian” as a meaningful category of identity, detached from the *altepetl* that had previously served as its anchor and instead constituting a racialized, relatively mobile, laboring population” (Nemser 58).

Congregación as it was first proposed responded to the current threat and reality of dispersion (as the Spanish perceived it), a pity in the eyes of Las Casas, especially given the Indian capacity for civilized life. Although I will explore his writings in further detail in a moment, Las Casas used the great Indian cities of the Inca and the Aztecs to defend the Indians as rational humans, thus seemingly refuting the idea that all indigenous peoples could be characterized by their dispersion. While it was true that indigenous cities rivaled European cities of the time, Las Casas probably never saw for himself such cities in all their splendor. What he did see and is reflected in his early writings was the genocide of the indigenous in the Caribbean. Later, he would model his proposals for congregación on the needs of the less dense Southern Maya subgroups of New Spain and Guatemala. As we see will in Las Casas and Quiroga, proof of Indian rationality was deeply tied to the land. Thus, the Indian was constructed as both closer to land (nature) and always in need of conversion given their propensity to become irrationally dispersed once again. Nevertheless, the Indian had two potentialities. They could remain (or backslide into) dispersed savages, or they could

⁸ See Nemser on Gustavo Verdesio’s work on the Spanish failure to recognize human-made fisheries in the landscape (26).

be potentially converted as reduced civilized beings. Far from being permanently welcomed under the umbrella of civilized humanity, elites feared that Indian conversion was tenuous and subject to regression, and dispersion would refer to not just improper population distribution, but methods of land use suggestive of idolatry and later as I will show in chapter three, sedition. The paradoxical characterization of Indians as both settled and dispersed, as potentially ideal converts or “wandering infidels” is owed in part to the fact that Mexico is a large country of diverse landscapes, and just as the Indigenous were not a monolithic culture, they did not all use or inhabit the land the same way in the same environments (See Radding and Saldaña Portillo).

I argue that Las Casas and then Quiroga helped to define dispersion as a racial quality, making their antidote of congregación a lasting prescription for centuries to come in what I have called the race/land remedy. Particular indigenous groups, such as those to the peripheral south and north, that hunted and gathered or seasonally migrated embodied the Spanish’ worst fears for the indigenous population as a whole. In many cases, however, “dispersion” was actually made worse by the missionaries’ incursion:

Migration was both cause and effect of geographic and social changes owing principally to the pressures of colonialism on aboriginal life. Individuals and families did not move at random, but followed discernible objectives and conformed to regional settlement patters. The flow of persons from missions to presidios, haciendas, and mines corresponded to perceived needs and opportunities arising from the colonial economy. Migration had a dramatic impact on indigenous communities, leading at different conjunctures to their abandonment and reconstitution in new forms. (Radding 166)

As Nemser points out above in reference to early colonial congregación, or Radding regarding the later northern missions, concentrated rural cities uprooted the indigenous from their land making them, as a population, available for exploitation. As later chapters will show, the later manifestations of the project followed suit, generally attempting to re-order land and labor for increased exploitation. Adapting Moore’s framework, Indians-as-nature and their lands were made to work harder for free or for a very low cost in the emergent way of organizing nature known as Capitalism.

Congregación was a crucial step in the making of this Capitalist world-ecology by acting as a force of primitive accumulation.⁹ Writing at the intersections of race, Nature, and capitalism, Moore says:

The Columbian rupture of 1492 marked not only the “discovery” of the Americas, but the “discovery of Mankind” – and with it, Nature (Albuafia 2008; Mumford 1934). For the Columbian conquests were not merely exterminist and plundering; their epochal significance derives also from ambitious imperial projects to map and catalogue productive natures of every kind (Bleichmar et al. 2009). The project proceeded through the assumption that Nature included indigenous peoples. (Moore 2016)¹⁰

As subjects in need of perpetual transformation, tied to both their souls and their lands, both Indians and land (nature) became more exploitable through the race/land remedy.

Congregación radically transformed labor and land use by superimposing a new territoriality over Mexico. It also required both negative and positive forms of power. That is, it ideologically emerged and was performed in both the name of violence and love, dispossession and charity (Nemser 63-64). Much like race, primitive accumulation is a story of conversion. It is the mechanism by which land and labor became transformed into commodities and capital. Marx likened primitive accumulation to the original sin of capitalism since it was the origin of capitalist accumulation. Outside of capital because it was not properly a capitalist mode of production or accumulation,¹¹ he called it “secret” because its role in jumpstarting the cycle of capitalism remained outside of the bounds of written history. Marx wrote that “so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production” (875). The violence required to dispossess peasants and change prior social structures became invisible and thus contributed to the naturalization of capitalism as an economic system best suited to humans and the

⁹ Congregation, “not only coincided with some of the classic forms of primitive accumulation seen in Marx but also functioned as a form of primitive accumulation in its own right.” (27).

¹⁰ <https://jasonwmoore.wordpress.com/2016/10/04/naturesociety-the-violence-of-real-abstraction/>

¹¹ Marx uses the metaphor of original sin, but unlike Adam Smith, he rejected an idea of origins based in morality. Moral disparities (between the lazy and the resourceful) are not the cause of economic disparities, nor is greed the cause of wealth and poverty. Wealth via capitalist accumulation is necessarily acquired on the backs of exploited labor, no matter how morally “good” a capitalist may be. Therefore, in Marx’s framework, there is no way to have a more equitable system of capitalism (as in Keynesianism).

land. While the rise of the capitalist had previously been described as the “diligent, intelligent and above all frugal elite” against the “lazy rascals” by economists like Adam Smith, Marx criticized this as mythic “nursery tale” (873-874). Through no fault of their own—and I will return to this concept in a moment—men and women lost their land through enclosure, theft, and pillage until they “finally had nothing left to sell except their own skins” (874).¹²

Following “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation,” Marx describes the “Bloody Legislation against the expropriated” and the necessary collusion between laws passed by the state to aid primitive accumulation and the capitalist class. It was not enough to dispossess peasants from their land. Marx shows how a tradition of vagrancy laws formed the second step in primitive accumulation, for “these men, suddenly dragged from their accustomed mode of life, could not immediately adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition.” The English laws dating as far back as 1530 turned the expropriated into “beggars, robbers, and vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases under the force of circumstances,” but nevertheless, “legislation treated them as “voluntary” criminals, and assumed that it was entirely within their powers to go on working under the old conditions which in fact no longer existed.” Marx emphasized that the peasants were dispossessed through no fault of their own, nevertheless, they became the subjects of violent legislation that naturalized their perceived sloth and criminality.

Las Casas articulated a theological proof along this same line; it was not the Indian’s fault that they were not Christian, after all they had never had the opportunity to be converted until the conquest. Therefore, far from naturally inferior beings who deserved enslavement and theft of their lands, Las Casas argued for regulation over the accumulation of Indian labor power. Nevertheless, Las Casas naturalized Indianness and helped to enshrine segregation in his pursuit for the unabated

¹² Whether or not the Indian peasant lost their land “through no fault of their own,” becomes a subject of great debate for generations to come. Race became a metric for determining one’s ability to own and make land “productive.”

accumulation of souls (Nemser 2014). Capitalism linked its own modes of production by claiming that these modes followed the rules of nature itself, thus, “the advance of capitalist production develops a working class,” Marx wrote, “which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature.” Through congregación, one can see that the colonial state used Indian’s dispersion not only as justification for dispossession and enslavement, but also as evidence of the natural inferiority of indigenous land use practices to those of the Spanish. The indigenous populations’ racialization as Indian was tied to the rise of Eurocentric (and I would add Capitalist) reason in which, “Slavery is thus transformed from a condition imposed on a person from the outside, to a condition emerging from within a people” (Saldaña Portillo 43). Like the bourgeoisie who needed the state to regulate the wage and lengthen the working day to ensure a state of dependence “which springs from the conditions of production themselves, and is guaranteed in perpetuity by them” Las Casas and Quiroga’s congregaciones guaranteed indigenous vulnerability by instituting the beginnings of capitalism through a reorganization of both human in inhuman natures (Marx 899).

Silvia Federici considers colonialism more fully by showing the historical importance of gender and race in primitive accumulation. In her book *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici explains how capitalist accumulation occurred on the backs of women by demonizing them, controlling their bodies, and excluding them from the wage relation for the reproduction of labor power. She examines the crossroads of religion, the state, capital, gender, and race, interrogating primitive accumulation and capitalism from its earliest moments. The colonial economy required “an immense accumulation of labor-power” through the violent enclosure of common spaces, often through rape and enslavement (64-65). If “primitive accumulation is, above all, the accumulation of difference,” then the violent dispossession of people from their land also required the creation of their gendered and racialized difference (63). In other words, primitive accumulation fundamentally contributed to

the creation of hierarchical subjectivities that were defined by and worked in service of capitalist exploitation. Federici, reiterating Marx, reminds us of the contradictory nature of capitalism and reorients Foucauldian biopolitics back to a function of capitalism. After noting that “the promotion of life-forces” may go hand in hand with the “massive destruction of life,” she states, “capitalism must justify and mystify the contradictions built into its social relations—the promise of freedom vs. the reality of widespread coercion, and the promise of prosperity vs. the reality of widespread penury—by denigrating the “nature” of those it exploits: women, colonial subjects, the descendants of African slaves, the immigrants displaced by globalization” (16-17). The great advantage of Federici’s work for this project, then, is that it makes sense of capitalism’s contradictory life and death forces. Moreover, by telling the story of how certain populations’ oppression became subjectivized—and therefore naturalized—particularly along the lines of race and gender, it accounts for the primitive accumulation of colonialism.

Finally, Alberto Moreiras contributes to an understanding of colonial primitive accumulation by showing how the emergence of humanist reason rested on colonial violence. The initial terror of the conquest was a form of primitive accumulation, without which colonial hegemony—the process by which the dominated participate in the continuation of their own domination—never could have taken hold. Las Casas’s benevolent efforts to praise the rationality of the Indians, seen in this light, could only have resonated against the backdrop of colonial rape and pillage. How could the indigenous be saved if there was nothing to save them from? In passing from initial plunder to the construction of hegemony, there is the necessary step of forgetting primitive accumulation’s violence. Consequently, Moreiras renames the “secret” or rather, these “forgotten” forms of colonial primitive accumulation, “ongoing colonialism” because of its ripple effect into the present (354). Las Casas’s call for a more “reasonable” and sustainable form of empire, Moreiras argues, is in fact, indicative of the problem with reason itself. It “reasoned” away the initial colonial violence and

set the stage for later forms of internal colonialism (353-354). Quiroga, I would add, carried on Las Casas's task by performing this colonial forgetting in its more advanced stage, having never questioned the colonial project itself (as Las Casas eventually did) and articulating his *pueblo-hospitales* as a constitutive outside to the emergent colonial state sovereignty.

The primitive accumulation and modes of production—such as slavery, the *encomienda* and *mita* systems, and even wage labor—that can be seen during the colonial era were not “pre-histories” of capitalism, but were instead fundamental to its development on a global scale and deserve the utmost consideration. If territory is a historically contingent category, as Stuart Elden has argued, then this project views land and resource use as also historically contingent elements in need of attention alongside territory (18). Although Indigenous land tenure structures cannot be reduced to a simple notion of the commons, certainly some territory was considered “common” for wood and hunting as opposed to the nascent colonial capitalist paradigm of enclosure. Las Casas's congregaciones in practice failed to distinguish between the different kinds of land tenure mandated by the crown, often because of labor shortages, land was most often worked communally for the purposes of subsistence, and the need to pool resources to pay tribute (Bertrand). The *pueblos de indios* also held land in common for wood and other forms of gathering. While enclosure happened, congregación curiously kept the commons open (within a redrawn bounded space) to some degree. The *ejido*, though replaced in the collective post-revolutionary imagination as a pre-Colombian feature of land tenure, was in fact a Spanish concept referring to common woodlands, *not* lands to be communally worked for pasture or cultivation. This is nothing new as many have noted the way that non-capitalist forms of land tenure and labor allow for increased exploitation under capitalism.¹³ The logic of primitive accumulation, however, changed pre-Colombian Indigenous

¹³ See Silvia Federici, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Steve Stern after the Brenner Debates, and finally for a groundbreaking study on colonial capitalism in Mexico, see John Tutino's *Making a New World*.

understandings of the commons, and it impacted land use for all parties involved. Ultimately, enclosure as a historical form of territory resorted to racial segregation, drawing lines and enforcing boundaries. The resulting territorialization of Mexico between country and city was, and is, a highly racialized distinction that congregación mediated, creating two distinct spaces that allowed nature to be put to work through racialization and ongoing primitive accumulation.

Dispersion and its fix, congregación, form the second part of colonial primitive accumulation as a kind of juridical compromise. According to Martínez, congregación is directly linked to the dual republic system, the *república de indios* and the *república de españoles*, that emerged as an attempt to appease divergent elite interests. Las Casas and those in the Salamanca school believed, to varying degrees, in an Indian freedom that was based in the Indigenous' right to land. Martínez explains that the Spanish crown sought to ground its claim to the New World in Natural Law since after the Reformation, papal decree no longer carried the same authority in Protestant nations. "Spanish monarchs," writes Martínez, "therefore convened various juntas to discuss the *nature* of their jurisdiction over the territories and peoples on the other side of the Atlantic" (97, emphasis mine). Thus, the New Laws of 1542 were largely influenced by Las Casas to justify Spain's right to "property (land and bodies) in the Americas" (97). Congregación emerged as a kind of compromise between the Dominicans and Franciscans and the likes of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the much maligned adversary of Las Casas who believed Indian inferiority justified their enslavement. Those interested in extracting New World labor and resources for profit could claim sovereignty in certain spaces while the crown could claim that it was acting justly in spreading Christian civilization to the Indians on land set aside especially for them. In this sense, the land still technically belonged to the Indigenous, and they were "free" within its bounds. Free because they were to be reduced by their own volition, free because so long as they converted to Christianity, they would be governed not by Spanish colonists but by priests with Indian self-government on the perpetual horizon, but also

“free” to offer their labor for the crown’s accumulation of wealth. Once settled on the prescription of congregación, Las Casas and Quiroga sought to perfect the plan through the development of a racializing pastoral power grounded in space. As a force of primitive accumulation and fraught with internal antagonisms, congregación simultaneously promoted Indian life while also facilitating its destruction.

Pastoral Power

Foucault’s theorization of pastoral power, especially when put into conversation with political economy, offers great insight into the connections between land and race. His work contextualizes the different modes of power and how they operate within the realms of life and death and relate to sovereignty, the individual, and the state. The first form of power, and perhaps the most traditional, is sovereign power. This is the sovereign’s right to “kill or let live.” Coercion is negative and an open threat. If a subject does not comply, the sovereign has the power to kill them. If this relation of violence turns into outright force, say bondage, where the subject is not free to make a choice to obey or disobey, it ceases to be a relation of power because “there is no power without potential refusal or revolt” (Omnes 253). The other forms of power fall under what one might call “positive” power, or the power to “make live or let die.” Rather than exercising highly visible forms of violence that kill, physically restrain, or cause bodily harm, this form of power tries to shape, guide, and foster *certain kinds* of life and ways of living. Conversely, it “lets die” others through different forms of violence, like abandonment.¹⁴ Positive power is manipulative and closely tied to the development of capitalism and the modern state. Of course, the line between the two types of power and violence is fine and often the two go hand in hand.

¹⁴ For example, sterilization is a form of positive biopower that could be considered forced bodily harm, but its rationale is governed by “letting die” a part of the whole population rather than the punishment of an individual.

I am principally interested in the forms of positive power, such as disciplinary, pastoral, and later biopower, that function after initial colonial sovereignty had been established and its violence enforced. The positive forms of power, which Foucault saw as developing linearly, targeted the individual and then what Foucault terms the “population,” seen as an abstracted statistic or species. This leads to the bond between individual and totalizing power to form modern state power. In Southern Mexico it was not enough to simply dispossess the native population of their land and demand that they convert by force. Positive power maintained the ability to constantly convert people and land as a response to the always tenuous and crisis ridden grasp of colonial reign.

When it comes to race, Foucault is perhaps most known for his theory of biopower, but his description of pastoral power helps to interrogate modes of race and racism that are expressed outside of biological understandings of race, as was the case during the colonial era. Foucault, however, separated his forms of power temporally when in fact they coexisted in the New World—where power exercised over the individual via pastoral power and discipline mixed with that of race (biopower and the population). Foucault clearly dedicated much thought to the dynamics of power (discipline and punishment) in space (enclosures and institutions), but he saw spatialized power as emerging later and distinctly from previous forms of power.¹⁵ According to Foucault, the pastorship combines with its opposite, the state, during this early modern period (*Omnes* 227). Considering pastoral, disciplinary, and biopolitical power to be related, collapsing his periodization does not contradict his fundamental point—that it is the marriage of the individual and the political body as a whole that comes to constitute state power. A core aspect of Foucault’s framework is the way in

¹⁵ It is not my intention to split hairs over Foucault’s historical accuracy or periodization. Rather, it is to show that Foucault’s various formulations of power are useful for understanding the colonial era of Mexico, especially if one considers how they may have emerged together rather than as distinct phenomena in successive historical moments. While this chapter will show that the racialization of the native population in the New World allowed biopower and disciplinary power to co-exist much earlier than Foucault claims (HS 139-140), the goal is not to offer a revision of Foucauldian timelines.

which negative and positive power shifted and combined with one another over time to exercise power over both individuals and populations. This is the work of pastoral power in Mexico.

According to Foucault, disciplinary power emerges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it creates docile bodies that are malleable in order to aid in the efficiency of capitalist production and the extraction of time. It privileges the process rather than the result of production, and “partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement” (DP 137). “Discipline sometimes requires enclosure,” Foucault explains, to ensure a more perfect distribution of bodies over space, and “it is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark place and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture.” Foucault continues by referencing the enclosure of nineteenth-century rural workers into “congregations” which he likens to a “factory-monastery” (150), but the prison, the school, and the hospital are all examples of spatialized disciplinary power.

Biopower emerges in the nineteenth-century and is more specific to race and populations. For Foucault, race emerges as a concept that orders aggregate “parts” of a larger population. The disciplining of bodies and the partitioning of space transforms into the separation of groups of people within the population. I will return to the concept of biopower in subsequent chapters, but for now, suffice it to say that it applies to Las Casas and Quiroga in so far that they established a “part” (Indians) of a larger population. Missionaries did begin to establish a kind of biopolitical practice of demography, thinking about the indigenous as a race of people they called Indians, and charting their distribution over space for the improvement of the population (and the colony) as a whole. Foucault separated pastoral and disciplinary power, but Las Casas’s and Quiroga’s pastoral power incorporated disciplinary techniques that were well on their way to working with biopower. Congregación is the material result of this process.

Pastoral power especially thrived in the New World where it had faltered in the Old World. Foucault grounds his notion of pastoral power in biblical times and suggests that while “the idea of a pastoral government of men” never disappeared, it took a backseat during the Middle Ages after which pastoral power returned together with the emergence of “reason of state” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pastoral power is urban, says Foucault, and it could not be sustained during the dramatic population decline and the rise of feudalism during the Middle Ages:

And that is true for several reasons: some are of an economic nature - the pastorate of souls is an especially urban experience, difficult to reconcile with the poor and extensive rural economy at the beginning of the Middle Ages. The other reasons are of a cultural nature: the pastorate is a complicated technique which demands a certain level of culture, not only on the part of the pastor but also among his flock. Other reasons relate to the sociopolitical structure. Feudality developed between individuals a tissue of personal bonds of an altogether different type than the pastorate. (240)

The founding of the Dominican and Franciscan orders to renew pastoral work is proof of pastoral power’s persistence as a concern for the Church and later the crown that favored the two orders for deployment in the New World. Foucault cites several instances when the Church tried to recoup pastoral power as a response to crisis—none of these examples, however, are from the New World (240-1). But, it should come as no surprise that the Dominicans and Franciscans responded to crisis and developed a fundamentally urban approach to conversion and colonization through congregación. The social bonds of feudality that Foucault describes, however, do not apply to the New World in which the beginnings of capitalist and statist power relations were coalescing. Las Casas, and later Quiroga, address the religious and politico-economic in trying to establish pastoral power in the New World through racialized congregación.

As previously mentioned, pastoral power is concerned with dispersion and care over each individual in the flock. The shepherd must not only gather dispersed individuals, but he must be “all things to all people.” As an ultimate father authority, he has a destination for his flock or a “final kindness,” he must keep constant watch, and lastly, render an account of each individual’s actions.

Citing Plato, Foucault notes that the Greeks distinguished between tasks reserved for the politician versus those who, although compared to shepherds, cared for individuals within specific domains. For example, the physician cares for a few sick people, the pedagogue teaches his students, but neither is responsible for the entirety of an individual's well-being. The politician's "task doesn't consist in fostering the life of a group of individuals. It consists in forming and assuring the city's unity. In short, the political problem is that of the relation between the one and the many in the framework of the city and its citizens. The pastoral problem concerns the lives of individuals" (Omnes 235). In the "final kindness" of the shepherd, land and territory seem to factor in for Foucault where, "[the flock] must either be led to good grazing ground or brought back to the fold" (Foucault 229). In the Western Pastoral tradition, the shepherd leads the flock to a land that is there for the taking, that God created, but does not own or administer as a function of territory. In the paradigm of the "promised land," or the "final kindness," the land is fruitful, abundant, and safe. Las Casas, and later Quiroga, however, promote a form that fixes power to a bounded space that is in need of cultivation, transformation, and eventually "development." As a response to colonial crisis, Las Casas's and Quiroga's proposals for congregación confound the role of assuring the city's unity and cultivating the lives of individuals. Through race and space, the priest becomes the politician and the shepherd, in all his roles.

Finally, obedience is central to pastoral power. For the Greeks, obedience was a means to an end, but Christianity transformed it into an end itself. The sheep must always be obedient to the shepherd for obedience's sake. Foucault writes that "if a Greek had to obey" or "follow the will of someone in particular (a physician, an orator, a pedagogue), then that person had rationally persuaded him to do so. And it had to be for a strictly determined aim: to be cured, to acquire a skill, to make the best choice." Christian obedience is practiced because it is the shepherd's will, and importantly, "it is a permanent state" of submission (237). So while it could be said that Las Casas

and Quiroga advocated for the rational persuasion of the Indigenous to be congregated and converted, once persuaded, the goal was to be eternally convinced such that the need for daily decision melted away. One can also see the relation between the shepherd's will and the modern formulation of sovereignty. The congregación was a spatial fix that worked to make permanent obedience to God and the colonial state. Obedience created flattened uniformity by, perhaps paradoxically, methodically enforcing time and a strict division of space that will be explored in both Las Casas and Quiroga's writings. Recalling the "bloody legislation," congregación functioned by registering delinquency and dispersion, the opposites of obedience, in spatial terms. The usefulness of obedience for capital also naturalized the necessity of surplus (and eventually profit) generating work (regardless of the wage relation), a job of creating new subjectivities that the priests were well suited to perform by conferring qualities upon the Indians that were in need of remedy. Not quite "laziness"—though some certainly did make this argument of the indigenous—dispersion was a deeper problem intimately related with the land itself, the ultimate source of capital.

The Spanish privileged urban life and culture long before the conquest, and recalling Foucault, the pastorate of souls was an urban experience. Some have argued that the congregaciones were more representative of a medieval conception of St. Augustine's "Civitas Dei" than the Renaissance ideal of a gridded city (Markman 60-62). Markman contends that the congregaciones were never as developed as the Renaissance cities, although some pueblos de indios of Chiapas, like Chiapa de Corzo, later added Renaissance details like arcaded government buildings on the plaza. Originally, however, the towns were generally nothing more than a church, an inn, divided residential plots, a large plaza, and a gridiron street pattern departing from the four corners of the plaza. Markman thus interprets the priests' actions solely within their religious goals, and overlooks their necessary contribution, even if carried out unintentionally, to the nascent colonial economy and state. Others contend that in fact they were the predecessors to the Renaissance ideal of a gridded

city. However, priests in Southern Mexico and Guatemala constructed gridded cities before the crown dictated town planning in 1573 and certainly before Renaissance town planning took off in Europe. The use of the gridded city can be explained by already existent Roman and medieval ideas about cities, as Markman contends, but also by the basic need to simplify Indigenous social structures dependent on unfamiliar and seemingly chaotic land use patterns (Farriss 160-168). The writings and congregaciones of Las Casas introduce a paradigm of city life with divisions and habits proper to neither the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Rather, they are responses to crises unique to the New World, profoundly dependent on Indigenous racial formation, religion, and political economy.

Las Casas: Bringing the Flock to Pasture

Before Hernán Cortés had even landed in Mexico, setting in motion one of the greatest genocides in history, Bartolomé de Las Casas recognized that the Spanish *encomienda* system in the Caribbean would lead to Indigenous extinction and jeopardize colonization entirely. In 1516, the same year Thomas More's *Utopia* was published, Las Casas wrote the *Memorial de Remedios para las Indias (Remedios)*. In 1518, he followed it with two other *Memoriales* regarding the Indies again and Tierra Firme. While the 1516 *Memorial de Remedios* hoped to suspend the corrupt *encomienda* system and create Indian communities for healing and conversion, by 1518, Las Casas attenuated his argument in the face of opposition, proposing instead "poblamiento mixto" (OC 2, 15; Bertrand 144).¹⁶ His proposals failed or were never implemented for a number of reasons, and Las Casas spent at least the next decade leading a cloistered life as a Dominican.¹⁷ After nearly twenty years, he would publish *De unico vocationis modo (De unico modo)*, picking up where he left off by providing

¹⁶ Despite considering a model of "poblamiento mixto" prior to his ten-year sabbatical, he ultimately returned to a model of segregation, believing the Spanish colonists to be too corrupt to live side by side with the Indians.

¹⁷ See *Presentación* in *Obras Completas Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas*, 15, vol. 13.

proofs and proposals to salvage his dream of Indian conversion by peaceful means. The *Remedios and De unico modo* have received attention for their proofs of Indian humanity, but they are also significant for laying the foundations of congregación. Although one can see many similarities between the 1512 Leyes de Burgos and the *Remedios*, the latter is a specific economic and social plan in response to impending crisis. Both the *Remedios* and *De unico modo* share concerns over the just division of labor, the proper composition and roles of inhabitants, economic rights, and spatial arrangements of land. Both project a racialized spatial and social map onto the land in order to assuage colonial crisis.

There are three main versions of *De unico modo* that are in need of comment. According to Francis Patrick Sullivan, the first is the original version that circulated in 1534, from which the first four chapters are now missing, likely removed by Las Casas himself. Helen Rand Parish reconstructed and Sullivan translated an English version of the original based on the later *Apologética*, since it is believed that Las Casas drew heavily from, if not directly reproduced, the arguments made in the removed chapters of *De unico modo*. In 1539, Las Casas included papal decrees. In 1552, Las Casas issued a “stuffed” version, the same as the 1539 version but with additional biblical verses and proofs that circulated years after his death.¹⁸ I use the “stuffed” version, cited as “*De unico modo*,” in order to incorporate and draw on Las Casas’s biblical citations, and on the basis of Parish and Sullivan’s work, the corresponding chapters of the *Apologética*.

After being appointed as the bishop of Chiapa, Las Casas was hailed by his co-religionists for successfully entering and transforming the “land of war” into the “land of true peace” (Verapaz). He implemented his plan for congregación and conversion in what is now Chiapas and Northern Guatemala, founding many towns that still exist today. Las Casas and his followers were also among the first to discuss the ideas now generally referred to as land reform and

¹⁸ This version can be found in *Obras Completas: Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas* (Edited by Paulina Castañeda, et., al).

Indigenous autonomy, arguing that the Indigenous were the rightful owners of their land and were not natural slaves because they were in fact rational beings. He did so by categorizing “barbarians” into four different types. The first was vague, more individual, and referred to anyone who lacked rationality or behaved regretfully, especially in an asocial manner. The second lacked writing. The third was evil and rare in the world but potentially owed their barbarianism to the “barrenness of the region in which they live” (in Saldaña Portillo, 45). For the fourth kind of barbarian, Las Casas invoked Aristotle’s “rational barbarians,” who based on their socio-political structures, were not natural slaves and deserved freedom. In *De unico modo* Las Casas argued that Indians were capable of self-rule and deserved full restitution of their land on the basis that—left innocently untouched by the Christian faith—they were this fourth kind of barbarian. In other words, the Indians were on equal footing with Christians when it came to their level of civilization, except for the fact that they had not yet, by no fault of their own, had the opportunity to become Christian. For this reason, they were entitled to their property and to some degree, autonomy, if they made up for their spiritual deficit. Because of this classification, he argued that the Spanish ought to pursue the goal of conversion peacefully, and if they did, the Indians would react in kind. There was, however, a provision for just war if Indians who had otherwise been exposed to the Christian faith patiently and peacefully (i.e. following Las Casas’s pedagogical and spatial model) rebelled with violence.¹⁹ The later chapters then condemn to hell all who have supported the colonial system of exploitation (65). In his last writing *De thesauris qui reperiuntur in sepulcris Indorum*, Las Casas proposed a deal with King

¹⁹ As Biermann states, “Las Casas was no pacifist.” The project of Alta Verapaz fell apart when the bellicose Lacandón Indians attacked several missions. Las Casas believed that in this case it was acceptable to meet them with force. Biermann speculates that had Las Casas been given more resources, he would have been able to pacify the Lacandones, and ultimately, the project of Alta Verapaz would not have failed (478).

Philip that would have provided restoration of native rule in return for the treasures of the Incan tombs based on his argument in *De unico modo*.²⁰

Rather than establishing Las Casas as a “liberator of Indians” or a duplicitous agent of empire, I argue that it is more productive to study his proposals of congregación, segregation, and restitution, as intimately tied to a nascent capitalism. In other words, my framework is historical rather than moral. The conflicts over land use and population distribution are indicative of the fact that, since the colonial era and its fledgling capitalism, elites have continually tried to attenuate the violence of primitive accumulation such that it might not jeopardize the health of the universal political body. This prompted the missionaries to theorize their own kind of political economy within the congregación. Short of denouncing the colonial project and its need to extract silver and reterritorialize the New World on its own terms, Las Casas would struggle for most of his life to elude the imperative of colonial primitive accumulation inherent in the accumulation of souls and the creation of utopic congregaciones. Since Indians and their lands were the constitutive outside to the emerging colonial sovereignty, Las Casian logic hinges on this notion of “by no fault of their own.” In other words, the Indians were worthy of a more “reasonable” form of primitive accumulation and subsequent empire precisely because it was not their fault that they were not Christian. As mentioned above, Marx also notes that the expropriated are made into beggars by no fault of their own. For colonial priests, the dispersed Indigenous needed to transform the way they reproduced themselves to save lives and souls. If such a transformation were to be achieved, then the violence over land and bodies would cease, allowing a peaceful existence for not just the Spanish, but the Indians, too. This project of transformation relied on the deployment of racializing pastoral power in the form of congregación.

²⁰ The *Untold Story*, an unpublished manuscript by Helen Parish, contains a similar example proposed by one of Las Casas’ followers in Mexico. Supposedly Native rulers in Mexico agreed to an exchange of treasure with the King for autonomy over their lands.

Showing how Las Casas did the work of Indian racial formation, *De unico modo's* prologue offers an explanation for the humanity of the Indians based on their intellect, their environment, and their capacity for city life. Of their minds, Las Casas says that they are “naturalmente de muy sotiles, vivos y claros” as desired by God who created them that way. Of their environment, Las Casas writes:

“Esto [entendimientos/minds] les provino (después de la voluntad de Dios, que quiso así hacerlas) por la favorable influencia de los cielos, por la dispusión suave de las regiones que Dios les concedió que habitasen, por la clemencia y suavidad de los tiempos, por la compostura de los miembros y órganos de los sentidos exteriores e interiores, la bondad y sobriedad de los mantenimientos, la dispusión buena y sanidad de las tierras y lugares y aires locales, la templanza y moderación del comer y del beber, la tranquilidad y sosiego y sedación de las afecciones sensuales, la carencia de la sollicitud y cuidado cerca de las cosas mundanas que causan las pasiones del ánima, que son el gozo, amor, ira, dolo y os demás, y también *a posteriori*, que es decir por las mismas obras que obran y efectos que hacen.” (See Apologética 629 and Sullivan)²¹

Such commendation of their environment was just one perspective, though. Other Spaniards argued that the tropical environment was evidence of their natural inferiority and irrationality, but for Las Casas the New World was naturally blessed.²² Like other colonial chroniclers, Las Casas painted the New World as bountiful, but he warned of the unfettered extraction and plunder of the land and people. While others have shown the beginnings of conservationism in the face of colonial crisis²³,

²¹ In Parish and Sullivan's translation of the *Only Way*, they reconstruct this passage based on the *Apologética*: It [this mind] comes from the fostering influence of the heavens, from the kind conditions of the places God gave them to live in, the fair and clement weather. For most of the Indies has land that is dry, land that is open, spacious, level, pleasant, fertile, and in fine locations. The hills, valleys, mountains, plains are uncluttered, they are free of stagnant pools, they are blanketed with aromatic plants, medicinal herbs of all kinds, and commonplace charmers spread everywhere so all the fields are smiling (*The Only Way* 201-202).

²² Bernardo de Mesa was one of the first to put forth this argument, but Indian inferiority was most infamously advanced by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. See Sullivan 202 note 110. See also Pagden 1986 on Bernardo de Mesa. This argument reappeared in the 19th and 20th century in which theories of racial and economic backwardness claimed that the tropical climates led to laziness and underdevelopment.

²³ See Richard Grove on the emergence of colonial conservation in the New World (25). He argues that capital allowed for such immense and fast environmental transformation that empires began to notice the connection between environmental degradation or change and human activity. Columbus, for example, was likely aware that deforestation changed island rain patterns, and many other imperial powers began adopting policies of land management and conservation that were closely tied to the accumulation of wealth (See Chapter 1). See page 72 for the role of Utopia, paradise, and literature in forming attitudes about colonial conservation. Elinor G.K. Melville 1997, *A Plague of Sheep* on the ecological consequences of Spanish agricultural practices in Mexico, and John Richards 2003, *The Unending Frontier* about the environmental impact of Western style agriculture on Mexico.

Las Casas was operating under a different mindset. If Moore is correct that the Nature/Society split is the result of capitalism, it would be reasonable to assume that this caesura had not fully formed in the Las Casian cosmovision. Las Casas conceived, rather, of the need to preserve people (and their souls) first and foremost, not yet thinking in terms of natural resources in the completely commodified sense. In speaking of “la conservación de la tierra,” the New World, including both its land and its people, functioned naturally and utopically as a complete package. His *Remedios* and his later calls to ban the Spanish from Indian territory in Chiapa shows that Las Casas feared that Spanish abuse of Indian bodies and souls extended to the very land. The land itself, then, was inseparable from Indian subjectivity in need of care, preservation, and conversion. With this argument, just as the first, Las Casas claimed that the humanity of the Indians was a natural given. He then blended mind, body and environment to show that their minds were nourished by their bodies and the “sanitary conditions of the land” to produce “moderation in food and drink, from the state of their sensual passions—calm, quiet, controlled—from the lack of upset and anxiety—their habitual state—about those worldly affairs which elicit the passions of the soul—pleasure, love, anger, grief” (translation in Sullivan 202). The congregación simply formed and perfected their natural proclivities toward a holy Christian social existence.

Las Casas based his first two arguments for Indian humanity on their intellect and environment, relying heavily on how the latter shaped the former. His third argument, however, cited the Indian propensity toward civilization and cultivation, or the ability to produce and manipulate their societies. The argument was of course somewhat circular in that it was the environment that created Indian’s natural capacity to manipulate it. He then broke down the third argument of civilization and cultivation into three further subcategories which mirrored the three kinds of self-rule to be considered fully human: “1) personal, by which one knows how to rule

oneself, 2) domestic, by which one knows how to rule a household,²⁴ and 3) political, knowledge of how to set up and rule a city” (203). Both the *Remedios* and *De unico modo* championed new agricultural methods to conserve the land and to form a utopic Christian city of men, thus tying ideologies over land use to Indian subjectivity. While Las Casas framed congregación as a response to Indian dispersion, he acknowledged that there were great kingdoms that lived in cities with judges, kings, laws, commerce, religion, and institutions. The Indigenous produced and enjoyed art, language, and logic. Indian dispersion, then, represented a kind of fall from their former state-of-grace, and a spatialized, racialized pastoral power was the remedy. Since the Indians were already capable of domestic, political, and personal rule, they were ripe for pastoral power’s ability to cultivate individual subjectivity in relation to the larger colonial project. As already mentioned, pastoral power is concerned with dispersion and care over each individual in the flock. As a response to colonial crisis, Las Casas’s proposals for congregación necessarily confound the role of assuring the city’s unity and the lives of individuals. The priest would use congregación to act as the politician and the shepherd, in all his roles.

For a thriving flock, according to Foucault, “dispersed individuals...gather on hearing [the shepherd’s] voice,” requiring his constant presence (229). The call to gather the Indians can first be read in Las Casas’s second remedy where he commands that the crown establish “una comunidad en cada villa y ciudad de los españoles, en que ningún vecino tenga indios conocidos ni señalados, sino que todos los repartimientos estén juntos y que hagan labranzas juntos, y los que hobieren de coger oro lo cojan juntos.” Instead of living with a Spanish owner or *encomendero*, they ought to be formed into communities so as to work together under the vigilance of a shepherd-priest. Las Casas warned that if the king wanted to be truthfully informed of his colonies, he ought to “enviar una persona

²⁴ One can see the clear gendered understanding that establishes a patriarchal society where the father conducts himself properly in order to head his family and household to be a productive member of the larger political body, the city. As mentioned above, their naturally modest sexuality and personal restraint are further proofs of their civility.

religiosa, de buena y sana conciencia, que no tenga cudicia ni parte alguna en aquellas Indias y le estorbe a escudriñar la verdad.” He continues that there should be a friar on each island “que haya estado allá y sepa las cosas de la tierra y indios,” capable of seeing through the “cantelas y mañas” of Spanish abusers (24). Here Las Casas advocates not just for Indians to be gathered into cities apart from the Spanish, but stresses the importance of social separation from them. More importantly, priests are to oversee affairs previously granted to the *encomenderos*, such as taking over the Indian’s religious and linguistic education (24-25, 40-41). By the time he writes *De unico modo* and comes to Chiapa, Las Casas argues that no Spaniard should be permitted in the newly gathered Indigenous *congregaciones*, allowing the priest to fully take on the role of the politician in unifying the Indian city-town.

The health of the natives and the colony depends on the proper material provisions and a regulated economy. Along with priests, the aforesaid arrangements should be overseen by a *mayordomo* who has no economic interest in Indian labor and who can moderate gold extraction so that the Indigenous “no hagan más de aquello que conviniere a la sustentación y conservación de la república” (OC 2, 24). Each community should have sufficient beasts of burden to help and enough livestock to sustain them. Las Casas continues by saying that after contributing the royal fifth and the 10 percent tithe, all surplus gold should first go to communal needs, and then to pay the Indians a fair wage (24). He concludes the second *Remedio* by assuring the crown that the aforementioned provisions will keep the *encomenderos* in line and the Indians alive and instructed in the Christian faith:

Su Alteza tenga sus rentas ciertas y sus tierras pobladas y abundantes de vasallos y multiplicando la gente, como en aquella tierra maravillosamente multiplica, aumentarse ha cada día su auxilio y provecho, a gran utilidad y fijeza del reino, y lo que más es, no se cometerán tantos y tan diversos y abominables pecados, porque no se dará lugar desta manera a que cada cudicioso quiera henchirse en poco tiempo de muchos dineros, menguando y matando los vasallos de S.A., no mirando ni teniendo fin sino a su propio interés. (OC 2, 25)

Las Casas makes an association between population growth and the inherent ability, and therefore quality, of the land to sustain it. With “maravillosamente,” Las Casas suggests that the land is exceptional, so blessed that life multiplies miraculously, and only the excessive sins of the Spanish could have imperiled it. A hearty population of Indians will also remedy the current crisis by bringing stability or “fijeza” to the kingdom. “Lo que más es,” he writes, with the provisions to limit economic surplus, “no se *dará lugar*” for sins of greed committed not by the Indians, but by Spaniards who could undermine royal power. In other words, Las Casas’s socially segregated and highly regulated economic fix literally does not leave space for corruption or crisis.

Nevertheless, Las Casas knew that some priests had abused their privileges in the New World, which is why *De unico modo* describes the “ideal missionary” as a shepherd who comes to resemble Foucault’s description of the shepherd as “all things to all people.” The ideal missionary does not seek power and wealth over non-Christians, and praises self-sacrifice and poverty in the name of service to God. For the necessity of sacrifice, Las Casas cites 1 Thessalonians 2:8: “we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls,” and John 15:13, “greater love than this no one has than that he lay down his life for his friends.” Demonstrating the shepherd’s duty to be present and to show sacrificial care and vigilance over the flock, Las Casas cites Galatians 4:19, “My little ones, I am in constant labor until Christ is born in you.” In order to tend to each individual member, the ideal missionary must also become like he whom he wishes to save. Las Casas cites Corinthians: “to the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law; to the weak, I became weak. I am made all things to all people so that I might save all” (“The Only Way” 107). The shepherd is the paternal leader as an extension of the flock, so for Las Casas, the ideal missionary must become like the Indians. Las Casas’s insistence that priests learn the Indigenous languages and understand their culture is just one such example (*Remedios* 26).

As previously mentioned, the congregación is the “final kindness,” or the shepherd’s target for his flock, as described by Foucault. It is the bounded space of a town built specifically to foster conversion. With the inhabitants in earshot of Church bells, congregación complemented the task of the ideal missionary by subjecting the Indians to the affective and habit forming rituals that would force a life of Christian devotion. The congregación does the work of the shepherd by gathering together the dispersed and providing a land for them where they can establish a Christian community. This “final kindness” also goes hand in hand with the matter of vigilance. Congregación made vigilance over the newly converted easier because constant supervision could only be achieved spatially through concentration. Vigilance also brings to bear the fundamental aspect of pastoral power: the shepherd must “render an account” of all the sheep in the flock’s actions. In Las Casas, this is demonstrated by his views on habit, truth obedience, and conversion. He was less preoccupied with immediate conversion and “backsliding,” the tendency to revert to pagan ways and beliefs, and did not expect the Indians to be immediately converted, recognizing that conversion could take time. Thus, the *Remedios* introduced several mechanisms of accounting, vigilance, and habit formation to foment eventual true conversion. In making the case that the Indians should not be brought into Spanish cities and *encomiendas* but should have small towns of their own, Las Casas writes:

porque si todos los indios, como dicho es, a los dichos lugares o villas de los españoles se juntasen, toda la tierra quedaría despoblada y no sería posible librarse de los criminales, y muy pocos y con grandísimo trabajo irían y vernían de una villa o ciudad a otra. Por lo que conviene hacer los dichos pueblos de los indios de tanta gente, y los unos de los otros estar a cinco y seis leguas y siete, es porque mejor se puedan regir y un clérigo los pueda enseñar y doctrinar mejor, estando continuamente en la tal población con ellos; y en naciendo la criatura la bautizarán; y cuando holgaren, así mismo los tengan juntos para doctrinallos, y también para consolación de los caminantes, porque hallarán por los caminos donde se pueden recoger. (35)

In the pueblos, it would be easier to govern and the priests would be able to teach more effectively because they were “continually” with the inhabitants from birth. The distance between the towns is

also important for the distribution of colonial power in that with proper spacing, an unruly, unconquered, and unwatched countryside ceases to exist at all, leaving only civilized cities whose influence will radiate out to create security. Las Casas also proposed a guest house in every town for passersby, envisioning each congregación as not only a place of respite, but a node systematically connecting a larger colonial network. Even though at face value the *Remedios* speak to the particular “Indian problem,” they also address the universal distribution for a peaceful colony without criminals or unchecked territories.

Within the towns, Las Casas called for certain remedies that also imposed spatial means of conversion. First, Las Casas proposed that each pueblo de indios have a hospital built in the shape of a cross, so that the 200 beds were oriented toward an altar to see and hear mass (39-40). Second, while the Leyes de Burgos of 1512 call for Indians working in the mines to have hammocks, Las Casas went a step further. Not only did they need hammocks, but the hammocks had to be elevated substantially off of the floor. They also needed to eat at tables with tablecloths, not on the ground “como perros” (39). Though perhaps seemingly insignificant, these provisions impose a different spatial relationship quite literally away from the ground, and direct them into the embodied and elevated civilized positions of city life.

Las Casas’s belief in congregación demonstrates a notion of power that bridges the relation of the individual as the part to the whole population. It also advances an understanding of power that merges political and religious belief in the service of a centralized colonial state. Recalling that “the political problem is that of the relation between the one and the many in the framework of the city and its citizens,” whereas “the pastoral problem concerns the lives of individuals,” the emergent “reason of the state” attempted to define how the principles and methods of state government differed from how God governed the world, the father his family, etc. (“Omnes” 235, 242). While Las Casas was motivated by religious goals, one can see how his deployment of pastoral power came

to help form the modern state. Las Casas recognized that conversion would not be immediate, and that in order to convert, a new habitus of religion complete with discipline and ritual needed to be created and embodied. The performance of these rituals was important regardless of whether or not the targeted convert really believed and their soul had been saved. According to Seth Kimmel, Las Casas recognized that “all faiths were habits with histories,” and that he needed to overcome the history of paganism with Christian habit (62). Las Casas understood that natural law was actually “culturally contingent” and subject to change over time. For Las Casas, Kimmel argues, “[t]o be Christian . . . was to participate in Christian rituals such that the participation ceased to require any daily decisions at all. Custom replaced decision making.” Importantly, he adds that “the gap between the real and the verisimilar, the slippage between ‘natura’ and ‘quasi natura’ was useful from the pastoral perspective” (62). The congregación, then, elaborated an early modern form of what Foucault calls governmentality in which the city-town, its economy, and its inhabitants ran themselves—with a shepherd to guide them and administer the balanced spatialized project by which custom would eventually replace decision.

The *Remedios* plots out an ideal self-sufficient town with the proper distribution and role of inhabitants overseen by a shepherd figure. This required the proper division of space, but it also required the proper partitioning of work, social reproduction, and time. Women, men, and children each had specific rules and regulations because one of the primary concerns for Las Casas was the actual reproduction of the dwindling Indian population. Rather than mandating marriage, for example, Las Casas set up labor regulations, such as age requirements to work in the mines and three years of rest from hard labor for nursing mothers, to create the conditions for effective reproduction. The *remedios particulares*, specific recommendations that follow the general *memorial* section, amended the initial suggestions in the *Leyes de Burgos* for a more productive daily schedule. Instead of studying in the morning or after the workday, the Indians should have Thursdays and

Sundays off to completely dedicate to Christian instruction. During the working day, they should also have four hours of rest during the hottest hours of the day (between ten o'clock and two o'clock). To ensure that the Indians did not work too much or rest too much, the crown was to provide sand hourglasses for everyone (40-41). It was by imposing these disciplinary measures that the pastoral ability to "render an account" functioned, and it was only by creating a bounded space that the priests could surveil each member of their flock.

Vasco de Quiroga

It is well known that Quiroga read and modeled the *pueblo-hospitales* after More's *Utopia*, but his thought and policies are unique with regard to the connection between utopianism, land, and race in colonial Mexico. The crown sent Vasco de Quiroga to New Spain in 1530 to be a reformer. Serving on the second *audiencia* to prevent colonial abuse, he eventually became the bishop of Michoacán until his death in 1565. Although he is sometimes referred to as the "Franciscan" Vasco de Quiroga, he was a secular priest well-versed in canon law who often accused the religious orders of abusing the Indians (Krippner-Martínez 75). His utopian ideas about the New World, carried out in his *pueblo-hospitales* and outlined in *Información en derecho* (1535), are likely responsible for the misattribution. Quiroga sent *Información en derecho* to the Council of Indies after the crown reversed its anti-slavery stance²⁵. The text reads more like a legal document or "a treatise on labor relations" than one of Las Casas's impassioned and widely circulated accounts (Gómez 155). Also unlike Las Casas, Quiroga did not propose an exclusively Indian space, nor did he question the legitimacy of the Spanish colonial project (155). Nevertheless, his *pueblo-hospitales* did create a segregated space to foster Indian communities in the hopes of eventually achieving a unified colonial society.

²⁵ The crown bounced back and forth on slavery in a constant effort to conserve the Indian population while also appeasing and controlling colonists. After banning slavery in 1530, Quiroga was responding to a 1534 *cédula real* that reversed this position. See Bernardino Verástique, *Michoacan and Eden: Vasco de Quiroga and the Evangelization of Western Mexico*, University of Texas Press, 2000. Page 112.

Quiroga's pueblo-hospitales deployed a spatialized pastoral power as a form of primitive accumulation. Recalling Marx that "The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition, and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws," Quiroga's writings make evident his preoccupation over shaping social reproduction to meet supposedly natural laws (899). I read Quiroga's concern for the pueblo's self-sufficiency as a step in the history of capital in which congregación temporarily held together apparent contradictions to usher in the later stages of capitalist development. Although Quiroga feared inserting his pueblo-hospitales into the greater colonial market, he contributed to the creation and conditioning of surplus labor by promoting self-sufficiency and caring for the life of the indigenous through an essentialization of land and people.

While the pueblo-hospitales provided medical care, the early modern understanding of the word hospital was still related to hospitality, referring to an institution that cared for the vulnerable by providing shelter, sustenance, and religious education (Warren 7). Education, in so far as it could convert and civilize the Indians, cannot be overlooked as one of Quiroga's main goals. Like Las Casas's disciplinary and ritualized proposals for the congregación, the hybrid pueblo-hospital also founded the lasting connections among education, race, and proper land use by employing a strict social code that dictated the division of labor, gender roles, living arrangements, general obedience, and even dress. Recalling Federici on primitive accumulation, Quiroga centered gendered social reproduction as a necessary step in the making of colonial power. The pueblo-hospitales implemented a patriarchal structure in which children were to obey their parents, wives their husbands, and men their elders. However, if a child's parents, particularly indigenous parents, proved inadequate in their ability to educate their children, Quiroga had no qualms about placing the child in the hands of another Christian adult. The vagrancy laws highlighted in Marx similarly advocated for the removal of children from their parents if they were begging or otherwise not gainfully

employed. In its ideal form, however, the family was crucial to social reproduction within the communities. Quiroga even dictated the size and form of the family unit in which families of ten or twelve made up larger extended family units and so on. Boys were to be married by age fourteen and girls by twelve. Families adhered to a rigid program of religious education and pastoral work, requiring that the majority lived close together in a gridded city. Some families rotated between peripheral country plots, but careful to never lose control over the countryside, *veedores* (overseers) closely surveilled them (Ordenanzas 12-13). Finally, all of the inhabitants were to wear simple white garments of cotton or wool (ideal for both the winter and summer) to instill a sense of uniform egalitarianism (Ordenanzas, 17). Whereas Las Casas cited Indigenous textile handiwork as proof of their elevated civilization, Quiroga smoothed over these particularities in the name of order, thus leaving little room for individual ethnic identities within the Indian identity imposed by the Spanish.

Intimately related to the partitioning of time, labor, and space, Quiroga's social order ensured not only obedience but also the just distribution of resources and the self-sufficiency of the *pueblo-hospitales* by privileging the reproduction of the town's population over its export potential. While Quiroga did not challenge the colonial system by creating an autonomous space outside of it, he did seek to insulate his communities from the imminent dangers that profit from exchange with Mexico City and landed elites could invite. Surplus goods, such as excess wheat, were to be stored for the community in case of famine and to be sold-- with the profits monitored and used for the common good-- only if there was an overstock. Gómez mentions in passing that, "In this land of presumably endless abundance, the problem of need appears easily solvable. It is the looming crisis of surplus, neglected by Quiroga, which poses the main threat" (92-93). What is "the looming crisis of surplus?" Quiroga imagined the political economy of his utopian communities to be driven by need rather than a capitalist logic of export and extraction. Nevertheless, his instrumental capitalist metaphysics, which I will address in a moment, and his interest in labor time set the stage to extract

labor power, create surplus and surplus value, and then enter into capitalist relations. So, the crisis of surplus is that with an actual surplus of goods (e.g. wheat), there would be no motivation or authority to impose a calculated work regimen. There is no need, after all, to work for 10 hours a day if there is no actual material need. Quiroga hoped that his congregaciones would mitigate this violent process by creating segregated Indian communities that also paradoxically sought a utopian kind of egalitarianism, regardless of the pueblo-hospitales' own violent logics. By prioritizing social reproduction or need, the problem of economic and social chaos is solved through proper social roles and regulated production, leaving the pueblo-hospital to function autonomously and instrumentally.

An examination of Quiroga's *policía mixta* explains how he envisioned congregación mediating the contradictions and crises emerging in the colonial framework of racialized extraction and exploitation:

Y si es tan buena policía es necesaria para la buena gobernación en la solamente seglar, qué será en la policía que es y ha de ser de necesidad de obligación, policía mixta, que en todo ha de poner orden y concierto de nuevo, así en lo espiritual como en lo temporal, en que de necesidad se ha de proveer en esta tierra y Nuevo Mundo por su Majestad y sus ministros, pues Dios le ha hecho apóstol de lo uno y rey de lo otro, y dar para en todo no muy buen estado y corte de república cristiana y católica, en que haya buena y general conversión y bastante sustentación para todos, españoles y naturales, con conservación dellos y de la tierra; y esto que sea por tales modos, medios y arte y por tales leyes y ordenanzas, que se adaten a la calidad y manera y condición de la tierra y de los naturales della, de manera que ellos las puedan saber, entender y usar, y guardar y ser capaces dellas; y desta manera son las de mi parecer, sin los entrincamientos y oscuridad y multitud de las nuestras, que no las sabrán ni entenderán ni serán capaces dellas de aquí al fin del mundo, ni se las adatarán cuantos son nacidos. (77)

To what exactly *policía mixta* refers is ambiguous, but I interpret it to mean the variety of dualities facing the New World in need of stabilization based on Clifford Angell Bates argument regarding the Greek and early modern historical meanings of “mixed polity.” First, by translating *policía* as polity rather than policy, one can trace *policía mixta* in the historical trajectory of *politeia* and its relation to the “mixed polity” as coming to mean the ideal form for a city-state, especially in Thomas

Aquinas. Politeia in Aristotle's *Politics* could refer to the form of the *polis* or a *type* of regime (Bates 103-104). At some point, a mixed politeia or regime comes to be interpreted as Aristotle's ideal form of government, blending either democracy and oligarchy, the politics of the rich and the poor, or the divine and the secular. However, Aristotle never intended "mixed polity" to refer to a specific "best practice" for a regime, much less the ideal form of polis. The interpretation of "mixed polity" as an ideal form of government seems to have coalesced in the Middle Ages, perhaps by Thomas Aquinas. Bates contends that:

It is again Aquinas who appears to develop the argument that the "mixed constitution" derived from Aristotle is the best regime for human beings on Earth. In fact, Aquinas argues that in Heaven only the royal rule of God exists, while on Earth the best regime is not mere kingship, because of the objection to absolute kingship made by Aristotle, that it is unstable politically. (117)

Bates also argues that Aristotle's notion of politeia and the need to blend different elements of society and political rule were grounded in "a teaching not of limited government, but of local government, one that aims at unifying a community toward some expressible notion of public happiness understood in terms of the good life for those who live together in the political community" (121). That is, Aristotle's book four of *Politics* had a more pedagogical role than previous ones, and thus served to provide strategies for more stable governance between competing factions rather than as a manifesto describing the way a more authoritarian regime could be paired with more plebeian elements. Quiroga's proposal seems to be an amalgamation of the Aristotelian and medieval view. His "mixed polity"—which "put in order" the "spiritual" in relation to the "temporal," given the "quality and condition of the land, and the manner, and condition, and good habits, and inclinations, and uses, and customs of the natives"—suggests the subjugation of the colony to the crown, of the Indian to the Spaniard, and of the earthly to the divine.²⁶ Although the *policiá mixta* is hierarchical, it is also a question of order and balance to maintain stability. It is the

²⁶ Translation in Warren, 33.

proper mix between the king's colonial rule and a robust, locally inspired—i.e. native—rule. The only way for the temporal to be in service of the spiritual is to attend to the particularities of the land and the people. The early colonial Spanish settlement and the existing native communities had a kind of “de facto rule,” but what they needed was a more intentional form of rule with proper balance, distribution, and economy to achieve *buen gobierno*. The fix was to meld the dualities into a functioning whole, even if the Indian and the Spaniard, in law and in space, had to be temporarily separated.

The above passage speaks to the importance of self-sufficiency, but it adds conservation of the land in maintaining a *policía mixta*, too. It demonstrates how care and conservation as a mechanism of power came to depend on the mutual construction of land and racialized subjectivities. Quiroga called for laws suited to the Indigenous mentality by demanding that Indigenous could “guardar y ser capaces dellas [las leyes y ordenanzas].” He also makes conservation of the land central to this question, stating that there must be “buena y general conversión y bastante sustentación para todos, españoles y naturales, con conservación dellos y de la tierra.” In order to conserve both land and Indian, laws had to fit “la calidad y manera y condición de la tierra y de los naturales della” because “no las sabrán ni entenderán ni serán capaces dellas [las leyes] de aquí al fin del mundo, ni se las adatarán cuantos son nacidos” (77). While this argument has to do with the qualities of the “natural” New World environment, and how that environment informs the Indigenous’ capabilities, it seems reasonable to assume that these laws would necessarily have something to do with land use or territory (since this is a primary function of colonization). The inability for new generations to adapt their understandings of land and land use to Spanish laws suggests an immanent process of racialization of both the Indigenous and the land. In other words, Quiroga rejected a universal notion of law, and advocated for a special set of laws particular to the New World because the Indigenous’ capacities were, and would continue to be, derived from the

overdetermining power of the land itself. Through out the course of *Información en derecho*, it becomes clear that the “modos, medios y arte” by which these new set of laws were to be enforced were embodied by congregación or the *pueblo-hospital*, which redrew the territory and demanded new methods of land use. The shepherd’s pastoral power must go beyond simply knowing each individual member of his flock. He now must know the quality and condition of the land in relation to his flock to exercise balanced and vigilant care.

Quiroga’s logical progression from *policía mixta* to congregación shows his conception of the Indian, land, and community. In his reasoning, the New World is not new because it was “found anew,” but because it is actually so old that it is “como aquél de la edad primera y de oro, que ya por nuestra malicia y gran cobdicia de nuestra nación ha venido a ser de hierro y pero, y por tanto no se pueden bien conformar nuestras cosas con las suyas...” (77). As such, the New World needs to be ordered, guided, and molded. The Indian is ancient, and stuck in time, lending it a purity. This ancestral quality demonstrates their potential to be model Christians, but they need to be ushered into the modern present. Such a task needed to be carried out delicately. They need to be protected so that they “vivan y no mueran ni parezcan como mueren padeciendo como padecen agravios y fuerzas grandes por falta desta buena policía que no tiene y por el derramamiento y soledad en que viven.” What follows is a call for order: “Por que todo se ordenaría y remediaria y cesaria ordenándose ésta, y todo bien y descanso vendria juntamente con ella a todos” (82). Quiroga decries the state of bare life to which the Indian has been reduced precisely because the relation to others is characterized by a permanent distance. The Indian’s “derramamiento” or spatial dispersion is indicative of his spiritual (and individual) dispersion. They are dying, but not yet dead—living in “soledad” and alienation from each other and from civilization (the city). As Foucault states, the shepherd’s pastoral power individualizes each sheep. This loneliness is not a general sadness or

loneliness as an Indian people, rather it is each Indian's individual dispersion—and therefore isolation—from other Indians, from the priests, from God, and ultimately from civilization.

Quiroga's next argument offers the solution of congregación. In the pueblo-hospitales the Indians' physical and spiritual isolation will be remedied, and they will be brought into community not only with each other, but with the priests and God. Their living space, the land itself, will also be formed into a more social and civilized space in which resources can more effectively be gathered (83-84). Unlike the alienating work of the concentration camp, the congregación forced a spiritual and temporal community. Quiroga performs an important act of forgetting and naturalizes the problem of dispersion and disorder for in his framework, the Spanish have not displaced the Indigenous or stolen their lands. Instead, improving the colonial project is a question of ordering, transforming, and converting not just the Indians, but the land as well:

Ordenárselo, dárselo y confirmárselo, y trocárselo y conmutárselo todo en muy mayor, sin comparación, lo cual todos, *sin que nadie discrepe*, tienen por lícito, justo, sancto e honesto; que no solo se puede, pero aun se debe de obligación, y así podría cesar todo escrúpulo y darse la concordia con justa y buena paz y sosiego, reposo y abundancia de todo y con gran sobra para la sustentación de españoles, conquistadores y pobladores, y con gran perpetuidad e conservación, y buena y general conversión para toda la tierra e naturales della. (94)

Quiroga repeatedly mentions perpetuity, suggesting the desire to transform precarity into permanence. From the status of living dead, Quiroga hopes to bring not just Indian lives and souls, but also the colony itself, into a state of permanent life and conversion. Moreover, the land also gets tied up in this matrix of perpetuity as something in need of everlasting conversion *and* conservation. With the general conversion of the land, all disagreement and upheaval will give way to “concordia con justa y buena paz y sosiego, reposo y abundancia de todo...” among all the factions. Moreiras describes something similar in Fernández de Oviedo's call to “persevere” in the land: “Oviedo dedicates...his great *Historia general y natural de las Indias* where the description of the American flora and fauna is set at the service of a presentation of the New World as “standing reserve,” as Heidegger would put it, that is, the New World as naturally available to long-term Christian

exploitation” (360). The mutual articulation between race and land is evident in Quiroga’s grouping of the different entities at the end of the passage. Quiroga refers to the “sustentación” of the Spanish, who include both conquistadors and settlers, and the “conservación, y buena y general conversión” of the land *and* the “naturales della.” This last bit is a phrase he repeats: the “naturales della,” or “of the land”, not the other way around. No one disagrees (*nadie discrepe*) that transforming “everything”—the colonial project and the land—will be more sustainable for the Spanish, but yet the Indians and their land require a paradoxical pairing of “conservación” *and* “general conversion.” This is another example of how the Indians are constructed as potentially quintessential converts and the New World as naturally abundant, but the wild propensities of both must be subjected to order and form.

To achieve this homogenized peace after seeing the destruction and corruption already afoot in the New World, Quiroga states that the Spanish must stop trying to repair the broken system through alms and begging, and instead “fundir la cosa de nuevo” (175). He famously compared the Indigenous to “cera blanda” ready to be molded, but he also saw the New World and its people in terms of metallurgy. For example, he uses the verb “fundir,” to smelt, invoking the language of metals that convert, transform, and mix, instead of the more straightforward “fundar,” to found or establish. His language of transformation is indicative of the actual transformation between the two steps in primitive accumulation. Quiroga makes invisible the violence in the first step of primitive accumulation (violent dispossession), and passes onto the second, that of moving from aimless begging and alms giving to a literal more intentional formation of the laborer. Of the Indigenous and their land, he writes:

Hay tanto y tan buen metal de gente en esta tierra y tan blanda la cera y tan rasa la tabla, y tan buena la vasija en que nada hasta agora se ha impreso, dibujado ni infundido, sino que me parece que está la materia tan dispuesta y bien condicionada, y de aquella simplicidad y manera en esta gente natural, como dicen que estaba y era aquélla de la edad dorada que tanto alaban los escritores de aquel siglo dorado antiguo, y agora lloran los desta edad de

hierro nuestra, por haberse perdido en ella la sancta y buena simplicidad que entonces reinaba, y cobrado la malicia que agora reina. (175)

Orlando Bentancor also reads this passage in *Información en derecho* in terms of the early modern conceptions of matter and form with respect to metallurgy, empire, and political economy. He contends that the creation of order is paramount and understood in terms of subjecting New World matter to a New World form:

Quiroga transpone la técnica metalúrgica a la esfera legal y política, haciendo uso de una racionalidad imperial transatlántica que es también condición de posibilidad de la expansión técnica y capitalista que concibe a la naturaleza y los habitantes del nuevo mundo como un material crudo que debe ser moldeado mediante la organización imperial. El rol de las fuentes clásicas, así como el de la utopía de More, es subordinado a las exigencias de una racionalidad imperial que es simultáneamente metafísica y técnica, esto es “instrumentalista” ya que consistente en un modo de cálculo y ordenamiento que subordina la materia a la forma y el medio al fin. (172)

Bentancor’s argument is particularly useful in considering the question of conservation and reproduction. By focusing on need, or use-value, Quiroga is attentive to the environment and its natural qualities (*la materia*) in terms of the political ends (*la forma*). Each good, or commodity, produced under this framework guided the strict rules laid out by Quiroga to form a mixed polity. Surplus (not surplus value, though it could be viewed as a necessary precursor to it) was dangerous because again, it threatened the logic of molding the Indian’s lifestyle, time, and work. Certainly some Spaniards were aiming to produce a surplus with the goal of exchange to export their goods for profit, but such a model threatened the delicate balance between the material and spiritual needs of its population.

Quiroga’s problem with dispersion is the same as Las Casas and many other colonial officials, but his understanding of matter and form is particular: Quiroga never quite settled on the *cause* of dispersion. As previously mentioned, Las Casas ultimately questioned the colonial project, even if he was instrumental in smoothing over its foundational terror. He also believed that the Indigenous were civilized, citing their grand cities and capacity to govern them as evidence. For

Quiroga, Indian civility was less established. Nevertheless, he considered Indian dispersion as a “just” tactic of resistance from Spanish oppression (Bentancor 187). He also blamed the Spanish for their equally chaotic practices of gathering Indians “como a pájaros en la red” (*Información* Ed. Peredo 94).²⁷ In other words, this kind of disorderly lumping together was the inverse of dispersion. Again, the contradictions inherent in the logic and rhetoric of dispersion and *congregación* resurface. Were the Indigenous dispersed to begin with because they lacked civilization, or was their dispersion a product of colonial violence? Quiroga claimed both at once. The Indians were in need of form because prior to the conquest they were living in a state of equality. Betancour understands Quiroga’s “libertad” here in relation to dispersion in that like soft wax, the Indigenous were free and equal in their formlessness, as an “amorphous mass” (192). According to Alvaro Reyes and Mara Kaufman, this is not so far off from Sepúlveda’s argument regarding “the savages” and their sub-humanity that is then picked up by Hobbes. They write that, “The “disaggregated” state of nature is described by Hobbes as a “multitude” that is “incapable of any single action. It cannot make promises, keep agreements, or acquire rights except as individuals; thus there are as many promises, agreements, and actions, and most important, conflicts as there are people” (52). Hobbes located this actually existing state of nature in the Americas. Their existence thus justified European conquest in the name of protection, and was a self-reinforcing concept of domination (52). The goal for Quiroga, however, was to achieve an equality with form, one that came with the caveat of order achieved via division and partition. Such an ordering would reveal the natural resources.²⁸ The Indians needed to be divided and ordered away from the amorphous mass of Indigenous dispersion *and* Spanish corralling. As such, Quiroga establishes the race/land remedy through a new form of

²⁷ “...a confundir e enredar e enlazar como a pájaros en la red, para dar con ellos en las minas.” 94 In this sense, enredar e enlazar has the connotation of “to gather” by trapping or tying up as one would an animal.

²⁸ See Bentancor 180, 192-195. Bentancor applies Heidegger’s concept of the “standing reserve” and the ontological relation between revealing and modern governance/technology (in which modernity sees a split between “*techne*” and “*arte*”) to explain colonial understandings of matter, form, and order.

equality based on parts that are discreet like the division of labor, families, and gender roles to form the Indigenous (the matter) into a civilized form, the Christian subject, which is in turn contained by yet another larger form, congregación). He thus uses the congregación to render them from amorphous mass to political subject. Likewise, ordering space reveals “stocks” in the land, a process mirroring the division of resources and territories into definable geopolitical entities that are easier to conserve and govern. By “dividing” to conquer, this equality is the form of colonial primitive accumulation.

In its ideal form, the pueblo-hospital would function as a self-reproducing technology of power that acculturated land and people to mitigate the crisis of unchecked accumulation. The incursion of market relations threatened to destabilize this delicate balance, yet Quiroga hoped that his congregaciones would avert the disaster by aiding Indian incorporation into a colonial system based on profit. As previously mentioned, incorporation would remain on the perpetual horizon since the Indians were, in spatial and political terms, the “constitutive outside” to colonial power. Quiroga said as much when he wrote that the “cosa razonable, probable, y necesaria” would be to “ordenar de nuevo otra arte y manera y estado de vivir y de república en que viviesen en buena conversación y policía...para sustentarnos a nosotros de nuestros faustos, soberbias y gastos excesivo.” Quiroga states that the Spanish could never nor should they be expected to live as the natives do, but the Indians’ natural simplicity acts as a check on Spanish excess. Their specific needs call for a particular form of segregated government, and more importantly, the pueblo-hospitales will not only help to maintain the Indian populations and convert them, but it will maintain them in their Edenic state of innocence so crucial to the colonial project. Congregation allowed for their preservation and purity while also reforming their vices:

darles tal orden y estado de república y de vivir, en que se pierdan los vicios y se aumentas las virtudes, y no pueda haber flojedad ni ociosidad ni tiempo perdido alguno que les acarree necesidad y miseria y pierdan la mala costumbre de este ocio dañoso en que están criados y acostumbrados, y de manera que no lo sientan ni pierdan, como dicho es, hora ni tiempo ni

la gasten mal gastada ni la empleen mal empleada, y se ordene en todo de manera que para sí les baste poco, y para cumplir con las caras que han de llevar y tributos que han de pagar para la sustentación de todos, les sobre mucho, y juntamente con esto de su buena voluntad y simplicidad no pierdan nada, antes sean más guardados y conservados. (201)

Here one can see Quiroga's desire to utopically order labor time as indicated by his strict schedules for work, marriage, and education. He sought to impose time on the timeless and formless golden age of the Indians. Spanish time (*la edad de hierro*) and its art of governance was out of joint with Indigenous time (*edad dorada*), again necessitating an art of governance particular to the New World. To be properly civilized required a sense of ordered time in opposition to Indian "ocio." It was a process of primitive accumulation that reoriented the Indian's time toward an imposed communal debt he owed to the crown, the Church, and the hacendado.²⁹ This debt was one forced upon the indigenous, and since capital steals labor time to generate profit, it kills the possibility of autonomy and increases dependence. The division of labor and the administration of time also create differences in social reproduction between Indian and Spaniard, man and woman, and the country and the city. Boys and girls needed to be married by fourteen and twelve, respectively, so like Las Casas, Quiroga also imposed time and law on the actual reproduction of the community. The division between genders would also bring form to what Quiroga saw as their "amorphous" state in which the strict gender binary was not recognized.³⁰ An economic pastoral power emerges in Las Casas and is carried out by Quiroga that steps in to order family life for the purposes of capital. And this, as Federici reminds us, is a crucial mechanism of primitive accumulation. Because Quiroga conflated Indians and their supposedly essential qualities with New World land, he pursued a policy of differential inclusion in law and space. Quiroga was not concerned with making the New World conform to Old World ways, rather he wanted to fit the Indians and their land into the cogs of the

²⁹ See Bentancor on Quiroga's need to order time in relation to matter and form, 202.

³⁰ This is not to say that Indigenous societies did not have distinct gender roles between men and women, rather that the division of labor into binaries and separate spaces was different, and like Indigenous settlement patterns, it appeared chaotic and even blasphemous.

new imperial wheel. For precarity to be transformed into perpetuity—permanent conversion, conservation, and supply—Quiroga privileged autonomy, life, and subsistence, but the process of instrumental imperialism and capitalism had already begun to take hold.

Conclusion

Elites, from priests to encomenderos, had competing visions for colonization. Some were preoccupied with converting souls, others with harnessing native labor for resource extraction. Many, however, hoped that religion and the accumulation of colonial wealth could coexist, and ultimately they envisioned a flourishing colony in which two cultures could live side by side, if not together as one. In the Caribbean, and later Mexico, it became clear that unfettered extraction and uncontrolled Spanish settlement threatened the colonial project since they questioned the power of the crown, exhausted the land, and decimated the native population. Congregación served as one response to this crisis, demonstrating the colonial propensity to link land and people through race in the race/land remedy. By flattening complex native social structures and ordering chaotic colonization, congregación also physically homogenized the New World landscape. Indigenous settlement patterns utilized various altitudes, while the Spanish most often sought out valley floors and plains. On flatter land, the Spanish built gridded cities, imposing a new colonial habitus reinforced through curated spaces.

The work of the Dominican chroniclers Antonio Remesal and Francisco Ximénez shows that the concerns raised by Las Casas and taken up by Quiroga continued throughout the colonial era, and as subsequent chapters will show, into the present day. Writing some seventy-five years after Las Casas' death, yet supposedly citing his exact words, Remesal highlights that successful conversion required city life and its ability to create an “active and passive”—that is, constant and complete—administration of the sacraments:

Requiere también esta ley ayuntamiento de ayuntada multitud y que los que la han de oír, recibir y guardar estén y vivan socialmente mas que otros, por el ejercicio continuo que manda que tengan del Divino Culto, protestando y reverenciando cada día a un solo Dios Padre E hijo y Espíritu Santo: y esto se hace por la administración activa y pasiva de los siete Sacramentos y las otras ceremonias de la Santa Iglesia: especialmente habiendo de concurrir todos los que son fieles a las iglesias a oír misa y la palabra de Dios y la Doctrina Cristiana, que todo es necesario siempre para confortar y conservar los y a cristianos e la vida nueva é Cristiana comenzada: y sin estos continuos adminículos todos los viejos y los nuevos fácilmente caeríamos y se perdería poco a poco la Fé. Lo cual es imposible poderse hacer, estando las gentes por montes y valles esparcidas cuanto menos habiéndose de enseñar y predicar y doctrinar los infieles de nuevo en la fé desde sus principios. *Hasta aquí son palabras del Padre Fr. Bartolomé*, que hallando en la Provincia donde andaba, lo primero, que era la libertad, solo faltaba lo segundo de juntar los naturales en pueblos, para que viviendo en comunidad recibiesen mejor la ley de Cristo Nuestro Señor. (211-212)

Remesal insisted that conversion had proceeded peacefully through spatial means of guidance and eventual active conversion and contribution on the part of the Indians. Upon finding the Indians dispersed, the only thing left to do was congregate them and provide a clean slate on which the priests could impart a permanent Christian conversion from the beginning (“desde sus principios”).

Late into the colonial period, even the most sympathetic Spaniards were baffled by the Indian’s choice to live scattered across the countryside. Congregación sometimes successfully resettled the native population, but often these communities disintegrated due to disease and famine, requiring renewed campaigns for the reconcentration of people in Chiapas. Writing around the early 18th century, many years after the initial colonization efforts in New Spain, Francisco Ximénez, another chronicler and coreligionist of Las Casas, wrote about the challenges of converting and reordering dispersed Indigenous populations. Of the highland Indigenous in Chiapas, Ximénez wrote:

A que digo que es materia tan imposible conseguir aquesto con ellos, y más si es para juntarlos con otros indios, que más bien se dejen morir que mudarse á otra parte, aunque vean por sus ojos sus propios daños, y más hace aquesto ponderable al ver que ellos no tienen casas suntuosas sino unos bujías que en un día los hacen, ni menos tienen alhajas que les embarazan el transporte de una parte a otra, por que son como el caracol, que todo su ajuar lo llevan consigo y juntamente su casa; y no obstante es tanto el amor que le tienen al barranco y al cerro o monte donde nacieron, que más bien dejen la vida que el lugar, y si los mudan, como ha sucedido algunas veces, mas breve se acaban. (200)

This description is contradictory: the Indians are rooted to their birthplace, yet they move with ease and cannot be made to stay in any one location. Ximénez's paradox resulted from different Indigenous and Spanish understandings of land and its accompanying social relations. The belief that the Indians were particularly attached to the land as an essential quality of their "race" continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In this chapter, I have argued that the race/land remedy emerged through different forms of pastoral, disciplinary, and biopolitical power embodied in the racial project of *congregación* intended to combat dispersion. Colonial primitive accumulation caused economic and political crises, but these crises were then absorbed and materialized into imperial power by turning toward segregation, even if the eventual goal was a united colonial state. If the conversion and well-being of the Indians was shaped by the land, and colonial policy could perfect land use, then focusing on subsistence and social reproduction within a sustainable rural city regulated this feedback loop. Priests like Las Casas and particularly Quiroga believed that focusing on use-value and subsistence, instead of surplus-for-profit, would balance rural food production and resource extraction with civilized Christian community. Both promoted work based on use-value that required discipline and habit, employing the division of labor, gender, race, and space and the partitioning of time. This colonial form of pastoral power sought to replace decision, leaving no room for corruption of the Spaniards or backsliding of Indian conversion, such that the *pueblos* of *policía mixta* would hardly need to be governed at all. Matter, the Indians and the land, was subjected to form, the partitioning of daily habits, the gridded city, and the Christian colonial state.

Despite his renunciations of the colonial project and arguments for Indian autonomy at the end of his life, Las Casas never gave up the idea of *congregación*. Late in life, he insisted that the crown relinquish its claim over the New World and that the Spanish colonists leave until the Indigenous freely accepted Spanish rule. Priests, however, were excluded from this ban so they could

convert and care for the Indians so long as they were persuaded rationally. Without quibbling over Las Casas's intentions, inherent to his ideas of congregación were the makings of a race-based pastoral power constitutive of empire. Figures like Quiroga carried the torch toward reform in ways that would remove any doubt regarding the validity of the colonial project. The incompleteness of conversion was a function of power. If conversion were ever really complete—if the Indians or the land finally “arrived” at a satisfactory state of permanent conversion—then elites would cease to have a reason to wield power over land and people. Power, in the case of Mexico, lies in the process of transformation, of claiming that people and land are still in need of development. Perhaps for this reason Sepúlveda's argument about essential Indian barbarity never completely dominated. A model in which the Indians would always and forever be inferior, and subject to “just” servitude and violence did not exactly serve empire. The crown could only stake a claim to the New World so long as the Indigenous had the *potential* to be converted. The conflict over the distribution of people and land use for the purpose of colonial extraction resulted in the need to convert, but so did a genuine belief in saving souls. The material—land—became linked to the ideological—race and religion—through racial projects like congregación, whose primary goal was conversion.³¹ The “modern art of government,” according to Foucault, is to cultivate individuals so that they contribute to the power of the state, and having now shown the beginnings of this process, the following chapter turns its attention toward power in the nineteenth century Mexican nation state (252).

³¹ I am specifically referring to Las Casian Dominican *congregaciones*, and not later civil towns created for the purpose of harnessing mine labor.

Chapter Two
From Dispersion to the Plantation: Nineteenth-Century Representations of
***Congregación* and National Progress**

*Pues ¿qué importara que rica
el América abundara en el oro de sus minas,
si esterilizando el campo
sus fumosidades mismas,
no dejaran a los frutos
que en sementeras opimas
brotasen?...
...¡En pompa festiva,
celebrad el gran Dios de las Semillas!*

—*América in the Loa al Divino narciso, Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz*

The ghost of *congregación* haunted nineteenth-century calls for “order and progress.” Liberal elites feared that their own reforms had left a power vacuum in the countryside by ousting the Church. They perceived the challenge of agrarian backwardness in Mexico as involving both race and land, which they summarized as the “Indian Problem” and the “Land Question.” Too often, Mexican history is thought of in terms of the colonial era, the independent national period, and the post-revolutionary era, as though they represent easily identifiable ideologies with sharp differences between them. However, both nineteenth century and post-revolutionary elites alike would be in dialogue with their predecessors, still searching for a race/land remedy. This chapter, then, focuses on two nineteenth-century liberal novels, *El monedero* (1861) by Nicolás Pizarro and *La navidad en las montañas* (1871) by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, to propose a more continuous genealogy of colonial *congregación* that bridges the colonial and post-revolutionary eras.

Both works by Pizarro and Altamirano, despite the obvious influences of liberal secularism and utopic socialism, show that nineteenth-century elites longed for the perceived power of missionaries to incorporate Indians into the nation—an important precursor to narratives of assimilation, or, *mestizaje*.¹ I read the novels not as liberal artifacts, but rather I examine their colonial roots and show how colonial articulations of race and land carried through and were transformed during this period. It is not my intention to provide an exhaustive historiography of race, land tenure, or *congregación*, nor do I suggest that liberalism or utopic socialism were absent from these novels. Instead, I argue that if independence can in part be attributed to creole alienation by the crown, as David Brading has classically argued, then these novels demonstrate efforts to find an autochthonous modernity that looked backward to the past as much as it sought the ‘new’ in Mexico’s future.² These novels also suggest that concepts like liberalism, secularism, and ‘scientific’ notions of race were not “pure,” and upon closer inspection, often refashioned rather than outright rejected prior ideologies.

Readings of *El monedero* and *La navidad en las montañas* through the influential framework of National Romances (Sommer 1991) also risk reducing them to their allegorical love stories, and they merit scrutiny beyond this approach to complicate the legacy of the nineteenth century. Altamirano’s story, which drew inspiration from Pizarro’s lesser known piece, remains influential in school

¹ The mestizo—a person of mixed indigenous and European parentage—became the national subject of Mexican state formation after independence and continued with greater institutional force after the Mexican Revolution. While nineteenth century liberals were more open to racial mixing and equality across racial and class lines (whereas conservatives tended to believe in a natural social hierarchy), this did not change their continued belief in race itself or the need for racialized cultural improvement (See Gutiérrez Negrón, 89). Liberal elites like Altamirano, as Joshua Lund (2012) notes, either implicitly or explicitly subscribed to the inevitability of eventual and total *mestizaje*, and were thus supportive of miscegenation and Indian assimilation. A main question was how to pursue this acculturation such that Mexican *mestizaje* could be its best, most modern, self. The novels thus depict indigenous and mixed race unions that are successful because of the cultural and economic practices of the couples, particularly with respect to land use. After the Mexican Revolution and José Vasoncelos’s famous essay *La raza cósmica*, the state would celebrate its indigenous past but assume that all Mexicans were mestizo, thus erasing the living indigenous from national identity. Meanwhile, the state implemented *ejidal* land reform which targeted the indigenous with assimilationist agri(cultural) programs.

² Brading, David A. “Bourbon Spain and Its American Empire.” In *The Cambridge History of Latin America*. Vol. 1, *Colonial Latin America*. Edited by Leslie Bethell, 389–439. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

curricula today. Pizarro was himself responding to José María Roa Bárcena's *La quinta modelo*, a conservative parody of liberal utopianism, by making a case for the viability of such ideas (Gutiérrez Negrón 2016). Both Pizarro and Altamirano were prominent liberal elites, considered paradigms of nineteenth-century Mexican ideology, culture, and politics.³ Their distinctive staging of model agrarian villages, saved by missionary priests from the civil war raging around them, compose an image of a nation in crisis that could be redeemed by just and intentional agrarian social policies. Read as didactic proposals for agrarian and social reform, they expose liberals' engagement with Mexico's Catholic colonial heritage,⁴ on which Enlightenment ideals about natural science and New Spain's nascent agricultural capitalism weigh heavy.

Through the works of Altamirano and Pizarro the persistent fear among elites that the conversion of Indians was tenuous and always subject to regression is evident. If indigenous Mesoamericans were defined by their opposition to Spanish land practices, in particular their "uncivilized" dispersion over the landscape, Indian subjectivity quickly became conflated with rural dispersion, a negative potentiality that persisted through the colonial and national eras, and became a racialized index for unsanctioned uses of land.⁵ *El monedero* and *La navidad en las montañas* reveal

³ Pizarro and his works have received far less attention than Altamirano and his writings, perhaps because Altamirano was more active in cultural and government institutions. Although both men worked in government, Altamirano founded several literary journals, such as *Regeneración*, taught, and held more influential government posts until his death in 1893, interacting with other Porfirian intellectuals such as Justo Sierra. For the most developed analysis of Pizarro, see Carlos Illades (2008). Of Altamirano, the following words appeared in the introduction to the 1904 edition of *La navidad en las montañas*: 'Ignacio M. Altamirano, a pure Aztec Indian, was born at Tixtla, State of Guerrero, December 12, 1834. The first fourteen years of his life were the same as those of every Indian boy in Mexico; he learned the Christian Doctrine and helped his parents in the field...He died February 13, 1893, at San Remo [Italy]. His illness was chiefly nostalgia, longing for that Mexico he loved so much and served so well. Altamirano was honored and loved by men of letters of both political parties...He ever urged the development of a national, a characteristic literature, and pleaded for the utilization of national material.' This characterization of Altamirano's early life is still the most common today, even though it is likely embellished (see Lund 2012 for a more nuanced treatment).

⁴ It is important to not necessarily take nineteenth and twentieth century intellectuals (liberal, conservatives, and post-revolutionary alike) at their word. While many conservatives, like José María Roa Bárcena, may have declared that liberals were eschewing all tradition in the pursuit of the new, or other post-revolutionary land reformers and intellectuals, like José Vasconcelos, may have claimed to be breaking with oppressive nineteenth century Porfirian institutions, there was in fact a diversity of ideas and inspirations across time periods and political lines that literature helps expose.

⁵ On racialization in Mexico, see Joshua Lund (2012) on how 'race wars' in Mexico are actually conflicts over land and resource distribution. For colonial Mexico, see Nemser 16-21. Also, 'group differentiated vulnerability' is key to

paradoxes in elite views of Indian dispersion. On the one hand, they grounded Mexican modernity in essentialist notions of an “ecological Indian” (Krech, 1999) living in harmony with nature who, under certain circumstances, could be tapped for their wisdom of the natural world to make it more productive. On the other hand, they racialized people as Indian because of land use methods they judged as inferior, leading to the conclusion that the countryside and its inhabitants needed to be modernized. There are few related ways of conceiving of this ambiguity.

Both authors pose colonial congregación alongside utopic socialism—an apparently antagonistic and anachronistic pairing. The intricacies of the messy intersections of nineteenth-century ideologies cannot be explored in their entirety here, but the novels show how liberalism “infused” with utopic socialism (Charles Hale 2014) grafted comfortably onto the colonial antecedent of congregación. For Carlos Illades (2008), Pizarro is part of what he terms “el primer socialismo” in Mexico, characterized by idealism, harmony, and historical linearity—a notion not so different from post-revolutionary land reform architect Molina Enriquez or José Vasconcelos’s teleological and racialized notions of Mexican agrarian progress,⁶ which I discuss in the next chapter. Both Pizarro and Altamirano admired “los primeros cristianos” and by extension saw the first Spanish missionaries as representative of this more “pure” and socialist leaning expression of faith. In fact, in Pizarro’s earlier 1849 *Catecismo político del pueblo*, he wrote, “Fray Bartolomé de las Casas y el obispo de Quiroga consolando a los esclavos del Anáhuac; Hidalgo y Morelos dándoles libertad y patria, serían con mucho la prueba de que el sacerdote cristiano tiene por misión principal sembrar la

Nemser’s understanding of racialization in the New World (12). Congregación facilitated the constant physical division of space and people, the calculation of Indian life, extraction of resources and labor power, often under either the guise or reality of providing ‘care’ (44). That is, by differentially falling ill and as privileged infidels, they were racialized as vulnerable in opposition to the Spanish, and therefore in need of spatial concentration to employ conversion and care (54). Congregación is an ‘infrastructure of race’ defined as, ‘the material conditions of possibility for the processes of racialization that both ascribe categories of identity to bodies and populations and enable those identities to be subjectively experienced and lived’ (64).

⁶ This was different from Marx’s materialism in which prevailed the notions of contradiction, class antagonism, historical contingency, and revolution that would come to shape later Mexican anarchist’s views (See Illades 24-25, 30, 40).

semilla de la igualdad y de la justicia, lo cual es exactamente destruir con el Evangelio en la mano los tronos de la tiranía” (*Obras I*, p. 26 cited in Illades). Together, they convey a belief that the agrarian model town could achieve harmony between society and nature. Because Spaniards rendered the Indians as closer to nature, made only stronger by the emergence of natural science, the indigenous were positioned in Pizarro’s and Altamirano’s novels to function as a bridge between the present and a utopian mestizo future.

The championing of work and rejection of idleness (*ocio*) also unified liberal intellectuals. This emphasis on work mirrors Jason Moore’s (2015) assertion that under capitalism, “humans have put nature to work—including other humans—in accumulating wealth and power...” (9) Moore’s framework also can help make sense of the durability of *congregación* in the ideology put forth by Pizarro and Altamirano, and later, post-revolutionary elites to intensify capitalist production and its need to make natures of all kind work harder (insofar as their labor goes toward the production of capital accumulation). Moore explores the “appropriation” of unpaid “work” from racialized peoples, women, and natural resources in his discussion of “Cheap Natures” and capitalism’s ontological necessity of separating Nature from Society, but notably, the novels portray this as a separation in need of repair to achieve capitalist progress (Illades 96). Through this lens, colonial missionaries like Vasco de Quiroga in his *pueblo-hospitales* regulated Indian idleness by imposing a disciplined labor time onto indigenous people and the landscapes they inhabited. Although nineteenth century liberals like Pizarro and Altamirano may have described work as the product and result of freedom, the novels here describe work in terms of pastoral cultivation by the state to instill an ascetic Christian Capitalist work ethic onto people and nature. By virtue of “putting people and nature to work” (even if we conceive of nature and society as dialectical processes with their own autonomous qualities) in a disciplinary regime, however utopically socialist, Pizarro reveals a liberal racialized capitalist ethos premised on expropriation and exploitation, casting subsumption as

harmony. Although Altamirano's novel has been privileged for academic study and cultural import, it is Pizarro's *El Monedero* that first set the nationalist tone and called for an agrarian modernity rooted in specific peoples and places. Altamirano abstracted this vision, made it more palatable to liberals and conservatives alike, and suggested its more universal applicability.

The Race and Land Questions

At first glance, it might appear that the most notable differences between the colonial and post-independence eras concern race and religion. The caste system, in theory, enforced strict divisions and hierarchies based on religion and blood, while in nineteenth century Mexico, liberals claimed equality through citizenship. This had significant implications for property regimes. Recalling the colonial era, the crown maintained a separate republic for Indians with its own legal framework, and although liberals after independence sought to expropriate Church and communal lands, *pueblos* still managed to assert their autonomy using the framework of citizenship (Annino 60-61). This characterized an ongoing struggle that played a major role in the Mexican Revolution. Emiliano Zapata's call for "land and liberty" should not be misconstrued, some have argued, as about simple access to land, but instead about pueblo autonomy against incursions from a centralizing state (Kouri, Annino). Antonio Annino shows that the 1812 Cádiz constitution actually had lasting effects in New Spain and later independent Mexico. Because it did not conceive of citizenship solely in the French sense of sovereignty, which linked numbers (population) to representation and drawing lines of governance, and instead allowed for citizenship based on territory (as in the indigenous *pueblos*), it uniquely provided an opening for territorial based rights movements for autonomy. A significant liberal change, however, was that it leveled previously hierarchical arrangements between *cabeceras* and dependent surrounding villages, unleashing internal conflicts. Even so, the Bourbon Reforms had already conferred upon the indigenous the status of

Homo aeconomicus, such that, “By the end eighteenth century, the Indian was no longer imagined as spiritually ‘miserable.’ Rather, he was materially miserable. Bourbon reformers saw Indian poverty as an obstacle to production and agricultural wealth” (Annino 63). The Salamanca school and debates about Indian humanity and sovereignty (*jus gentium*) earlier in the colonial era also played an important role in defining Indian autonomy. This was picked up by the Jesuits, who argued that a king’s absolute sovereignty must be limited, thus “The Spanish Jesuits’ natural law always theorized that a society organized in corporations is natural and unlimited, whereas a state is a limited and artificial entity unnecessary to the moral goals of individuals.” Annino then asserts that, “In this way, the slippage of liberal citizenship followed not only the model of the constitution but also the natural law tradition” (85). Similarly, María Elena Martínez’s influential *Genealogical Fictions* makes a compelling argument that calls for a more careful historical understanding about the conditions that allowed race to materialize under a colonial framework and influence Independence (11-15). Following Martínez, race and religion in Mexico cannot be separated, since the idea of conversion, honor, and lineage were all linked. It is important, then, to practice a more fluid understanding of race that bridges the colonial era and the nineteenth century.

Liberal ideas nominally asserted racial equality through citizenship, but they were also subjected to the historical racism of colonialism and nineteenth century debates about biological versus culturally and environmentally contingent ideas of race. The post-independent state formally did away with the colonial era’s caste system, which by its end, had grown to include more than 100 different castes. While segregation still existed, the state’s architects readily constructed Mexico’s future as mestizo. The most important question of the day was defining how that mestizo future would look, and who would contribute to it. Thus, the “Indian Problem” was, for the most sympathetic elites, characterized by the need to incorporate the indigenous into an economic modernity, and for its more eugenic, a quest to incorporate only the desirable elements of the

natives and extirpate those they deemed to be “backward” ones. The biological conception of race emerged most clearly alongside Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, but it had important Enlightenment precursors in figures like Carl Linnaeus. European positivists such as Augusto Comte and Herbert Spencer spun Darwin’s theories to extend his findings into the political and social realm. Under the *Porfiriato*, technocrats known as the *científicos* translated positivism through Lamarckian genetics to fit Mexico. In Lamarck’s conception of heredity, characteristics could be acquired from one’s environmental conditions and then passed on to future generations (hereditarianism). It had particular appeal because it offered Mexican elites a way out of the leading deterministic European theories.⁷ It meant that their “raw material” (Indians and Mestizos) could be improved through changes in the environment and culture. An example of this “soft inheritance” would be an alcoholic father who passes the vice onto his son, not because alcoholism is a genetically encoded disease but because once acquired from his environment, it could now be inherited. Additionally, Lamarck advanced the idea that through use or disuse, certain characteristics would be expressed and passed on. The cure for negative traits rested in policing the hygiene, daily practices, and environment of the Indian and Mestizo races. Some intellectuals, such as Pizarro and Altamirano, went a step further, believing that the Indians possessed good qualities that were worth preserving. This form of positive eugenics set the stage for twentieth century mestizaje, where the mestizo represented not an inferior race, but a kind of super, more evolved race.

In relation to dispersion, Lamarckism’s influence prompted Mexican elites toward policies of better population and resource distribution over eugenics. Minna Stern writes that “whereas the majority of *científicos* had encouraged growth through European colonization, eugenicists—animated by both mestizophilia and neo-Lamarckism—favored natural growth (Minna Stern 194).”

⁷ See Stepan and Minna Stern on Gregor Mendel, widely considered the father of modern genetics, and his connection to modern eugenics. In the international scientific community, Mendel eventually “won” as the decades wore on, but Lamarckism made a lasting imprint on Mexican racial thought to which I will return in Chapter Three.

While it is true that some advocated for European colonization, as in journalist and activist Luis Alva's proposals, it was often with the intention of improving mestizaje and simultaneously supporting indigenous education and land reform—which could take the shape of redistribution or a change in the mode of production.⁸ Ideas about land and race, according to Charles Hale, that were influenced by a positivism “conditioned by midcentury reformist liberalism” prevailed in the nineteenth century and deeply influenced post-revolutionary thinkers (259-261). While Latin America maintained a more cultural understanding of race, the introduction of European biological understandings of race and genetics tested Mexican elites belief in the power of education. As such, land and environment were introduced as powerful indicators and drivers of racial expression. The propensity to do so had long been established and was a direct holdover from the colonial era shrouded in the science of the time. It also allowed for the kind of “internal colonialism” necessary to fortify the newly Independent state.

These geographic depictions of so-called Indian landscapes reflect the nineteenth century romantic *costumbrista* tradition, characterized by a celebration of the landscape, wildlife, vegetation, and everyday forms of pastoral life. That these novels often represent a kind of essentialized and passive harmony between Society and Nature is often the limit of many readings, which deny them their productive, even didactic, nation building impulse. By cataloguing that which was proper to each new country, visually and textually mapping borders, resources, and populations, the genre constituted new post-independence relationships between race and land, concepts which in the nineteenth century were inextricably linked to science and knowledge. In her study of Cuban and Puerto Rican anthologies of *costumbrista* paintings between 1880 and 1904, Daylet Domínguez

⁸ See Lund, *The Mestizo State*, Chapter 1 on Alva's articles proposing European colonization, particularly by the Irish, of Mexico's northern lands to improve the Mexican mestizo race (as opposed to just the Indian race). He praised the indigenous and to his credit, saw them as a “real, living, active indigenous community.” Lund argues, however, that he was ultimately limited by liberal ideology (which was tied to the teleological horizon of the capitalist mode of production), thus directing his thoughts on race toward racism (15-17).

shows that intellectuals saw them as a privileged epistemological medium because they required careful observation of not just ways of life, but physical characteristics of people and their landscapes. While their popularity could be attributed to the print form being more accessible for a variety of reasons, or the fact that paintings require a less literate audience, Domínguez argues for a second possibility: “Los letrados promovieron el uso del costumbrismo con el ánimo de extender el dominio de las letras a los debates sobre raza e identidad nacional en un momento en el cual las ciencias sociales comenzaban a cobrar protagonismo” (133). The inclusion of natural history in both narrative and costumbrista paintings, further argues Dominguez, “no se redujo a la incorporación de las descripciones de la flora y fauna dentro de la narración, sino que se extendió al impulso clasificatorio del saber naturalista” (139). They taxonomized humans according to phrenology and physical characteristics, much like the drawings of Carl Linnaeus and Franz Joseph Gall and Johan Caspar Laveter, and “En ese sentido, los cuadros de costumbres y sus litografías constituyeron ficciones disciplinarias ligadas a un proyecto epistemológico sobre el cuerpo y a la formación de ciudadanías futuras” (137).

The description of Indian geographies and *rinconadas*—that is, towns situated in concave and mountainous *rinconadas* often cultivated by Mesoamerican peoples—also reflect an intellectual current that began with Enlightenment scientists in New Spain, who began to take special interest in altitude, since just one mountain could offer the ability to study a diversity of climates, plants, and people (López 85, Nemser 154-156). Unlike the Spanish botanists, who often disregarded the specifics of a plant’s origin seeking to universalize its production in early green houses and gardens, the botanists and physicians of New Spain began to constitute their own national space through a more particular categorization and inclusion of flora and fauna. What began as the crown’s attempt to extract, commercialize, and circulate New World nature for European markets in a mercantilist fashion, shifted into a *criollo* desire to better understand the lay of the land for national development.

The Botanical Garden's location in Chapultepec was hard won as scientists fought for the hilly landscape that could replicate mountain microclimates. The garden's significance is that, "it classified things as well as the space that enveloped, bound, and sustained them. It was not only the items laid out on the table that were subjected to the classifying and quantifying gaze, but also the table itself" (Nemser 156). It thus did something related, but different, from Foucault's notion of "ordering things" and things alone, such as plant and animal life that was dislocated from its environment in both representation and study. In other words, it is not that the Chapultepec Botanical garden was to be a microcosm of an actual Mexican mountain ecology, but rather that within one hill, different universal plains could be replicated for scientific inquiry. It thus recognized a certain amount of new world specificity while also trying to universalize. This kind of scientific thought transferred to race: "The operationalization of Chapultepec articulated by Cervantes, Constanzó, and Sessé [colonial and newly independent botanists in Mexico City] demonstrated a new imperial capacity to order nature through infrastructures of equivalence that transformed the way space and the living beings that inhabited and circulated through it were seen and mobilized for particular ends" (Nemser 156). There is a shift evident in Alexander Von Humboldt's writings about New Spain from the taxonomy of Linnaean botany to "general physics" and other natural, mathematical laws. Humboldt also started to make a relationship between environments and the supposedly different races that they produced and were adapted to them (159). Nemser thus argues that colonized people were racialized by their "affectibility" to their environment, whereas the European white subject was autonomous and capable of dominating (colonizing) their environment: "we find the racializing caesura that splits humanity into two types of bodies—one self-determining, the other externally determined" (164). As biopolitical notions of life emerged, it was concomitant and inextricable from race; in other words, life was "always already racialized" (138).

Thus is the quest of Pizarro and Altamirano to find a form of production and government that attends to the specific racialized forms of human life and their attendant environments. In the narrative depictions of Pizarro and Altamirano, agrarian towns start as model gardens and blossom into model plantation, displaying the full possibility of Mexico's profitable biodiversity and its labor force. Pizarro takes up some of the more specific aspects of Mexican nature, while Altamirano reduces and abstracts Pizarro's vision for a more palatable nationalism. These novels then, can be read as an amalgamation between the nineteenth century taxonomic drawings, the costumbrista painting, the botanical garden, and the congregación, into narrative form, serving as a proposal for a race/land remedy of national capitalist progress. Below, I will show how the garden continues as an important feature of Pizarro and Altamirano's novels, such that the garden and the congregación become one in a synthesis of agroindustrial capitalist progress. As the "original" site of so many tropical plants, which were often "out of control" on savage natures, Mexico needed congregación to contain, give form, and expropriate nature. The environment as Pizarro and Altamirano saw it was fully civilizable, if not more so than Europe, and it could be made productive via attention, recognition, and harnessing of highly localized environments (microclimates). Race, in these two novels, is constructed in tandem with the land—both are put to work, in Moore's sense of the term. A spatialized subjectivity emerged from this dynamic, with dispersion and concentration defining the Indian. Depending on the conditions, Indians would either disperse or be reduced into a stable compound with the land. Peaceful and productive landscapes are peopled by converted and concentrated Indians under priests' supervision (those whose labor has been expropriated). Autonomous landscapes with nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes are barren and hostile.

In both cases, Pizarro and Altamirano depict Indian geographies—*rinconadas*—where land and people have been assimilated to modern capitalist needs.⁹ These Indian geographies were material in the sense that the early Spanish colonizers tended to prefer valleys, often denigrating indigenous land use practices that utilized different altitudes and microclimates, and that colonial violence often pushed indigenous people into the mountains. Further, Liberals' political concern with religion was not for its own sake, but rather for its capacity to promote or impede progress toward modernity. They supported the abolition of communal lands to remove colonial obstacles to capitalist accumulation and supposed equality under the law, yet they retained colonial imperatives to transform the nature and people of the New World. In the nineteenth century, *congregación* resonated as a link between humanist modernizers and profit-seeking capitalists. Mexico, these novels suggest, was particularly well positioned for equitable capitalist modernity if the right race/land remedy could be applied to reconcile the “Indian Problem” and the “Land Question,” and the relation between the two was not unlike earlier Enlightenment articulations of the late colonial period. Later, the remedy would reemerge again in the post-revolutionary state as a means of traversing communal land tenure on the path to private property, facilitating the Green Revolution and making natures of all kinds work on an unprecedented scale.

El monedero: The Secret of Counterfeit Congregación

Pizarro's *El monedero* tells the story of the creation of Nueva Filadelfia, a utopic and predominantly Indian agrarian village. It begins with the Mexican American War of 1846-1848 and ends with the signing of the 1857 liberal constitution. The main character is “el indio” Fernando Hénkel, an indigenous orphan raised and educated as an engineer by a German man in Mexico City.

⁹ See Christlieb and Torres 2006. A *rinconada* is defined as an *olla* (or basin) for water (where two rivers meet) or in the fold of a mountain, and more symbolically, ‘it recalls the earthly uterus inside of which the Mesoamerican people were created.’

He falls in love with Rosa Dávila, a criollo client's daughter, who he eventually marries after her conservative, and ultimately racist, father dies. In the middle of the novel, however, Fernando and the plot take a diversion. Upon getting lost during a storm, he wanders into the Indian hamlet Tepepam where he meets María, the mestiza daughter of the bandit Pedro El Otomí or "El tigre." It is here where Fernando becomes enamored by the simplicity of Indian life and harmony with the land, inspiring him, along with Padre Don Luis, to construct a model town called "Nueva Filadelfia."

It is revealed in the novel's epilogue that Fernando founded Nueva Filadelfia with counterfeit money. Fernando asserts that he has no obligation to pay back the money, for "si hay algunas restituciones que hacer, por todas partes las reclama con un derecho preferente el pueblo, de quien salen todas las riquezas en el mundo dejándole pobre" (NYPL 623). In the eyes of Fernando, all he has done is taken back what rightfully belonged to the 'pueblo' in the first place and implemented a redistribution of resources. Beatriz Alba-Koch posits that it may be a nod to Marx who criticized Fourierists for their reliance on the "patronage of the wealthy," and at the most obvious level, a recognition by Pizarro that the main roadblock to such a project was the lack of money and "moral fervor" of the colonial era (27). However, it could also be said that the use of counterfeit money is an act of primitive accumulation that expropriates nature and expropriates/exploits people.

Fernando Henkel jumpstarts the capitalist accumulation that Nueva Filadelfia will generate by first acquiring land for free with the sin of counterfeit money. Pizarro stages the site for Nueva Filadelfia as empty and as a town to which neighboring Indian communities voluntarily gravitate, rendering invisible the racialized violence at the heart of land and labor acquisition driving "progress" and the accumulation of capital. Moreover, the site is carefully selected after musing over the many adequate possibilities to the south, east, and north of Mexico City with no consideration for prior land holding arrangements. The town is not founded from real expropriation of the wealthy, but rather it represents a sidestepping of the process (in utopian fashion).

As previously mentioned, limiting the analysis to “National Romances” glosses over the particularities in the works of Pizarro, and as we will see in a moment, in Altamirano. Similarly, both Illades and Luis Reyes de la Maza have noted the predictability and simplicity of Pizarro’s characters. For Illades, “Cada cual realiza lo que se espera que haga, según el esquema de Pizarro: el comerciante roba, el soldado estadounidense engaña y traiciona, el bandolero es cruel y el indio es bueno” (87). But this overlooks the fact that “el bandolero” (the bandit) is not just a criminal, but an Otomí Indian, that the priest is a hero in the nineteenth century, that María is an Indianized Otomí mestiza rendered “Nahua,” and that the “good Indian” Fernando Henkel does not always follow the law. In other words, this statement glosses over the specific ways that race functions in these novels. This is not to say that Pizarro was a master of narrative complexity, but rather that the novel presents us with a messier amalgamation of colonial holdovers and liberal ideology than generalized and archetypal frameworks allow.

Pizarro portrays a slippery slope between criminality or banditry and political resistance around the question of land. Pedro El Otomí/El Tigre is civilized when he is settled and becomes productive and literate, and a bandit when he flees to the mountains. In keeping with nineteenth century scientific racism, Pizarro resorts to phrenology to describe his propensities toward violence.¹⁰ Lazy and disobedient, he fled to the mountains when he tired of the *hacendado*’s reprimands, until hunger made him return. Finally, one day, Pedro refused to work but also refused to run away, resulting in his incarceration. He escapes “con mayor altivez de la que antes se le había conocido,” and returns to his birth village which also happened to be in a water dispute with the same hacienda (221). Pizarro’s explanation of the dispute is typical: the indigenous town lives on non-irrigated land (dependent on rainfall) in opposition to generally lower elevation irrigated

¹⁰ “La frenología habría indicado, al observar el cráneo de Pedro ‘El Otomí’, entendimiento claro en la elevación de la frente, falta de benevolencia y veneración, por la astucia y un gran valor por el desarrollo de las partes laterales, finalmente un amor acendrado a su hija en las prominencias de la parte posterior del cráneo” 220.

hacienda land. “Había entre ellos la tradición y aun los recuerdos de algunos viejos, de que en casos semejantes habían regado sus milpas con la agua que le disputaban á la hacienda, y mandaron una comisión al administrador pidiéndole aquel favor sin perjuicio del pleito, pero el administrador se negó,” suggesting the memory of the older community members of colonial styles of water management, the importance of which I will discuss in a moment. Pedro becomes the leader of a peasant resistance to break the water pipe and redistribute the water to everyone, and here Pizarro is sure to inform the reader that, “los de la hacienda no vinieron á impedir el acto, de manera que el riego fué tan abundante como quisieron los del pueblo” (NYPL, 216), emphasizing that Mexico has plenty of resources to go around. This act unleashes Pedro’s criminality, however, and “Pedro no quedó satisfecho con esto, y cuando concluyó el riego hizo dos cosas injustificables...” The first is that he does not allow his crew to close the broken aqueduct with an earthen dam, and the second is that he then raids the hacienda, and invites his co-conspirators to flee with him into mountains and indefinitely pursue banditry to its cruelest potential. After years of banditry, Pedro does eventually become literate, coincident with his settling down to a hardworking agrarian life. Pedro represents another local kind of power as an Indian leader who interrupts the colonial logic of resource and population distribution, who by elite reason can only be rendered criminal. Absent in the narrative is this same reason that forces dissidents to become dispossessed political refugees, all of which becomes abstracted in the rhetorical violence of “dispersion.” Further, Pizarro concedes that water management ought to be just, but stops short of validating any real expropriation of the hacienda’s property or the irrigation system that feeds it. As a nomadic Otomí, Pedro is the kind of Indian hard pressed to transform himself, and so it is here where Pizarro resorts to phrenology whereas such an explanation is absent in the case of his daughter María or Fernando Henkel. Pedro’s supposedly natural and irrepressible propensity toward banditry eventually gets the best of him, and he leaves María to be cared for by friends in an Indian town.

Along with detailed descriptions of indigenous landscapes, the novel is sprinkled with indigenous vocabulary and footnotes for place names. This suggests that Pizarro was searching for an autochthonous modernity. After a lost Fernando exclaims, “¡Oh Dios mio!...¿dónde estoy?” Pizarro informs us that “el viajero se hallaba en aquellos momentos sin saberlo, en el Puente de Dios, y sobre la gruta de Cacahuamilpa, dos maravillosas creaciones de nuestro suelo, que no tienen igual en el mundo” (178).¹¹ He goes on to describe the geography of the region, near Taxco, Guerrero, which is one of the largest limestone cave systems in the world. It was formed millions of years ago under the ocean, and today the Chontalcutlán and San Jerónimo rivers meet to create underground tunnels, and then emerge again to eventually flow into the Balsas river. As a place where two rivers meet on the sheltered side of a mountain range, the geographic formation meets the description of a *rinconada*. More importantly, Pizarro picks this place as so authentically indigenous that not only is it literally subterranean, but it has been maintained as an indigenous secret since the conquest: “Réstanos añadir, que sobre este Puente de Dios está el pueblo de Cacahuamilpa, que se ha hecho famoso por la gruta del mismo nombre que tiene á muy corta distancia, cuya existencia no han revelado los indígenas sino hasta el año de 1835” (178). That knowledge of the caves was hidden from the Spanish is true, and even while Pizarro was writing the novel, the caves had yet to be explored by scientists.¹² The towns above the caves, as I will discuss in a moment, are represented as poor, but also productive in the right hands. María shows Fernando how she has improved the land with her extensive garden of flowers and medicinal herbs, but at another moment it also becomes dangerous when her bandit father leaves him for dead in a deep canyon of the rugged terrain. While Pizarro believed, like many of his time, that the Indigenous

¹¹ This is not to be confused with the more well-known cave and underground river system of Puente de Dios in San Luis Potosí (a similar geographic formation to that of the Grutas de Cacahuamilpa).

¹² Even today only 20 of the 90 salons have been fully explored. In 1936, Lázaro Cárdenas declared the Grutas de Cacahuamilpas a national park.

were deficient in many regards, their perceived natural relation to the land (in particular the Nahua as opposed to the nomadic Otomí) was something to be rescued and indeed, the base on which to found a profitable, and therefore, utopic Mexico (Alba-Koch).

Pedro “El Otomí” is contrasted with María, who also goes by the Nahua name “Huitzitzíqui,” and gets her own chapter by the same name. María, like Fernando, speaks Nahuatl which for Pizarro is evidence of an essential communalism with the land and a properly Mexican modernity. In another footnote, Pizarro explains that “Huitzitzíqui” means “colibrí” (hummingbird), and “Para formarse una idea de la hermosura de esta voz, es preciso oírla de boca de uno que posea bien el mexicano, para percibir el silbido particular del pájaro-mosca, cuando se encuentra con otro de su especie” (192). Pizarro clearly admires the language and its speakers, insisting that to really appreciate it, “Huitzitzíqui” must be heard from a true native.¹³ Like Altamirano, Pizarro also favors the Nahua for being more civilized. Even though María is part Otomí, she is made more civilized by learning Nahuatl, and like the Aztecs, becoming a learned herbalist and cultivator of flowers, thus rescuing the vast wealth of indigenous medicinal knowledge. María walks Fernando through her stunning garden and then shows him her shelves of carefully labeled plants, and Pizarro goes on to name several by their names in Nahuatl, concluding that:

Seria largo referir los nombres de otras muchas sustancias medicinales que María habia acopiado, leyendo algunos libros antiguos y preguntando á los indígenas, entre los que hacia sus experiencias, bastando indicar, que el catálogo que hemos empezado es muy diminuto, si se atiende á que el célebre Doctor Hernandez en un tiempo en que los mejicanos habian ya desgradándose en todos sentidos, conoció por los médicos indígenas mil y doscientas plantas, cada una con su nombre muy adecuado, mas de doscientas especies de pájaros y un número considerable de cuadrúpedos, reptiles, peces, insectos y minerales [1]. (NYPL, 193-194)

The footnote then refers the reader to the first volume of Francisco Javier Clavijéro Echegaray (1731-1787), a Mexican Jesuit priest who tirelessly studied the Aztecs and natural science. Living out

¹³ According to Frances Karttunen’s translation, it is a variant of hummingbird with the second half perhaps referring to something “light, free, nimble.” Mexican linguist and Nahuatl instructor Youalsitlali Cruz agrees it is a variant, but thinks that the second half refers to the colors of a hummingbird.

the rest of his days in Italy after the Jesuits were expelled in 1767, Clavijéro remained active in European circles and pushed back on leading theories that disparaged tropical New World climates and peoples, maintaining that the Aztecs had once cultivated an extensive stretch of Mexico and retained a vast knowledge of the natural world.

Clavijero likely drew from what remained of the Spanish court physician Francisco Hernández's writings (Doctor Hernandez above), one of the first Spanish botanists to travel to the New World in 1571. Unlike many imperial botanists, Hernández sourced his information directly from the natives and studied what was left of their medicinal gardens. He disparaged the indigenous as ignorant and "lazy and impious," but was thoroughly impressed by Nahuatl to taxonomize and cultivate plant life, a cognitive dissonance only explained by racism (75). He even suggested that Nahuatl serve as the universal scientific language of classification, but was roundly rejected by his European counterparts who found "Nahuatl as too strange and savage to serve as the real language of learning" (López 76). The crown was also more concerned that such detailed knowledge of the New World could be stolen by its imperial competition and hid his manuscript and accompanying drawings in an archive which subsequently burned down in 1671. It wasn't until the mid 1700s, explains López, that the crown began to long for the great loss of the manuscript and was able to partially recover it (without the drawings) in New Spain. The crown then led another Royal Botanical Expedition with Martín Sessé y Lacasta who became instrumental in the creation of Mexico's botanical garden at Chapultepec as a research station. Sessé viewed his role as an enlightened scientist and believed in experimentation over prior expeditions that "prioritized" taxonomy and native knowledge. Vicente Cervantes, a Spanish botanist and pharmacist who managed the garden with Sessé, and stayed on after independence, "continued to emphasize the study of plants and nature as "pure" botanical science and never made any mention of agriculture or the other practical uses beyond medicine...rather than providing technical services for the new economic elite to

engage in export-led monocrop agriculture, as happened in other Latin American countries.” (López 94). Very soon, however, Mexico was to increasingly become one of the prime hubs of U.S-Mexican exchange for agronomy and experimentation from the Porfiriato onward. Pizarro, seemingly aware of this colonial history, at least in part, takes María’s botanical garden as a point of departure and moves from ‘pure’ abstract science to imagining a literary laboratory of agronomic and political modernity, rooted in a race/land remedy.

Knowledge of Nahautl, especially its taxonomic force, is recurrent in the novel, like when Fernando wanders into Maria’s village. Fernando still remembers Nahautl, unlike other de-Indianized Indians, who “procuran olvidarlo, como si con esto pudieran quitarse toda la obligación y semejanza con las infelices razas indígenas de que descendemos más o menos directamente casi todos los mexicanos actuales,” which allows him to seek shelter in a hut and find solidarity with other an old Indian woman and her family suffering from a deadly fever. Because of the local indigenous fiscal’s superstitious beliefs that the woman is a witch, the plague has gotten much worse, leaving the woman and her family to die while Fernando also falls ill. The good and rational Padre Don Luis firmly disciplines the fiscal for indulging his superstitious inclinations and deposes him.¹⁴ In the following chapter, titled El Padre Don Luis, it is revealed that he is the town vicar who serves a region where “la vegetación es ingrata porque el terreno es en su mayor parte pedregoso o arenisco. Algunos jacales distribuidos sin orden, una pequeña tienda, y la casa del alcalde componen esta población que lleva el nombre de Tepepam” (which Pizarro provides a footnote for: “significa sobre el cerro”) (57). Like one of Las Casas ideal missionaries, “el vicario, con un celo verdaderamente apostólico, los visitaba diariamente; llevaba a las familias hambrientas alimento, a los enfermos medicinas y al pecador la salvación; aparecía como el ángel de Dios entre aquellos desolados pueblos

¹⁴ There is not space here to analyze Pizarro’s identification with spiritism, but his notion of an ascetic Christianity also blended a communalism with nature and spirits. In the novel, María displays the powers of a medium.

que lo adoraban como a una providencia” (58). It is clear that for Pizarro, Nahuatl represents the civilized aspects of the now fallen, dispersed, indigenous, and maintaining it both preserves the connection to “almost all” Mexicans’ identity. Like the esteemed Doctor Hernández, the language itself preserves the civilization and is an essential element to making the land productive. Each footnote is a recovery of an indigenous past, and those who have recovered indigenous knowledge, like María, transform barren landscapes into not just beautiful gardens, but bountiful export agrarian industry.

This is made evident in an exchange between Don Luis and Fernando that discuss possible sites to found Nueva Filadelfia in which three processes are at work. The first is that passage describes the abundance of (potentially) fertile land in Mexico, despite having lost nearly half its territory during the Mexican American War. The second is that what is deemed an ideal ecology adheres to the botanists of Chapultepec and Humboldt’s observations regarding the unique pattern of littoral rainfall ecologies in Mexico and Central America. “Alexander von Humboldt was among the first to notice the region’s peculiar weather,” writes Martín Sánchez Rodríguez, where the eastern side of the Sierra Madre is humid and rainy, and the Pacific is much drier with torrential downpours. Unfortunately, these much needed waters evaporate or run off just as quickly as they came (56-57). The third factor, then, is that many of the places mentioned, especially the regions Fernando chooses for Nueva Filadelfia, are in the bajío region, particularly beholden to the Pacific slope pattern of rain and in need of irrigation techniques to moderate and reserve the water over a longer period of time. The exchange proceeds as follows:

—¿Cuál ha de ser la total extension de terreno para establecer la Nueva Filadelfia?

—Debe buscarse una de seas dichas localidades en que tanto abunda nuestra patria, que situadas en temperatura templada, tienen cerca por diferentes lados la temperatura fria y la caliente.

—Yo conozco algunas, dijo Fernando, muy ventajosamente colocadas; Tenancingo por ejemplo, que tiene á corta distancia el pino y el encino de las temperaturas frias en los montes que lo defienden por el lado del Norte; en varias llanadas que le cercan por los otros rumbos, produce muy buen maíz, excelente trigo en las haciendas de la Tenería, Tlapizalco y

Santa Ana; y á tres leguas al Oriente, bajando la cuesta de Malinalco, tiene los frutos tropicales, como naranjas, plátanos, café, algodón, caña de azúcar. Una cosa semejante sucede en Zacualpam de Amilpas, en Zatlan de las Manzanas, y para no cansarte, en todas las cañadas que se atraviesan al bajar la meseta central de nuestra república. Tienes, pues, de pronto los tres hermosos lugares que te he nombrado, con terrenos muy adecuados para el proyecto, sin necesidad de recorrer grandes distancias, porque de todos ellos no dista el que mas cuarenta leguas de la capital de la República.

—Mira, Fernando, además de buscar la baratura, creo que es necesario alejar á nuestros trabajadores de esos grandes centros de poblacion en que hay tantos vicios, porque si nos establecemos frente á frente de ellos, además de que fácilmente nos perjudicarian arrojándonos sus vagos y sus ladrones, tambien nos tendrían ojeriza, y nos tratarían con rigor ea pretexto de que somos demasiado atrevidos en querer mejorar la condicion de los pobres y dar lecciones de virtud. Veamonos léjos, muy léjos, donde ni siquiera se sospeche que hay un gérmen de nuestra vida, para que cuando las eternas rivalidades en que la actual sociedad agota sus fuerzas, pretendan perjudicarnos, mas bien nos aprovechen. ...tereno vírgen hacia el interior, por los Estados de San Luis, Zacatecas, jalisco, cuestan mil veces ménos, y son de una suprema calidad respecto de lo que puedan ofrecer de mejor la España, la Francia, y la misma Italia.” (NYPL 132-134)

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Bajío transformed from a primarily grazing region to one of the New World’s most dynamic agricultural centers. In her landmark study, Elinor K. Melville showed that what were once much greener pastures upon Spanish arrival had become dry and exhausted due to large scale sheep herding, introduced by the Spanish. The idea that the land was bad and uncultivable became naturalized and tied to the supposed savagery of the nomadic Otomí, who had in fact managed their landscape much differently pre-conquest. According to John Tutino, who asserts the region’s importance in the rise of global capitalism, the pre-independence Bajío boom was facilitated by an equilibrium between missions (Jesuit, and then Franciscan) and a mix of large haciendas that began producing wheat with smaller land holding communities cultivating staples like corn (39-40). While there were certainly uneven power dynamics at play, the spike in productivity and increased circulation networks allowed for northward expansion into California. This agricultural wheat boom never would have been possible, argues Sánchez, without the introduction of “single most important innovation” of “flood farming (*entarquinamiento*) that captured seasonal river flows in fields known as *cajas de agua...*” (57). The US then took over Mexico’s Bajío driven expansion into the North, coopting its networks. Meanwhile, the Bahío

downsized and shifted toward more autonomous practices (for political reasons, wars, and exhausted silver mines) from 1810-1820. In the epilogue when Fernando is explaining how he counterfeited the money, he recounts a trip to California and states that the Jesuits were one of the few entities that did not leave the northern territories for dead:

Una obra de esta naturaleza, que no cuenta con el entusiasmo que reinaba cuando se fundaron los conventos, que no alhaga fuertemente la imaginación y el interés de los ricos, por mas que sea en sí misma caritativa y dirigida al bienestar de los pobres, por mas que estos luego que la comprenden se disponen á toda clase de sacrificios, si no tenía por fundamento la abundancia de recursos para empezar, habria quedado relegada á la categoría de hermosos sueños. Para evitar que tan gratas esperanzas, las únicas tal vez capaces de satisfacer el anhelo de un corazon cristiano, se disipasen, me dediqué á buscar los fondos indispensables para la refaccion, en caso de cualquier contratiempo, y marché por esto á California. Allí habria conseguido cuanto necesitaba, pues en los pocos meses que estuve hice grandes ganancias, aunque á costa de indecibles penalidades; pero los enemigos de nuestra patria me arrojaron de allí, y los tratados de Guadalupe hicieron imposible mi vuelta, porque como tú sabes, aquella region, explorada por los Jesuitas, y medio civilizada por nuestros antepasados, descuidada enteramente por nosotros desde que somos independientes, pasó á ser de la Union Americana en castigo de nuestra criminal patria.” (619)

Pizarro's focus on the Mexican American war prompted him to look inward to what remained, and what he conjures is that in the not so distant colonial past, the region had a different way of managing water, people, and agriculture, and that moment was more productive than the present. The missions played a crucial role in securing Mexico's national territory and connecting it to the Bajío market, and it is to this historical memory that Pizarro turns to cultivate a pastoral power capable of transforming entire landscapes and populations.¹⁵ This account by Sánchez, as do other more recent accounts, contradicts the still popular thesis by Eric Van Young that the later colonial agricultural expansion was due to increased land cultivation rather than improvements in production methods. In light of this, one might also attribute the Bajío's agricultural revolution to production

¹⁵ Moore contends that if the agricultural revolutions of the nineteenth century were achieved by cultivating more land, then the twentieth century's Green Revolution was achieved through methods that made the land 'work harder' through inputs like water, fertilizer, and hybrid seeds. Though as can be seen here, the eighteenth century may have also increased output through innovation in production methods.

methods, as well. Furthermore, the fact that Fernando covers a rather extensive geography—from the Meseta Central and Bajío regions in the north (where they eventually settle), to suitable geographies to the south of Mexico City in Puebla, Cuernavaca, and Guerrero—is suggestive of abstraction and “geographies of equivalence” within Mexico (Nemser 142). That is, it reinforces that a large portion of Mexico’s land could sustain industrial agriculture.

While Fernando is sleeping, Pedro unexpectedly returns to town to see María, goes through Fernando’s things, and reads the letters from Don Luis. In terms of form, this is a clunky device that allows Pizarro to expediently reveal the plans of Nueva Filadelfia, but it also presents the plan as a written proposal or decree, akin to those of Las Casas and Quiroga. The letter recounts that plans are advancing well, but until Fernando can return and explain to the campesinos in “their language” the communal nature of the project, they remain untrustworthy of the priest. Luis goes on to say that he has added to Fernando’s suggestions: “Aunque todos están animados de las mejores intenciones y muestran gran docilidad, esto mismo me ha estimulado á adelantar su enseñanza moral con la estricta observancia de lo que bien podemos llamar *ley del pueblo*, pues no tiene otro objeto que el bien procomunal” (230). He then states that he has created a “reglamento” in order to divide time and make work more efficient. To avoid “deformation” of the body and monotony of the mind, workers will rotate duties throughout the day according to a strict schedule. The great town bell will ring at 4:30 am, then other bells will follow to reach every inhabitant, so that all can wake up, bathe, and then pray together. Directly after, they all listen to a short moral lesson that ends by 5:30 am. Everyone—adults and children—attends school for at least 2 hours. Children continue their schooling outside in the fields and inside the factories. The afternoon, just as Las Casas outlined, is to be spent eating and resting from the hot sun. Men may leave the community to hunt in the afternoons. At two o’clock, everyone is to gather and head to the rotunda for communal games of all kinds and theater. As Don Luis says, the natural docility of the inhabitants must be augmented

by additional disciplinary measures. Anyone wishing to skip out on this nightly activity must acquire “voluntary” license from the director. Additionally, every day at school, work, and at the rotunda, there is roll call done by the teachers and foreman (although there are “ni amos ni siervos”). The similarities with colonial *congregación* continue as Don Luis outlines procedures for daily life. Each family home will be issued a wooden bed, a table with six seats, at least four outfits, work shoes, and one *serape* per person. Despite this base living standard, work well done can be rewarded with “premios” of useful things to the recipient, and those who have either earned or enter the town with more money can spend it on certain luxuries.

Nueva Filadelfia promotes both strict gendered discipline and relative equality for women, further suggesting the ways in which capitalist agro-industry depend on gendered difference and the family as a unit of labor. First, only families are eligible to live in the model town. As per the rules, the family helps to police women’s movements. To excuse herself from the nightly rotunda activities, a woman must be in the company of either her husband, father, or brother, and if she is single, with her mother. Women also attend school and work in the factories and the fields, albeit performing lighter tasks since they are “weaker.” While there is recognition of the often unacknowledged reproductive labor of women, Don Luis writes that on Saturdays, one woman from each household will be “excepted from work” to do laundry. Any women’s issue arising before the Council of Elders will be deferred to the “matronas” who will preferably be comprised of the “maestras de obras.” Women for whom the initial investment in the village exceeds 140,000 pesos may be excused from farm work and “algunos servicios que el consejo administrativo detallará en cada caso particular,” but they must perform factory work and any other duties (236). There is then a colorblind class divide with potential racial implications between which women perform agricultural labor and which perform more “modern” factory work that is enshrined from a woman’s initial buy-in power. So while Pizarro believed in women’s education and their ability to work outside the home, women were

still responsible for reproductive tasks, were socially confined to the Christian nuclear family, and were also subject to different kinds of work regimes depending on their class (and quite likely, race).

Fernando responds to Don Luis's letters of concrete outlines with one simple remedy. One such letter is worth quoting at length:

Cuando tu obra llegue a obtener todo el desarrollo que debe adquirir, y los pueblos vecinos a la Nueva Filadelfia palpen la felicidad que en ella disfrutaban los colonos, todo el trabajo de aquéllos se reducirá, si quieren adelantar, a imitar lo que tú has logrado y establecer.

Para todas las calamidades no naturales de que siempre son víctimas los pueblos, existe un remedio que generalmente han desdeñado por ignorancia o por otras causas que no son sino variedades del mismo mal, cuyo remedio se reduce a una sola palabra: *asociarse*. Aisladas unas de otras las familias, aunque en aparente concentración, necesitan considerables recursos para una regular comodidad, y como muy pocas pueden proporcionárselos, resulta forzosamente que la mayor parte de ellas soportan lo que suele llamarse una mala suerte, y que frecuentemente no viene a ser sino un efecto necesario de muchos desórdenes sociales que ellas no han causado, ni pueden aisladamente remediar. (317)

In the novel's most colonial language yet, Fernando cites dispersion as the primary ill facing the Indian peoples. Their current state is deceiving since they are only "apparently concentrated," exposed by their inability to acquire the necessary resources for a dignified life or solve the great variety of ills facing them. Similarly, colonial priests linked physical isolation with social isolation, leading one to read this passage as the result of an incomplete colonial project. The people *seem* concentrated spatially, yet they are still socially isolated from one another, and need to join forces. Nueva Filadelfia will do away with both spatial and social dispersion. Upon proving itself as a just community, the nearby inhabitants will gravitate toward it (just as Las Casas dreamt), because they will feel it so profoundly. In other words, it will be an embodied compulsion (note the use of the passive voice: "se reducirá") toward movement that calls them unconsciously to a concentrated rural city and agrarian work ethic.

Finally, the novel provides us with an epilogue ten years later during which Nueva Filadelfia has flourished, duplicated itself, and made plans to build a third settlement. Pizarro takes the reader there by way of traveling soldiers. At first sight, one of the travelers observing on high cannot

decide if it is a hacienda, “o creo pueblo,” but it is neither, the other soldier corrects him, “es otra cosa,” thus rendering the old arrangement of *congregación* a novel and modern marvel. Later, the epilogue tells of Nueva Filadelfia’s agricultural merits (595). They grow corn, wheat, beans, and “otras semillas para alimentarnos frugalmente, y para vender a los que comercian y vienen a buscarlas a nuestras puertas” (604). They have perfected everything except for sugar (the most “modern” crop, generally produced plantation style), but presumably still lack the scale necessary for a true capitalist production.¹⁶ They even have savings from their textile work that is dedicated to the children, the profits from which go in to the town coffer (an idea lifted straight out of the colonial playbook of *congregación*). Even still, liberalism’s influence has had its effects on Pizarro, as the soldiers notice that the women working in the fields each have *huipiles* of a different color, in stark opposition to homogenizing colonial dress codes.¹⁷ More importantly, Pizarro’s Nueva Filadelfia strikes a natural balance between the land and wealth accumulation. The town’s profits and savings are just enough to provide a good life for the townspeople and even found a third settlement, but they are not so excessive as to cause greed (598). Again, that this wealth and expansion originated from a criminal act is swept under the proverbial rug as a secret of primitive accumulation. This miraculous agrarian transformation is envisioned by Pizarro sets the Chapultec Botanical garden to find its fullest enlightened and experimental-cum-colonial race/land remedy expression in a *congregación liberal*.

¹⁶ It should be noted that producing sugar on such a large scale required African slave labor or indigenous debt peonage, meaning that Pizarro failed to account for the necessary link between the reality of capitalist modes of production and its necessary labor exploitation. In other words, there can be no export oriented utopic sugar production.

¹⁷ Vasco de Quiroga’s *pueblo-hospitales* had an all white dress code for inhabitants.

Altamirano's Paradise

As with *El monedero*, those who have studied *La navidad en las montañas* tend to do so within the parameters of liberalism, utopianism, and Sommer's foundational fictions.¹⁸ A deeper analysis of the novel reveals more about the vision that this national reconciliation was to take, particularly by interrogating its politics of power, race, and land. Rather than focusing on Altamirano's arcadian society as "inherently liberal," I read it as inherently Indian, but converted by the benevolent hand of liberalism (Alba-Koch 27). The novel does not paint a liberal village that always was, rather it actively describes its transformation into a racialized liberal village. Altamirano's nostalgia played an active role in nation formation and imagination. As such, the novel claims congregación and pastoral power as tools of capitalist transformation in the organization of racialized human and non-human natures, thus moving beyond a simple costumbrista novel.

The novel's utopic town and its people are presented as once barren, but now unified and functioning harmoniously with nature. The story is written from the perspective of a lost republican soldier who stumbles upon a Spanish priest and is invited to spend Christmas Eve with his parishioners. Sounding not so different from a colonial chronicler trying to convince the crown, the "yo" (I) of the last lines switches to Altamirano who claims that the events were told to him by "un personaje, hoy muy conocido en México, y que durante la guerra de reforma sirvió en las filas liberales: you no he hecho más que trasladar al papel sus palabras" (41). Of this supposedly true story, we learn that the Spanish priest taught the villagers how to exploit their land to the fullest, taking advantage of their natural propensity toward hard work and diligence. When the soldier

¹⁸ See Doris Sommer (1999), who highlights *El zarco* but cites *La navidad en las montañas*. See also Carlos Illades (2008), Beatriz Alba-Koch (1997), and Edward Wright-Ríos (2004) for alternative readings of *El monedero* and *La navidad en las montañas*.

arrives to town, the townspeople and the priest are trying to facilitate a Christmas Eve romantic union between the young Carmen and Pablo, a troubled but now reformed indigenous man.

The novel moves from the wilderness to the town, vacillating between the essential and that which can be converted through city life. Similar to Pizarro's discussion of the Grutas de Cacahuamilpa, *Navidad en las montañas* opens with the backdrop of the mountains that 'habían desafiado allí, durante millares de siglos, las tempestades del cielo y las agitaciones de la tierra,' presenting them as the physical intermediary between the spiritual and the temporal, between heaven and earth. The mountain's ancient quality suggests that whatever emanates from them is rooted in a timeless essence. Even though Mexico is a young nation, its history—the people and the land—has existed for centuries. From the panorama shot of the mountains, the story zooms into the particular: the life and botany of the mountain and the wind that 'comenzaba a agitarse entre las hojas' (5). From fixed and passive mountains Altamirano shifts to the active movement of the wind that rustles the leaves, suggesting that this is a place where things happen, it is not outside of history.

Moving from nature to the narrative voice of the soldier, the story begins its romantic reflection of Mexican Christmas traditions. The soldier's narration jumps between the country and the city, where his memories transport him "a otros tiempos, a otros lugares; ora al seno de mi familia humilde y piadosa, ora al centro de populosas ciudades" until he settles in to recounting his childhood pueblo (6). Just as the colonial congregaciones intended for their inhabitants to be in earshot of the Church bells, the soldier hears the bells "convocando a los fieles a la misa de gallo." Describing his father, "cuyo semblante severo y triste parecía iluminado por la piedad religiosa," the soldier suggests his indigenous heritage, and Altamirano is able to make a more explicit connection to this relic of a pueblo de indio.¹⁹ The next chapter shifts back to Mexico City, where the soldier

¹⁹ The descriptors *severo*, *triste*, and *piadoso* are stereotypical of the melancholic Indian. See Lund for a detailed discussion of Altamirano's contested biography and identity. Unlike the standard narrative in which the mestizo has an Indian mother and a Spanish (or later mestizo) father, the case of Altamirano is the opposite.

recalls that even still the urban Christmas celebration “era una fiesta que aun me causaba vértigo” (8). In other words, the city continued to be a disorienting place for a mestizo “con rasgos Indios”, as if to say the ways of the countryside were essential to his physical sense of being.

The priest recounts that he was drawn to the priesthood for he dreamt of being like the colonial Spanish missionaries. For Illades, nineteenth century liberals saw themselves as “un sacerdocio secular e intelectual,” and the story shows its autobiographical colors with the orphan priest acting as a white alter-ego of sorts to Altamirano (25). After realizing that the religious orders were no longer “el plantel de heroicos misioneros que a riesgo de su vida se lanzaban a regiones remotas a llevar con la palabra cristiana la luz de la civilización, y en que el fraile era...el apóstol laborioso ... reduciendo al cristianismo a los pueblos salvajes” (12), he left the Carmelites to become a secular priest. After becoming ill, doctors discouraged “misiones lejanas” and instead suggested that the priest convalesce in a small town with a cool climate in the mountains, bringing the question of climate in line with health and well-being.²⁰ Reflective of Foucault’s framework of pastoral power and his description of the shepherd as “all things to all people,” the priest explains his role: “También soy misionero, pues sus habitantes vivían, antes de que yo viniese, en un estado muy semejante a la idolatría y a la barbarie. Yo soy aquí cura y maestro de escuela, y médico y consejero municipal” (13). The priest takes on every social role for the sake of his flock, but he then moves immediately to a discussion of the land:

Dedicadas estas pobres gentes a la agricultura y a la ganadería sólo conocían los principios que una rutina ignorante les había transmitido, y que no era bastante para sacarlos de la indigencia en que necesariamente debían vivir porque el terreno por su clima es ingrato, y por su situación lejos de los grandes mercados no les produce lo que era de desear. Yo les he dado nuevas ideas, que se han puesto en práctica con gran provecho, y el pueblo va saliendo poco a poco de su antigua postración. Las costumbres, ya de suyo inocentes, se han mejorado; hemos fundado escuelas, que no había, para niños y para adultos; se ha introducido el cultivo de algunas artes mecánicas, y puedo asegurar a Vd., que sin la guerra que ha assolado toda la comarca, y que aun la amenaza por algún tiempo, si el cielo no se

²⁰ Page 13. Although it would not have been uncommon for doctors to suggest crisp mountain air, one can hardly imagine that an isolated village was just what the Euro-centric nineteenth century doctor ordered.

apiada de nosotros, mi humilde pueblecito llegará a disfrutar de un bienestar que antes se creía imposible” (13). Its inhabitants still live in a state “muy semejante a la idolatría y a la barbarie,” having barely been converted during the colonial era and still practicing a subsistence living (13). But what is most decisive is the natural hostility of their land and climate and their isolation from central markets. The fix to their “rutina ignorante,” has been education, the formation of new habits, and the introduction of work in modern agriculture and *artesanía*.²¹ With his knowledge, the town will become more agriculturally productive, if only the country can reach political peace. The priest explains that he works alongside the people, “como a un hermano” and does not work as a priest, “sino como cultivador y artesano” (13). This could be read as a direct transposition from liberal ideology, however, moving further back in time, one must also remember Foucault’s assertion that the Christian shepherd must become like he who he wishes to save. He quite literally cultivates people *and* their lands, putting nature to work through pastoral power.

For romantic conservatives of the time, liberals were incapable of seeing Mexico’s natural beauty, and put “la patria” before the family. Dispelling such claims, Altamirano stages a national reconciliation that has its roots in the countryside. As the duo arrive to town, the priest again explains that before his arrival, *el pueblecillo*, located on “terreno bastante ingrato,” was virtually arid, and while they were able to produce corn, beans, meat, and cheese, there were no luxuries or common comforts. The priest recounts, “yo les insinué algunas mejoras en el cultivo; hice traer semillas y plantas propias para el clima...aprovechaban hasta los más humildes rincones de tierra vegetal para sembrar allí las más hermosas flores y las más raras hortalizas” (16). The priest advocates for methods of agriculture that use every corner, compelling nature to work harder for cheaper. Further, he claims to both know and reap more from the land than the locals. His foreign

²¹ Indigenous handiwork was a common theme among nineteenth-century intellectuals looking to salvage the positive elements of Indian society. It was also an economic reality for many Indigenous villages that were formed as the result of *congregación*.

seeds are “more appropriate” for the climate, and after a year, the town reminded him of the most beautiful South eastern French and Northern Spanish villages. The geography is Indian, but it is transformed into something modern, beautiful, and productive with the introduction of European crops. As the town’s people are both Indian and Mestizo, so too are its crops and agricultural methods, setting the stage for a more productive mestizo mode of production.

Although liberals like Altamirano had a comparatively sympathetic view of the indigenous, elite notions of race still pulled them toward public health campaigns aimed at improving the indigenous. The priest communicates that he is pleased for having encouraged the people to trade their tortillas for wheat that is “más sano.” The soldier agrees: “seguramente: yo creo, como todo el que tiene buen sentido, que la buena y sana alimentación es ya un elemento de progreso.” As an extension of his public health policies, the priest encouraged the construction of a mill to the end of abolishing “esa horrible tortura que se imponían las pobres mujeres, moliendo el maíz en la piedra que se llama *metate*; tortura que las fatiga durante la mayor parte del día, robándoles muchas horas que podían consagrar a otros trabajos, y ocasionándoles muchas veces enfermedades dolorosas.” Accompanying the belief that wheat is healthier than corn is the idea that the indigenous habit of women grinding corn with a *metate* causes deformity: “La cabeza, el pulmón, el estómago, se resienten de esa inclinación constante de la molendera, el cuerpo se deforma y hay otras mil consecuencias que el menos perspicaz conoce” (17). The preoccupation over environmental and cultural factors that caused deformity is reminiscent of Lamarckian ideas about heredity and health, and indicates that the racialized body and the land are in need of improvement.²² Altamirano notes that this was a hard tradition to break since a woman’s aptitude for corn grinding was an important attribute for a wife. The use of a mill has freed up the women’s time to be spent on ‘other tasks’

²² See Stepan and Minna Stern on the role of Lamarckism and Neo-Lamarckism for Latin American elites, who believed through ‘soft inheritance’ that races could be ‘improved’ through changes in behavior and the environment.

(17). Whether this allows women to perform more unpaid reproductive labor or enter into a wage relation as agrarian workers is unclear, but it is indicative of a partnership between liberalism and colonial congregación to make nature work harder for capitalism.

Altamirano narrativizes social integration that colonial priests had always imagined to be ultimate end of colonial congregación (Martinez 5). The subsistence based, and therefore autonomous (after the priest's civilizing tutelage) town is ready to be integrated into the national market and state. The decision to produce wheat instead of corn, shrouded in health and modernity, also mirrors the market of the past in the Bajío (as in *El monedero*) and the future: with sharecroppers producing corn on non-irrigated lands, it was to the benefit of the larger scale producers to grow wheat instead of competing with peasants over corn.²³ Mixing “modern” agriculture with the colonial, the priest also regales the soldier with talk of his impressive fruit orchard, a direct relic of missionary gardens in *congregaciones* (17). The *cura hermano* continues with a seemingly odd detail that the town, following his preference, is now vegetarian. Instead of raising animals for food, the priest shifted their focus once again to livestock that aid in increased output and circulation. There are more mules than horses “porque sirven aquéllos para cargar las mieses que se conducen por nuestros escabrosos caminos...” (18). Through their natural propensity for hard work, the implementation of the priest's vision began to provide for the town in abundance (16). He laments that unfortunately, despite their surplus, the town is too isolated from a market “para progresar” (17). Here one sees the capitalist necessity for and preoccupation with circulation. Altamirano's staging of the town as too far from any market—and as having benefited from modernization—is notable: it was these isolated towns that needed to be brought into the fold lest they rebel. The town has been literally awakened from its “ancient slumber” and brought into the capitalist time of

²³ The irony is that haciendas pursued these strategies specifically to diversify from neighboring Indian villages and their peasant sharecroppers.

history, which has consequently not only made it productive, but also placed it spatially on the map, priming it for its pending integration into the national market once there is an end to war.

Another key element to the novel are the town's social and religious institutions. Like the colonial priests, the *cura hermano* sees no reason not to celebrate and indulge “costumbres viejas, y que no encuentro inconveniente en conservar, puesto que no son dañosas.” The townspeople sing and play instruments, just as the colonial missionaries taught them to do. Again, this moment of festivity and of audible sound (like the bells) attracts “las cercanías y demás montañeses que habían acudido al pueblo para pasar la fiesta” (23).²⁴ The more dispersed indigenous people, who do not live in the town center, are attracted by these colonial vestiges. The priest says that they are “true pastors” who rent out lands of neighboring towns and haciendas to graze their sheep, and that “Estos hombres son dependientes de esas haciendas y viven comúnmente en las majadas que establecen en las gargantas de la sierra” (23). Altamirano, like Pizarro, describes the rinconadas inhabited by the indigenous alongside assertions regarding their honorable (but too humble) land use, linking a culturalist notion of race with land. He goes on to describe the town's elders, who in true Salamanca school fashion, are capable of just self rule. The indigenous patriarchs of the town, Tío Francisco and his wife, are described as honest pillars of the community. Francisco is a beloved elder and judge, having mediated land disputes long before the priest arrived, who despite his diminutive stature and melancholic look, “había un no sé qué que inspiraba profundo respeto... Los cabellos del anciano eran negros, largos y lustrosos, a pesar de la edad; la frente elevada y pensativa; la nariz aguileña; la barba poquísima y la boca sévera, el tipo, en fin, era el del habitante antiguo de aquellos lugares, no mezclado para nada con la raza conquistadora” (32). Similarly, the priest is also assigned an aquiline nose, signaling the shared integrity of both Spanish priest and indigenous judge.

²⁴ The priest qualifies the music, saying it is nice and simple, but wishes it were more up to date and ‘philosophical,’ probably so that it would have a more pedagogical effect. See Seth Kimmel on Las Casas's beliefs on habit formation and conversion.

Both men, one indigenous and one Spanish, are able to share physical characteristics just as they share integrity over their jurisdiction of the land. The object of Pablo's affection, Carmen, is described as "alta, blanca, gallarda, y esbelta como un junco de sus montañas." Her "nariz fina y sus labios rojos y frescos" (33). Her beauty is described as so exceptional that even the soldier cannot help but take notice, and despite Altamirano's racial fluidity, he privileges the mestizo and white constructs of feminine beauty.

It is here where the reader is finally introduced to the simple plot line when Pablo comes down from the mountains to accept the repentant Carmen. Altamirano seemingly combined Fernando Henkel, María, and Pedro El Otomí, into Pablo, a literal noble savage who embodies both Indian potentialities at once (Saldaña Portillo, 2016). By erasing the presence of María, Altamirano leaves little room for women, particularly indigenous women, to be civilized agents of progress and agrarian knowledge. This lover, hero, and bandit turned righteous farmer, is described as in accordance with nineteenth century paradigms of indigeneity, yet Altamirano makes nothing of the union between a phenotypically Indian man and a beautiful Mestiza.²⁵ More importantly, it is his status as a dispersed or reduced Indian that determines his character in the end. Pablo, described as "noble" but "un poco fiero," teeters on a fine line; fighting his two sides, the noble Indian who must fight off his savage inclinations, whose love for a beautiful mestiza is both the cause and cure to his affliction.²⁶ After falling hard for Carmen, who initially does not reciprocate his affections, he becomes a juvenile terror and a drunk.²⁷ The town rejects him, and so alienated and alone, he joins the army which degrades him physically but also disciplines him. He briefly escapes the army only to

²⁵ Pablo is described as 'un joven alto, moreno, de barba y cabellos negros que realizaba entonces una gran palidez, y en cuya mirada, llena de tristeza, podía adivinarse la firmeza de un carácter altivo' (39).

²⁶ 'Su noble carácter un poco fiero, es verdad, pero digno y apasionado siempre' (38).

²⁷ 'Abandonó el trabajo, contentóse con ganar lo suficiente para alimentarse y se entregó a la bebida y al desorden. Desde entonces aquel muchacho tan juicioso antes, tan laborioso, y a quien no se le podía echar en cara más que ser algo ligero, se convirtió en un perdido. Perezoso, afecto a la embriaguez, irascible, camorrista y valiente como era, comenzó a turbar con frecuencia la paz de este pueblo, tan tranquilo siempre, y no pocas veces, con sus escándalos penencias, puso en alarma a los habitantes y dió que hacer a sus autoridades' (34).

return, and the description of his escape is suggestive, given his “agilidad montañesa,” and his “conocimiento del lugar...pudo escaparse” (37). His natural ability and familiarity with the landscape affords him the upper hand to travel at whim around otherwise rugged terrain. After a few years he returns to town only to pick up necessary provisions before heading to the mountains where he took up:

una vida de Robinson. Escogió la parte más agreste de las montañas...Ha aprovechado algunas ideas sobre la agricultura y horticultura, y las ha puesto en práctica aquí con tal éxito, que da gusto ver su *roza*, como él la llama humildemente. No, no es una simple *roza* aquella, sino una hermosa plantación de mucho porvenir. Está muy naciente aún; pero ya promete bastante. (37)

After living in isolation, realizing the need to repent and serve his penance like Robinson Crusoe, Pablo comes to know the land differently such that he incorporates it and himself into the now productive economy of the town. One imagines *roza* to mean a humble garden, but specifically it is a perceived indigenous method of swidden agriculture (“slash and burn”).²⁸ The priest corrects Pablo’s self-described “simple” (read Indian) mode of production. It is not *roza* agriculture but plantation agriculture. It is promising and well on its way to a modern farm of scale. In the *Gundrisse*, Marx critiques bourgeois economists, specifically mentioning “Robinsonades,” who a-historically imagine private property and production to have emerged from an idealized state of nature rather than a specific form of social relations.²⁹ This eighteenth century “twaddle”, writes Marx, would go

²⁸ Altamirano backhandedly criticizes indigenous agriculture methods here, most likely because in his view, they were not productive enough. Over the course of the twentieth century, environmentalists popularized the ominous sounding term ‘slash and burn,’ demonizing peasant communities for destroying the world’s rain forests. It justified dispossession and once again, devalued indigenous knowledge of the land. Recent work in agro-ecology and environmental history has begun to rescue the method.

²⁹ “Individuals producing in society – hence socially determined individual production – is, of course, the point of departure. The individual and isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, belongs among the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth-century Robinsonades, [1] which in no way express merely a reaction against over-sophistication and a return to a misunderstood natural life, as cultural historians imagine. As little as Rousseau’s *contrat social*, which brings naturally independent, autonomous subjects into relation and connection by contract, rests on such naturalism. This is the semblance, the merely aesthetic semblance, of the Robinsonades, great and small. It is, rather, the anticipation of ‘civil society’, in preparation since the sixteenth century and making giant strides towards maturity in the eighteenth. In this society of free competition, the individual appears detached from the natural bonds etc. which in earlier historical periods make him the accessory of a definite and limited human conglomerate. Smith and Ricardo still stand with both feet on the shoulders of the eighteenth-century prophets, in whose imaginations this

unremarked if it weren't for its nineteenth century revival in figures like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who obliterated the difference between appropriation of nature as a human need and the expropriation of nature (and historical creation of private property) as a capitalist function. As Stephen Hymer has argued, that economists often use Robinson Crusoe as a metaphor of the self-made man is a prime example of the forgetting of the violence at the heart of primitive accumulation. A crucial point then is that a historical accounting of this violence also changes the narrative about Capitalist private property and harmony with nature, which then begets the ensuing alienation of both humans and nature in what Marx called "metabolic rift."³⁰

What is more, this vision of a natural economic origin is paired with pastoral power. Despite living like a hermit, Pablo looks out for his fellow man to protect their flocks of sheep from wild animals like panthers and wolves. The people "lo adoran" because besides hunting the animals, instead of taking the kill for himself, he leaves it for the humble shepherds and retreats to his *monte* without saying a word (37). In Pablo, pastoral power comes full circle. Like early colonial missionaries, the priest espouses peaceful conversion, and lets Pablo slowly transform. As Pablo tames his wild traits and uses them for good, he literally cultivates his productive qualities. It is no coincidence that Pablo turns into a pastor who looks out for wild beasts threatening his brethren's flock. On Christmas Eve, Pablo takes the final step in his conversion to unite with Carmen as the two melodramatically profess their love for one another. Pablo becomes the converted Indian pastor who can reproduce the pastoral power of the priest, except in this nineteenth-century framework,

eighteenth-century individual – the product on one side of the dissolution of the feudal forms of society, on the other side of the new forces of production developed since the sixteenth century – appears as an ideal, whose existence they project into the past. Not as a historic result but as history's point of departure. As the Natural Individual appropriate to their notion of human nature, not arising historically, but posited by nature. This illusion has been common to each new epoch to this day." (Gundrisse, 83-84)

³⁰ This is also a major point of contention for John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark regarding Jason W. Moore's lack of distinction between appropriation and expropriation, akin to Proudhon's error that all property is theft. For Marx (and Foster and Clark), only the historical capitalist construct of private property is theft (expropriation).

and with Pablo ready to carry the torch of assimilation, the future promised land is mestizo on an industrial scale.

Conclusion

Both *El monedero* and *La navidad en las montañas* imagine spaces of national progress where potential emerges from a naturalized and mutual articulation between race and land. Both Fernando and eventually, Pablo are “reduced,” diligent and honest Indian men who come to play a fundamental role in transforming Indian communities. They work closely with a priest to improve the land, simultaneously bringing peace and justice to all. Pizarro and Altamirano viewed congregación through rose-colored glasses, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, as fundamentally modern because it capitalized on a natural harmony between Mexico’s “raw materials:” Indians and land. Despite its failures, congregación survived in elite imaginations as the only means of fixing crises in the countryside. In both Pizarro and Altamirano’s villages, the priests work to create self-sufficiency as a way of insulating from outside conflict and instability—recall that both novels are set during times of war—but like congregación, the ultimate goal is peaceful integration into the state (and global) economy. Both novels depict pastoral figures whose knowledge and mastery over the natural world is just as important as, and integrated with, their knowledge over each individual member of the flock. The harmony with nature and hard work of an exceptional few replicate Bourgeoisie economics and adapt it to the necessities of Mexican state building. Dispersion and its attendant land use patterns still proved powerful for elites in deciding between the civilized and uncivilized, and congregación was poised to usher in an agrarian-based modernity. Nevertheless, the antagonisms surrounding the racial violence at the heart of Mexico’s foundation could not be smoothed over by liberalism and its project of agrarian capitalism. Of course, such antagonisms could not be ameliorated by combining liberalism with congregación, either. Under the guise of

brotherhood, the priests in these novels, especially in *Navidad en las montañas*, were still positioned to serve hierarchically as benevolent authorities, sweetly leading their flocks to more profitable ground.

Both novels also offer a vision of agrarian and environmental transformation indicative of a bridge between the colonial era and the post revolutionary land reform. Pizarro and Altamirano engaged the political ecologies of Bourbon era New Spain as they looked to their own native modernities. Where the botanical garden once served as an increasingly complex laboratory, Pizarro and Altamirano depict utopic agrarian villages, a literary precursor to the experimental farms for agroindustry, a practice which would become increasingly common in Porfirian agronomy and pick up speed during the Rockefeller backed Green Revolution.

Where Pizarro features two Indian characters—one a dispersed Indian and the other a concentrated modern Indian—Altamirano condenses them into only one character, Pablo. For Pizarro, Pedro El Otomí, though a victim of unfair social structures, is ultimately a cruel nomadic bandit, who despite his best efforts cannot overcome his proclivities. Fernando, doubly blessed from naturally good Nahua stock and the tutelage of a German benefactor, cannot help but spread progress through an agrarian utopia, but only after absorbing the knowledge of María and then repressing his feelings for her. Altamirano, however, relies less on stereotypical notions of nomadic versus settled Indian peoples. Rather, it is a transformation in land use alone that determines character in the last instance. Pablo, once a lost sheep, becomes the paradigm of racial progress through hard work and modern agricultural methods. Nevertheless, Altamirano's end goal was assimilation and eventual mestizaje, and it set the stage for the kind of positive eugenics to come in José Vasconcelos' *Raza Cósmica*. As always either potentially dispersed or reduced, the Indian serves as a renewable resource to be transformed away from one state of being into a more profitable and modern one. As the mestizo and *campesino* identities came to stand in for rural folk, well into the twentieth century, the state still characterized and sought to separate the racially acculturated,

pacified, and settled from those indexed as rebellious Indians, synonymous with bandits and guerrillas. The post-revolutionary state labeled the former as guardians of nature and national natural wealth and the latter as destructive forces to be eliminated.

Pizarro was a liberal with strong socialist leanings, but his novel reveals a much deeper ambivalence about Mexico's future than Altamirano's abridged version. Pizarro's much longer work gives room to particular consideration of different geographies and indigenous groups, engaging more with Mexico's past in such a way that a strong dose of doubt about possible unity stained his utopianism. Even though the start up capital for Nueva Filadelfia is counterfeit, and there is little discussion of the violence of land acquisition, Pizarro more fully reveals the national need to suture the two republic system from the colonial era (a utopian project to be sure). Pizarro not only left room for an Indian autonomy rooted in a reformed Catholic congregación, in some ways a conservative project, but also for whites to join in this structure, evoking the initial propositions of Las Casas for mixed race congregaciones which he later abandoned. The founders of Nueva Filadelfia come by the project through letters and discussion, whereas in Altamirano's version, no new village is created, rather an existing Indian and rural poor village is transformed through a priest and significantly, a delinquent reformed through the force of war. Altamirano's later 1901 novel, *El Zarco*, further attested to his acceptance of force (particularly paramilitarism) in the name of order, progress, and a mestizo mode of production (Lund 2). Similarly, Francois-Xavier Guerra shows that the antagonism between liberals and conservatives, characterized in large part by their relationship to Mexico's colonial corporate structure, was largely overcome during the Porfiriato when elites agreed "to stress social, economic, and civil modernization while at the same time side stepping political modernization" (139). Altamirano began this process through the abstraction of space and the naturalization of not just private property, but the expropriation of nature, in his *Navidad en las*

Montañas. Eventually, the tenuous compromise would give way to revolution, and dreams of agrarian capitalism would move from gardens and novels to experimental farms and policy.

In the 1917 Mexican Constitution, Article 3 of the Ley Agraria specifically identified congregaciones, among the other colonial categories of pueblos and *rancherías* as models for a more harmonious countryside (all three of which retain indigenous connotations), again in response to a nation in tatters. In the colonial era, an ejido most commonly referred to common lands for gathering wood, never to be used for agriculture. Therefore, the revolutionary “agricultural” ejido was an invention of reformers like Molina Enriquez and Luis Cabrera mixing the commons with the agricultural plot, and it was based on what they imagined to be more egalitarian colonial arrangements that attended to the particularities of Mexico’s indigenous heritage. It would eventually, they believed, give way to a more just and modern administration of private property, when the Mexican “pueblo” was ready (Kouri). Nostalgia for congregación’s capacity to solve the “Indian Problem” did not crop out of nowhere. Pizarro and Altamirano had planted the idea during the previous century in their literary workshops.

Chapter Three

Pastoral Failure and the Collective Work of Mourning *Congregación*

In the sphere of agriculture, large-scale industry has a more revolutionary effect than elsewhere, for the reason that it annihilates the bulwark of the old society, the 'peasant', and substitutes for him the wage-labourer. Thus the need for social transformation, and the antagonism of the classes, reaches the same level in the countryside as it has attained in the towns.

—Marx, *Capital*

The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.

—Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*

By the 1940s, Mexico had emerged from the chaos of the revolution with the sustained economic growth and political stability of the so-called “Mexican Miracle.” This period of national optimism is associated with the institution of the *ejido* and the technological advances in agronomic science, known as “the Green Revolution.” Both intended to make Mexico food self-sufficient by modernizing the countryside in order to support booming urbanization. The mixture of land redistribution and high modernist proposals bore the mark of the colonial race/land remedy and *congregación*. Through the *ejido* and its accompanying (agri)cultural projects—such as the *escuela normal rural*, agronomy, and the formation of mestizo and *campesino* identities, different institutions worked to constitute each other, and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) leveraged pastoral power to make the land and the people who cultivated it “work harder for free” (Jason Moore). For three decades, this process relied on the race/land remedy, but by the 1970s, it was clear that the “Mexican Miracle” had failed to provide a dignified life for the majority of *campesinos*, many of whom were forced by poverty to migrate to cities or north to the United States.

Two novels of this era stand out as early and lucid critiques of the land reform: Rosario Castellanos's *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962) and José Revueltas's *El luto humano* (1943). Both set in the late 1930s, the former stages a war between the Chamula Indians and various elites in Chiapas, while the latter traces both religious and radical campesino battles against the State. Revueltas's novel would be the first of many to criticize the post-revolutionary State, such as the pessimistic post-revolutionary agrarian novels like Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) and Elena Garro's *Recuerdos del porvenir* (1963), which illuminated subterranean processes of race, corruption, and State power that many historians would only come to appreciate decades later. Castellanos and Revueltas are privileged here for their direct engagement with pastoral power and the Church in rural Mexico, which serves as a fundamental point of departure and return for both novels. In doing so, they provide unique insight into the enduring legacy of congregación and the race/land remedy. Castellanos, as I will show, explicitly invokes congregación, while Revueltas more obliquely highlights pastoral power, coloniality, and ultimately, congregación's historical failure to sustain human and non-human natures. Furthermore, Revueltas's dialectical novel centers the construction and failure of a technologically advanced dam and informs the Marxian idea of metabolic rift between "nature" and "society," or perhaps as Jason W. Moore would have it, just nature. Both authors posit the colonial as an inescapable imprint on the post-revolutionary project, putting pastoral power and race into conversation with land reform and the Green Revolution. Ultimately, for both, there is a rift, a racializing caesura that has its roots in land and technologies of governance and accumulation (Foucault, STP, 43, 55-69).

This chapter begins with an historical examination of revolutionary elites' dependence on the colonial race/land remedy to achieve rural, and therefore national, development. Opening with a reading of an oft overlooked, but revealing passage of José Vasconcelos's iconic text *La raza cósmica* (1925), it then proceeds to Castellanos's *Oficio de tinieblas*, which directly references the continued

importance of pastoral power and congregación in the elite imagination. Finally, I turn to Revueltas's *El luto humano*, arguing that the novel stands as a singular and more radical critique of land reform and the State by revealing the oblique legacies of congregación and the shortcomings of the developmental State's approach to technology, labor, and nature. His approach to collective work and Mexican history also anticipated eco-Marxism and ecocriticism. My readings draw from Jason Moore's thesis that capitalism appropriates "uncapitalized nature as the pedestal of labor productivity" in order to create "Cheap Natures" (17).¹ Moore writes that "These historical natures take shape out of modernity's manifold revolutions—scientific, industrial, bourgeois, agricultural, financial, demographic, and all the rest," giving much attention to the Green Revolution as a leap of appropriation (expropriation) rather than productivity (18). Incorporating social reproduction theory and racial capitalism into his analysis, Moore contends that capitalism expropriates unpaid or underpaid labor of nature, broadly conceived as nature in the traditional sense and racialized, gendered humans, through a Cartesian Nature/Society split. It seems most productive here to read this "split" in terms of alienation rather than a Cartesian dualism. Both Castellanos and Revueltas demonstrate how the race/land remedy put nature—including humans—to work for free, externalizing the costs of capitalist development. Despite the advocacy of a homogenized national *mestizo* identity—following Lund's contention that "race always returns to segregation"—the Indian as an under-converted and under assimilated subject remained central to the creation of private property and historically cheap natures. By focusing on the margins, Castellanos and Revueltas claimed to testify to a peripheral rot spreading to the core.

¹ Moore's conception is inspired by but different from Marx's use of "appropriation," which "names those extra-economic processes that identify, secure, and channel unpaid work outside the commodity system into the circuit of capital" (17).

The Production of Communal History

The Mexican Revolution was a rickety bridge rather than a total schism between the *Porfiriato* and the *Pax Priista*, two moments of perceived stability. Revisionist histories have shown how these periods were plagued with peasant uprisings suppressed by elite narratives of State hegemony.² While the Mexican condition is often considered to have been radically altered by the Mexican Revolution, nineteenth-century ideas about race, land, and power resurfaced from the rubble of war. More importantly, these histories have also emphasized the fact that the Mexican Revolution can best be understood by its lack of any hegemonic coalition. The attempt to create a hegemonic State out of a myriad of contradicting interests is the story of the turbulent but eventual State consolidation in the decades that followed.³

At the juridical level, agrarian reform began when the 1915 *Ley Agraria* inscribed an official call for the restitution of lands, and the 1917 Constitution codified land reform in Article 27. Although the dominant narrative has often been that this period represented a revolutionary break, in some ways Article 27 restored fundamental aspects of colonial order. For example, the 1917 Constitution gave full ownership and administrative rights over Mexico's natural resources to the State. Land could only be privatized if the State deemed it in the best interest of the people, completely upending the liberal ideal of private property as inviolable. With the legal right to distribute land, the Mexican State's architects of land reform, namely Luis Cabrera and Andrés Molina Enríquez, invented the post-revolutionary agricultural ejido.

The post-revolutionary ejido drew on a mythic notion of both indigenous and colonial forms of land tenure. The standard institutional history of the ejido is that it was a restoration of

² See Aviña and Padilla on armed peasant movements during PRI rule.

³ By State consolidation I refer to the fact that the PNR was able to become the PRI and maintain political rule for 70 years. This was far from peaceful, and many urban and rural movements were repressed and activists exiled, jailed, killed, or disappeared from the 1950s through the 1970s in what has come to be known as the "Dirty War."

communal lands and practices lost during the liberal *Reforma* and later the Porfiriato. It was branded as a return to a more traditional way of rural life that suited the Mexican people, whose indigenous roots made them both predisposed to and in need of a state-sponsored paternal collectivism. It followed that this was what Emiliano Zapata had fought for, thus appropriating *Zapatismo* and the *Plan de Ayala* for the nation-building project.⁴ By the 1920s, the agrarian ejido came to be known as an indigenous form of communal agrarian land tenure based on the *calpolli* that the colonial Spanish had adapted to form new agrarian communities, like congregaciones. The calpolli was in fact not only a territorial form different from Spanish notions of space, but actually a sub-unit of social organization that related to the larger and dominant ethnic structure of the *altpetl*. Calpolli were not stand-alone cities, but when the Spanish arrived they read them as such and mistakenly equated their size with their prominence, then converting them into “*cabeceras*” (Lockhart 20). Lockhart notes that although the calpolli has gained prominence in scholarly work and colonial understandings of pre-colombian social forms, it is relatively uncommon in Nahuatl documents, where other terms appear (16). Replicating the Spanish error of understanding the calpolli in terms of an egalitarian kin-based city, land reformers projected it as a concept akin to the territorial notions of the commons, whose closest known relative was the Spanish *ejido*. Taking a step back, this means that Luis Cabrera and Molina Enríquez used a term of Spanish land tenure to refer to an idealized notion of a pre-Colombian form of land tenure. In the days of congregación, elites then argued, the countryside was more harmonious, more egalitarian, and more productive than what the Liberal Reforma or Porfiriato had achieved, precisely because these colonial land structures were more properly attuned

⁴ The institutionalization of the revolution purposely sidelined Villa in favor of Zapata. While the legacies of both movements became appropriated by the State, Villa was defeated by Carranza, and Villismo specifically called for private property and autonomy, since it was particularly anti-statist in orientation. The idea of State owned land was vehemently opposed across class lines in the north. Meanwhile, Zapatismo, was perceived not only as an indigenous tinged movement, but one that called for the reinstatement of communal lands. It was believed by those who came to power that it was Zapatismo that needed to be appeased and appropriated, while Villismo needed to be suppressed.

to the pre-Colombian disposition toward “commoning.” Nevertheless, they were also transitional structures that sought eventual reorientation of the Indians *away* from the commons. It represented a colonial golden age, providing a nostalgic vision for a utopic future. This was all a fiction promulgated in the name of political expediency (Kouri).

In the Middle Ages, the Spanish *ejido* referred to common forest or meadow lands outside of a village that were never to be used for cultivation. In colonial Mexico, the system of *tierras de repartimiento* imported the *ejido*, and granted different titles for agricultural lands. Emilio Kouri explains that the post-revolutionary marriage between two very different forms of land designation—the commons versus the agricultural plot—was a new construct, and that:

Según esta visión, las comunidades (pueblos, rancherías, congregaciones, etcétera) eran dueñas y administradoras de sus tierras; la parte medular de ese arreglo era que la distribución interna del acceso a la tierra agrícola era inclusiva y—si bien no igualitaria—tendía en principio a procurar cierta equidad colectiva.

The concept of an “agrarian” *ejido* negated the *ejido*’s actual history, and its post-revolutionary iteration was born out of a colonial nostalgia not so different from that of nineteenth-century elites. Article 3 of the Ley Agraria, for example, specifically identifies congregaciones—along with the other colonial categories of *pueblos* and *rancherías*, which likewise retain connotations of indigeneity—as models for a more harmonious countryside. For this reason, Cabrera and Molina Enríquez mourned the lands lost during the Reforma more than the land consolidation of the Porfiriato. This occurred at the same time that the post-revolutionary land reformers advanced an aggressive secular agenda, but one that distanced itself from the liberal expropriation of primarily Church lands during the Reforma and looked nostalgically upon certain colonial systems of land tenure.

The answer lies in pastoral power. Just like nineteenth-century elites, post-revolutionary elites imagined certain colonial rural arrangements like congregación to have been superior to any other system in managing power, land, and race at the rural municipal level. Despite the collectivist political rhetoric, the *ejido* was owned by the state and distributed to communities who had to

follow a strict set of rules regarding their use in order to eventually divide them into private holdings. The *Ley Agraria* explicitly stated, “la propiedad de las tierras no pertenecerá al común del pueblo, sino que ha de quedar dividida en pleno dominio.” Nevertheless, Cabrera and Molina Enríquez believed that the Mexican people were not ready for private property, echoing Porfirio Díaz’s declaration that Mexicans were not ready for democracy: “La restauración comunitaria, pensaban ambos, sería sólo temporal, pero por lo pronto la mejor opción era reconocer que tanto por arraigo cultural como por tradición ancestral la tenencia y el uso colectivo de la tierra eran las formas más auténticamente mexicanas de relacionarse con la propiedad” (Kourí). The lands that were in need of restitution according to the ejido’s architects were those expropriated during the liberal reform, and those lands belonged to communities that had indigenous roots and a communal understanding of land use. They identified the same communities of peoples and lands targeted by the crown and the Church for conversion, both of which required surveillance and cultivation (in both the cultural and agricultural sense), and who the post revolutionary state still targeted for pastoral care before being granted true autonomy or self-determination. In this twentieth-century race/land remedy, private property and mestizaje were the goals of land reform.

Both the mestizo and campesino identities emerged more fully after the revolution as tools of state formation. Both were racialized terms rooted in the land that oriented the post-revolutionary state away from the “Indian” as its subject, but retained the pre-Colombian past as its muse. Intellectual José Vasconcelos enshrined the notion of mestizaje as it is understood today in his 1925 essay *La raza cósmica*, but the essay’s nationalist possibilities first crystalized in the nineteenth century when Porfirio Díaz, a mestizo, was seen as a figure capable of uniting Mexico. Vasconcelos declared *La raza cósmica* a departure from nineteenth-century eugenic positivism, but many aspects of his manifesto were not so novel. Taking a neo-Lamarckian position, he argued for a positive form of biopolitics, stating that, “la quinta raza no excluye, acapara la vida” (24). He also rejected the

leyenda negra to praise the Spanish for “esa abundancia de amor” that initiated racial mixing and the missionaries who “pusieron al indio en condiciones de penetrar en la nueva etapa, la etapa del mundo Uno” (14).⁵ Reminiscent of Quiroga’s treatment of the indigenous as raw material or soft wax, Vasconcelos described the missionaries as preparing the indigenous for a higher order: civilized and Europeanized modernity. Nevertheless, mestizaje excluded some forms of life by assimilating and appropriating the living indigenous, and consequently allowed for their outright elimination during what has now become known as Mexico’s “dirty war” of the 1960s and 70s and continues today as paramilitary forces threaten indigenous communities and activists. The word “acaparar” (to accumulate, but also to control), reveals the latent gesture toward domination in *La raza cósmica*. This accumulative drive in Vasconcelos would also prove to be rooted in a desire to accumulate all life, including natural resources, even if it meant by assimilation, and by extension, the eventual death of the indigenous peoples altogether. Vasconcelos, somewhat unsurprisingly given his conservative turn later in life, subscribed to the teleological destiny of “the spirit” of the fifth race which he believed determined Latin America’s trajectory. Although the work advocates for an eventual Pan-Latin Americanism, it also acknowledges the necessity of nationalism to protect material interests in the short term (8).

Much has been made of Vasconcelos’s arguments and influence regarding the “spirit” of Latin American mestizaje, but the role of land in *La raza cósmica* is often overlooked. For example, he opens with the ultimate geopolitical dispersion: the geological separation of the world’s continents that splintered humanity into different races (2-3).⁶ The white race’s destiny was to “servir como puente,” having founded a civilization that once again put all the world’s people into contact.

⁵ See Nemser’s discussion on colonial “care” which engages José Rabasa’s notion of “love speech.” See also Charles Gibson 1958 on the *leyenda negra*, or black legend, which regarded the Spanish and its Catholic colonial project as uniquely cruel and backward in comparison to other, more ‘modern’ European colonizers, especially the English.

⁶ It is important to note that while this theory is widely accepted by today’s scientific community, it was considered a radical fringe theory at the time.

The white race was not the destination, as many eugenicists had claimed, but the journey. “No se quedó en reserva 5000 mil años la América” for one race to carry out the domination of another, but rather to form a fifth master race that could now benefit from the cultural and technical advances of the European. With these developments, Latin America could finally and fully capitalize on its best asset, its natural resources.

The Indian race was dying, he wrote, and should transform to accept the superior aspects of modernity just as the environment itself had: “Los mismos indios puros están españolizados, están latinizados, como está latinizado el ambiente” (13). Vasconcelos subscribed to a popular line of argument that Europe had modernized because it had to conquer its cold climate, whereas tropical heat made people lazy and unproductive. Engineering advanced by the white race, he wrote, would overcome any natural deficiencies in Latin America’s geography and its climate and turn them into assets:

La circunstancia de que sus costas no tienen muchos puertos de primera clase, casi no tiene importancia, dados los adelantos crecientes de la ingeniería. En cambio, lo que es fundamental, abunda en cantidad superior, sin duda, a cualquiera otra región de la tierra; recursos naturales, superficie cultivable y fértil, agua y clima. Sobre este último factor se adelantará, desde luego, una objeción: el clima, se dirá, es adverso a la nueva raza, porque la mayor parte de las tierras disponibles está situada en la región más cálida del globo. Sin embargo, tal es, precisamente, la ventaja y el secreto de su futuro. Las grandes civilizaciones se iniciaron entre trópicos y la civilización final volverá al trópico. La nueva raza comenzará a cumplir su destino a medida que se inventen los nuevos medios de combatir el calor en lo que tiene de hostil para el hombre, pero dejándole todo su poderío benéfico para la producción de la vida. (20-21)

Much like the colonial chroniclers, Vasconcelos characterized Latin America as a reserve of resources, thus reducing and equating Latin American modernity to its potential for resource extraction and wealth. At no point in the text did he question, let alone mention, the role of capitalism in producing inequality or “uneven modernities.”⁷ Rather, he attributed Latin America’s

⁷ The idea of ‘uneven’ or ‘combined’ development comes from Leon Trotsky in *The Permanent Revolution* (1929) and *History of the Russian Revolution* (1930). He argues that in underdeveloped regions, different stages of historical progress co-exist or jump ahead and can influence the political possibilities for revolution. Trotsky was taken in by the Mexican government in 1936 after he was expelled from Russia and was famously in conversation with well-known communist

unrealized ability to tap its resources to a natural, but surmountable, race/land disjointedness. He believed that when the people of Latin America became fully mestizo, and when technology (from Europe and the United States) permitted them to take full advantage of the land, Latin America would rise as an extractive and productive superpower not yet known to humanity. What began in the colonial era as a preoccupation over the dispersion of individual Indian souls and bodies for Catholic Empire morphed into one over the dispersion of all human “spirits” and races on earth: “Su predestinación, obedece al designio de constituir la cuna de una raza quinta en la que se fundirán todos los pueblos, para reemplazar a los cuatro que aisladamente han venido forjando la Historia. En el suelo de América hallará término la dispersión, allí se consumará la unidad por el triunfo del amor fecundo, y la superación de todas las estirpes” (15). Vasconcelos’s mestizaje ends all difference by stopping the passage of time and truncating evolution, all of which is precipitated by the fifth race’s ability to master land.

At the political level, the state absorbed Vasconcelos’s ideas and celebrated its indigenous past, funding anthropological and archaeological studies, erecting monuments and murals, and investing in tourism to indigenous sites. All the while the state marginalized the living indigenous who continued to suffer from exploitative racialization as the official question of race literally disappeared from the census, and outright discussions of racial categories became ever more disguised in the homogenizing political rhetoric of mestizaje and the campesino. The ejido, in theory, would complement this process by creating a balance between an increasingly vague and homogenized racialized rural subject and the land that Vasconcelos placed at the center of Mexican modernity.

figures such as Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Later influential historians and theorists such as Adolfo Gilly would adapt his theory of revolution and ‘uneven’ development to Mexico. For a Gramscian perspective on Trotsky in Mexico, see Morton, Adam David. “Reflections on Uneven Development: Mexican Revolution, Primitive Accumulation, Passive Revolution.” *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2010, pp. 7–34. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20684696.

The category of campesino, the prime benefactor of the ejido system, came into popularity during the Cárdenas regime as rhetorical tool of hegemony. As in previous centuries, this process of state consolidation also carried with it an economic vision rooted in race and land. The twentieth-century state tried to promote itself as “mestizo,” a racial synthesis of previously antagonistic forces that in many ways undermined particular identities and regions within Mexico. The only way to achieve hegemony and rural pacification was to redistribute land and re-articulate an identity based in a notion of “rural folk” over specific racial categories, class, or landholding. To be clear, *campesino* did not do away with race, but instead acted as a gloss for an identity that alluded to indigenous roots but could be more flexible with respect to political and religious positions and relationships to land. Similarly, to be mestizo shifted away from a specific caste category and into an identity that virtually every Mexican could claim. However, it carried with it the requisite segregationist impulse of race by excluding monolingual indigenous peoples, hence the continuation of the “Indian Problem.” This, since at least the nineteenth century, has accompanied the “Land Question,” and stands in for the preoccupation and paradox over the elite search to establish Mexican identity in its indigenous past while also assimilating living Indian populations. To this day, the campesino identity names a category of people who are united against elites, want “the right to the land they till,” are the “prime beneficiaries of Mexico’s revolutionary heritage,” and finally, whose “poverty is inherently unjust” (Boyer 25). In many ways, it captured everyone from the “proto-revolutionary” campesino to the “culturally conservative” campesino, by speaking overtly of poverty rather than race, and of a right to the land over any specific affiliation (*Cristero*, *Agrarista*, small landholder, etc). In my view, it is part and parcel of the post-revolutionary mestizo identity, subordinating indigeneity and other identitarian markers under a vague conception of a mestizo peasantry slowly evolving away from its distant Indian past. In name, the *mestizo* and *campesino* identities were a rejection of positivism and so-called objective science in favor of humanism and the Mexican “spirit.” They were

fundamental to the cultural Revolutionary project, but the state's shaky hegemony also subscribed to objective science in agronomy. In reality, positivism's influence endured as Vasconcelos resorted to essentialism of the highest order, encouraging the state to capitalize on Mexico's natural resources through the mastery of nature (including humans) via technology.

Agri-Culture and Agronomy: The New Pastoral Power

The *Cardenista* state achieved a historic level of control over the countryside through the massive reorganization of land between 1934 and 1940. In addition to the *ejido*, Cárdenas built up a secular rural education program paired with an activist agronomy that would finally turn peasant land use toward more 'modern' methods once and for all. Emerging in the nineteenth century, Mexican agronomy was heavily influenced by French positivism and Lamarck's notions of racial degeneration (or improvement) by way of socioenvironmental factors like diet or family life. It advocated for the introduction of European crops thought to be healthier such as wheat and the use of more modern plows along these same Lamarckian lines. In general, however, the exchange between Mexico and France was largely cultural, with many Mexican agronomists looking to French scientists and textbooks on agronomy, but few taking up the scientific method's call for observation and experimentation of local conditions. As they looked to professionalize themselves, *agrónomos* often preferred suits and cities over labs or fields (Cotter 27-38).

As the geopolitical tide shifted, US agronomy, highly experimental in nature, started to exercise a greater influence. During the Revolution, many Mexicans were educated in US agronomy programs, and especially during the rural reform of the New Deal, there was a vibrant exchange between the two countries (Tore Olssen 73-80). The state "redefined the "Revolution" to mean industrial and urban growth," and the *agrónomos* positioned themselves to facilitate these processes (Cotter 10). By the 1940s, agronomists reoriented themselves toward capitalist agribusiness, receiving

US funding to research and implement new techniques in northern Mexico.⁸ US agronomy promoted technologically advanced and scientific methods of agriculture, such as cross breeding corn varieties (rooted firmly in genetics), while generally continuing to marginalize and dismiss indigenous and peasant methods (Cotter 37).

The “Green Revolution” used “objective science” that created industrial farms and utilized new crop strains, irrigation methods, machines, and fertilizers, all aimed at increasing yields (Sonnenfeld 31). In this way, where French agronomy had made advances in organic fertilizers, US agronomy had created bio- and petro-chemical inputs that allowed for higher yields than ever before. It was also defined by research and implementation of new infrastructural interventions in irrigation and energy, namely through dam construction. This increased Mexico’s irrigated land by at least 50% during the 1950s and 1960s (Sonnenfeld 32). While these lands were in theory supposed to benefit the peasant sector, irrigation and fertilizers were in practice oriented toward an emerging agro-industry that was also part of financing and subsidizing industry for Mexico’s Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) program. *Ejidatarios* implemented some of the *agrónomos*’ methods when they offered a better alternative, but for the most part, peasants rejected the *agrónomos*’ self-declared expertise. This was in part because the *agrónomos* often ignored local environmental conditions and peasant knowledge, but also because the state failed to provide access to the expensive chemical inputs and machinery that their methods required.

Agronomy, focused on transforming land, was thus paired with a concerted effort by post-revolutionary presidents from Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924) to Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) in order to transform the *campesino* into a more productive and modern farmer receptive to the state’s needs. Under the consolidation of popular sovereignty, those who practiced pastoral power shifted

⁸ The US identified Latin America as a key site for resource security during WWII and the cold war. The Rockefeller foundation was instrumental in advancing the Green Revolution in Mexico. Many *agrónomos* studied at US research stations and US universities, and used crop strains developed in the US. cite?

from the priest to the rural teacher and the *agrónomo* (Cotter 4; Vaughn). The *agrónomos* played a large role in the rural school program, as Cotter explains: “In the SAF, *agrónomos* aided the cultural project, combining *Porfirian* ideas about diet, race, and peasants with revolutionary anti-clericalism and a neo-Lamarckian view of good nurture uplifting the inferior” (61). Porfirian agronomists were shunned by *hacendados* and *campesinos* alike, with neither accepting them as “experts.” However, young *agrónomos* saw opportunity for social mobility in the land reform, ready to assert their place in the Revolutionary Family (49-52).⁹ Established Porfirian *agrónomos* also continued to hold positions of power in the *Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento* (SAF) so long as they adopted a pro-Revolutionary stance, thus accounting for the holdover of many late nineteenth-century neo-Lamarckian ideas linking race and land, like the notion that environment and nutrition could have racial consequences through hereditarianism.¹⁰ *Agrónomos* played both sides by helping the *agrarista campesinos* obtain land while promising the state that they could modernize the countryside and increase agricultural output.

Part of the “cultural project” spear-headed by Obregón was the rural school, which intended to transform *campesinos* from superstitious, ignorant, and lazy people into healthy, secular, and science-oriented people. These transformations, elites believed, would yield not just agricultural results, but would address political issues like land reform and poverty. The rural school project also bore the mark of Lamarckism insofar as the improvement of people and their land would together advance Mexican civilization. *Agrónomos*, however, failed to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of *campesinos*, despite the implementation of model farms, *ejidos*, and research stations. As is well known, the campaign to promote secular rural schools was one of the prime catalysts for the *Cristero*

⁹ “President Plutarco Elías Calles, founder of the PRI’s precursor party, first used the term in 1929, and it was later popularized among scholars by the political scientist Frank Brandenburg. In his 1964 *The Making of Modern Mexico*, Brandenburg observed: “The Revolutionary Family is composed of the men who have run Mexico for over half a century, who have laid the policy-lines of the Revolution and who today hold effective decision-making power” (Huska 2).

¹⁰ See Lund for an extensive discussion of the way in which Mexican anthropology passed through France, the United States, and Latin America to influence racial thought and State policy through the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* in Mexico.

rebellion. Under President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928), the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) tried to set up “Permanent Cultural Missions” such as the one in Actopán, Hidalgo for the Otomí. The mission “included an *agronomo* who managed experimental plots and supervised the construction of wells, school buildings, and an open-air theater, as well as a doctor and nurse, professors of sports and industries, a social worker and a musician,” and was intended to compete with Catholic programs directed toward peasants (Cotter 64).

Some of the best-known novels and films of this period document these processes. For example, the 1948 golden age melodrama, *Río escondido*, by Emilio Fernández and starring María Félix, begins with “the President” (presumably Alemán) sending the young and dedicated Rosaura out to a smallpox-ridden village, whose tyrannical cacique is involved in a water dispute with either tenant or small holding farmers. Rosaura tragically dies from a heart condition, but during her short life, she wins over the townspeople and saves them from caciquismo and ignorance. The film is exemplary of the state’s plan to both employ and shift pastoral power from the priest to the rural teacher, and not so subtly suggests that the state’s program of rural modernization brings the redistribution and rationalization of resources on behalf of “el pueblo.” But other works, such as Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas*, to which I now turn, projected a much darker image of this attempt to rationalize and redistribute resources, particularly along the color line.

***Oficio de tinieblas*: The Bloody Pact of Private Property and Racial Capitalism**

Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas* hinges on the dislocation and blending of Chiapan histories. Set sometime during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas and his land reform in the highlands of Chiapas, the novel takes place in Ciudad Real, the colonial name for San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and stages the infamous Chamula rebellion of the late 1860s in the 1930s, when in fact no notable “race war” occurred. The Coletos (local elites) reject the land reform, and band together to blame the

state's agronomist and teacher, Fernando Ulloa, for inciting the Indians and especially their leader Pedro Díaz Winiktón. It would, however, be reductive to claim that the novel is about a Chiapas too "colonial" for "modern" progress. Instead, the novel operates on the assumption that the colonial is an intimate part of modernity, and that the revolutionary project, despite its talk of peaceful order and progress (or rather because of it), will result in future wars over land. As such, the novel draws most heavily on the last time Chiapas implemented land reform in the nineteenth century, and the ensuing conflict became canonized as a race war, showing how racialized historical narratives are produced by elites to maintain power over land and labor, and more importantly, how things will turn increasingly violent.

Born in Chiapas in 1925 to a ladino family in decline, Castellanos moved to Mexico City when her family claimed they could no longer sustain its failing ranch after the agrarian reform. She would return to Chiapas in 1956 as a member of the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (INI), putting on puppet shows to teach the indigenous about hygiene and history. Lund argues that the INI, despite recognizing that Indian exploitation was actually a "mestizo problem," continued to make Indian acculturation its objective. Notwithstanding her complicated biography, developmentalist politics, and documented condescension toward the indigenous, Castellanos seems to have understood in no uncertain terms that race was a construction (77-83, 102). Following her understanding of the "mestizo problem," *Oficio de tenebras* is about ladinos in Chiapas and the Mexican state, not about the "Indian Problem," and as Lund contends, it is not about a "race war" as such, but rather about a conflict over land and labor. The race war narrative is a masquerade put on by local elites trying to defend their local power from the centralizing state. The narrative culminates when the elites eventually 'succeed' by following Leonardo Cifuentes, a "whitened" mestizo landowner, who calls for martial law, paramilitary violence, and Indian genocide. In sum, he is a rogue mestizo who

eventually becomes the state, thus helping incorporate the elites into the state on terms more to their liking. Lund writes:

With the establishment of law and order, society no longer needs to be defended against an invading enemy other (the state); society must be defended, as Foucault puts it, from itself, from the sickness that it itself produces. This sickness is now (again) the Indian, and plans for its surgical removal are drawn up. (111)

While Cifuentes does unquestionably call for genocide, I argue that an examination of dispersion and congregación in the novel shows the way in which this genocide does not stand alone as an act of utter destruction. Rather, it is indicative of the colonial cycle of pairing crisis and violence with the pastoral care of the race/land remedy. It is the Church that has made the Indians “count” politically again as targets of conversion, thus foregrounding their ability to be excised by Cifuentes. Although presented at first as antagonistic forces, the relationship between the Church and the state, eventually embodied by Cifuentes, will lay the groundwork to establish far less radical land reform policies that have their ideological and material roots in congregación.

Castellanos also demonstrates that there was and still is a great deal of political capital to be gained in claiming that the indigenous are idolatrous and therefore primitive. In the end, the Church works with local elites by alerting them to the idolatrous gatherings of indigenous women led by Pedro’s wife and self-proclaimed priestess, Catalina Díaz Puiljá. The ostensibly secular local government then recasts this religious cult into a seditious meeting. What appear to be narratives over the converted status of the Indians turn out to be elite fears over losing their ill-begotten private property (including human property). The Coletos’ status as land (and slave) owners is naturalized by constructions of racial hierarchy that craft Indians as somewhere in between pagan and barbarous on one hand and Christian and civilized on the other (Saldaña Portillo). Both highland and lowland elites belong to a capitalist order, and this is in part what the novel is about: a shift in racial capitalism itself. For the colonial Coletos, the indigenous are natural resources attached to the land who, by a perversion of divine and natural right of property, should be made to work

harder and harder on their lands for free (or very nearly). For lowland elites moving toward industrial monocropping and for the post-revolutionary state, the dispersed Indians must forcibly be removed from the highlands to secure a steady labor supply elsewhere, and in fact the land, as an ontologically separate entity, much like Foucault's "society," must be protected from the Indians themselves to be made productive. The novel's religious figures remember colonial congregación, mirroring historical attempts to mediate capitalist shifts with the pastoral power of racialized concentration.

Dispersion and congregación surface in *Oficio de tinieblas* in all their historical complexity. In the historical background that the novel lays out, the Church has abandoned the Indians in the countryside, as in the nineteenth century, and this has allowed them to come under the influence of Fernando Ulloa, the embodiment of the state and its land reform. The central state has jeopardized the landholdings and labor force of the *ladinos*. Church elites try to intervene, using pastoral power to bring the Indian town San Juan Chamula back under Church influence. The monseñor don Alfonso has resolved to send his ambitious underling Manuel Mandujano to serve as the parish priest of Chamula. Reluctant to take the orders, Mandujano is reminded by don Alfonso of the colonial missions and the political stakes of conversion. The following passage is worth quoting at length:

- Eres coleteo antes que sacerdote y de ahí tienes la costumbre de despreciar a los indios—
continuó don Alfonso—en un cristiano eso es falta de caridad. Y en un político—porque
tú lo eres, aunque no queramos reconocerlo—es un error de cálculo.
- Los Indios son una cantidad que no cuenta en nuestras operaciones, monseñor.
- No siempre ha sido así. Recuerda a los misioneros de las primeras épocas de la conquista.
- ¿Y qué resultó de todo ellos? El fracaso. Hombres generosos, pero equivocados.
- En cambio, los jesuitas...
- Esos sí son los verdaderos hijos de la luz, tal como los define el Evangelio: tienen la
astucia de la serpiente.
- Me alegro de que coincidamos en la opinión. Pues, bien, los jesuitas hicieron un
experimento muy interesante con los indios del Paraguay. ¿Lo recuerdas?
- Vagamente. Creo que intentaron fundar una especie de utopía que tampoco les dio
resultado.
- Les dio resultado.

—Sí Nuestra Santa Madre olvidó la lección de los jesuitas que en cambio recogieron los laicos. Son ellos los que han vuelto a pensar en los indios. ¿Sabes para qué está aquí Fernando Ulloa? Para repartirles tierras. Y más tarde vendrán maestros par enseñarles a hablar castilla, a leer, a escribir. ¿Te das cuenta de lo que eso significa? Miles de almas, que por derecho divino nos pertenecen a nosotros, nos serán arrebatadas por ese gobierno injusto que tú combates. Y todo, ¿por que? Porque no hemos querido remediar oportunamente una negligencia culpable. (109-110)

Castellanos's decision to place the Jesuit missions front and center is a curious one given the lasting import of the Dominicans in the region. Since 1848, San Cristobal de Las Casas has been named so in honor of Dominican evangelization spearheaded by Las Casas and carried on by his co-religionists, which involved some of the first congregaciones in the Americas. According to the passage, however, both priests agree that these first "generous, but mistaken" missionaries failed, while the more cunning and enlightened Jesuits ("hijos de la luz") found success. A consideration of historical perceptions of the Jesuits, the Church in Mexico, and the INI sheds light on the passage.

While it could be said that the more recent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit missions in Northern Mexico and, of course, Paraguay were simply fresher in the collective memory than the Dominican congregaciones, Castellanos may also be invoking the perception of the Jesuits as being more modern, progress oriented, and having established a rival sovereignty in the New World. The Jesuit reductions in Paraguay famously came to a halt when King Charles III expelled the order from Spanish America in 1767 as part of the Bourbon Reforms, which sought in part to subject Church power to that of the Spanish state. Founded by Ignatius of Loyola, a warrior turned saint, the "Society of Jesus" was known since its inception for its military ethic and commitment to serve the Pope over any state government. By the late eighteenth century, the Jesuits were one of the wealthiest orders, and in their attention to temporal life on earth, they used their resources to comply with their vow to serve in risky and far away missions. Officially a mendicant order with a vow of poverty, during the colonial era they were rarely thought of as such. By the time of their expulsion, they had come under fire by the likes of Voltaire for a variety of supposed sins, and other

enlightenment figures cast their missions as a “state within a state” (Sarreal). The Jesuit missions had become vibrant economic centers, and when they were targeted by the Spanish and Portuguese slavers, the well-trained Guaraní successfully defended their territory (Wilde). In Mexico, as in many other colonial places, the Jesuits came to amass large land holdings and became so wealthy that they became self-sufficient from the crown, who sometimes owed years of back payments to the Jesuits (Clossey 187).

Luke Clossey argues that through the mission (*congregación*), the Jesuits practiced a “Global Salvific Catholicism” supported by its wealth accumulation in, and circulation between, Germany, Mexico, and China. Focused on saving souls as much as they were in accumulating wealth for the reproduction of their own order, the Jesuits courted donors, invested in maritime interests, and accumulated vast land holdings that were fundamental to globalization itself. The Jesuits were well-aware of their proximity to the global market, demonstrated in a quote Clossey features by Jesuit António Vieira (1608-1697), who “put the matter more directly in the *Historia do futuro* [History of the Future]: “If there were not merchants who go to seek for earthly treasures in the East and West Indies, who would transport thither the preachers who take heavenly treasures? The preachers take the Gospel and the merchants take the preachers” (255 Clossey). The Jesuits even articulated this back to the land, with Clossey noting José de Acosta’s “economic analysis” being inextricable from his religious belief, such that “the lands with the greatest mineral wealth were also the most Christian” (162). Clossey also writes that today Catholicism is definitively less salvific, centering “interreligious dialogue” more than the salvation of souls: “this global, salvific [early modern] moment of Catholicism is inherently unstable, as the global erodes the salvific” (256). Castellanos, however, seems to narrate a process of reorienting this salvific function away from the Church and towards state developmentalism, or perhaps what we might call a race/land remedy of Global Salvific Capitalism, from the soul to the market dominated subject and the land they stand on. This

would be Vasco de Quiroga's legacy played out to the end, a pastoral power advanced primarily in the name of the market, a point to which I will return in Chapter Four.

At the beginning and end of the above passage, don Alfonso clearly states that Mandujano is a politician as much as he is a Christian, and that the government is unjust, exposing the uneasy embrace between Church and state in post revolutionary Mexico. After their late eighteenth-century demonization, the Jesuits—with longstanding networks of support in Germany—saw the tide turn when wealthy backers revived the missions as brilliant examples of good government that rivaled any state. Other German, Austrian, and even Scottish thinkers subsequently lauded them throughout the next century, and Foucault even cited the missions as an example of a “heterotopia” (Wilde). Late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German *finca* owners of Chiapas may have been aware of and perhaps even admired the Jesuit missions “civilizing” power. As we will see in a moment, Castellanos portrays German coffee plantation owners as also having a stake in Indian education and “modernization,” leading one to wonder if Castellanos had herself overheard mention of the Jesuit missions either growing up in Chiapas or as a member of INI.

Those in the upper echelons of INI were also well-aware of colonial missionaries' work. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, most famous for his work on and recognition of African slavery in Mexico and Afro-Mexican communities, proposed the anthropological theory of *regiones de refugio*, and served as the director of the INI's influential and prestigious Tzeltal-Tzotzil wing from 1951-1952, which Castellanos would join just a few years later.¹¹ In a 1978 compilation of essays and interviews, “INI, 30 años después: revisión crítica,” Aguirre Beltrán reflected on INI and its *indigenista* framework in the wake of the 1968 “anarcoestudiantil” movements. He begins with a brief colonial history of the *República de españoles* versus the *Republica de indios* which he explains as follows: the Spanish wanted to “concentrar” the indigenous alongside Spaniards to more effectively exploit

¹¹ Tzeltal and Tzotzil are two of the most common Indigenous languages in Chiapas.

their labor while the missionaries wanted to “segregar” the indigenous to preserve them, thus creating *regiones de refugio* in which a dynamic colonial-indigenous culture was allowed to develop and endure over the centuries in relative isolation. While the opposition of *concentrar* and *segregar* is confusing since the Spanish missionaries did, in fact, use the term “concentrar,” Aguirre Beltrán’s point is that certain indigenous groups, such as those in Chiapas, had maintained a particular culture despite crude attempts at integration and acculturation from colonization to Vasconcelos. It was likely, Aguirre Beltrán explained, that the missionaries were to thank for the present survival of the indigenous in Mexico, but it was now incumbent upon the state to strike a balance between economic and national integration and the preservation of community culture (including language, religious celebration, myth, and dress). The vulgar characterization of congregación in Mexico aside, Aguirre Beltrán did not question the role of a state enmeshed with capitalism, unable to pursue integration without violence and certainly not true self-determination.

Castellanos echoes Aguirre Beltrán’s depiction of an isolated, peculiar, and syncretic Chamula in a *región de refugio*. The above passage on congregación suggests the possibility of an Indian stronghold under the sway of the Church—best portrayed by the historical example of the Jesuit missions in Paraguay—that could act as a real or potential threat to state sovereignty. The characterization of the early missionaries as a failure remains, however. While some of Las Casas’s congregaciones “failed” because of disease or famine, many towns dotting the Chiapan countryside today are a result of his project. As I discuss in chapter one, it could also be said that Las Casas, too, dreamed of an early notion of a religious Indian “state within a state,” and in this sense, he did fail—along with the Jesuits, of course. Nevertheless, one must remember that Castellanos worked with historical memory as much as she did with historical “facts,” and the memory of a rival sovereignty is most strongly recalled by the Jesuits.

Castellanos shows that the Church is equally to blame for indigenous suffering, for in the end, don Alfonso is happy to make a pact, as the Church historically so often has, with the congealing hegemonic state. In what seems like a presentation of *opposing* forces between the Church and the state, Castellanos will show the historical reality of *complimentary* forces. Don Alfonso's admiration of an alternative enclave that competes with state power, akin to Las Casas and the Jesuits, is utopic and unattainable. However, his deal with the state *is* attainable, for relations between the Church and state have been entangled since the colonial beginning, giving institutional life to each other and seemingly affirming Don Alfonso's assertion that congregación "dió resultado." As chapter one shows, missionaries like Las Casas and Vasco de Quiroga paradoxically segregated the Indians in an attempt to save their souls and eventually integrate them into the colonial State. Moreover, Christian indoctrination and habit formation often made the Indians and their lands work harder and cheaper for the colonial state, even if Las Casas himself would not have seen it this way. In other words, unlike Aguirre Beltrán, Castellanos recognized the historical complementarity of the state and congregación as a productive antagonism. In spite of its historical failures, the basic blueprint of congregación has been revived time and time again.

The Indians begin to "count" for highland elites only when the region's prior power structure is threatened by agrarian reform. The passages on Jesuit reductions and Mandujano's reassignment also recall Jacques Rancière's concept of the political as "disagreement," in which those of no "account" (the part that has no part) come to be recognized (to count) through an interruption as speaking beings by elites. While the concept of "the count" operates here and perhaps elements of the novel could be considered on these terms, I read these moments as primarily about elite violence toward the indigenous, who Mandujano specifically does *not* recognize as speaking beings. This approach centers the violence at the heart of colonialism, capitalism, and private property. Further, Castellanos's framing seems to shift the focus since don Alfonso sees the

Church in competition with Fernando Ulloa, the agronomist, over whether or not it is the Church or the state that will be responsible for making the Indians legible speaking beings by teaching them to “speak Spanish, read, and write” in a way more reminiscent of Foucault’s pastoral power and/or “the police.” In any case, upon hearing the news of his reassignment to Chamula, Mandujano is flooded by “mil imágenes confusas: indios levantiscos, borracheras bárbaras, comerciantes ladinos que huían a medianoche para salvar su vida, ya que no sus propiedades, del incendio y el saqueo” (110). When he thinks of Indians, he thinks of violent threats to property, which presents the most terrifying scenario of all: when ladinos have nothing left but their lives to protect, effectively reducing them to peasants with nothing left to sell but their own labor. The priest eventually provokes the Chamula Indians when he discovers their idolatry and harshly reprimands them, and it is here that the thousand confused images of the Indians above finally crystalize into an entity that is of political account to him: “La desobediencia de estos indios, su hostilidad, su contumacia, habían dado la cara. Ya no más esos fantasmas que finge la neblina, esos rumores furtivos en mitad de la noche, esa amenaza que no cuajaba jamás en un gesto, en un acto. Ahora el enemigo había tomado forma, dimensiones reales, consistencia” (225). The Indian as Indian only begins to count on the heels of state sponsored violence, giving credence to Lund’s assertion that “for Castellanos, Indian identity always emerges, indeed, can only emerge from this historical trauma” (81). With an identifiable enemy that has taken a discrete shape, Manuel Mandujano is able to argue in front of the ostensibly secular government that these gatherings of indigenous women are not about cult activity, but acts of sedition against the state (235).

That idolatry and pastoral power are about land becomes abundantly clear during the trial of Catalina, self proclaimed priestess and wife of Pedro Winikton, and a few of her followers for sedition. It is also no accident that Castellanos makes this clear in the courtroom, a farcical yet cunning charade of law and order performed by the Coletos. Asserting that “Castellanos is very

consciously reversing the blood flow,” Lund writes that the novel isn’t about when Indians attack, “it’s about when whites attack” (100). When pastoral power fails to bring potential dissidents and the land they inhabit back under state control, violence and racialization become the immanent result of capitalist reason. The pact between the state, private property, and the Church is underwritten by race. Where dispersion usually refers to the Indians, here Castellanos uses it to reveal what the colonial rhetoric of dispersion so often hides, that is, fear of deserved Indian retribution: “Eran numerosos, mucho más numerosos que los ladinos dispersos en la zona y aun que los que se concentraban en Ciudad real, y su ánimo salvaje, exasperado por la ofensa sufrida, se lanzaría sin freno a la destrucción” (228). Without policing spatial boundaries and taking extreme, even genocidal, measures, the order of private property naturalized by racial hierarchies in fact depends on continual violence.

The novel posits Christian conversion as a means of shoring up private property for whites (or those who claim whiteness by being propertied). The acquisition and transformation of land into private property operates by creating an Indian subjectivity, characterized by the tendency toward incomplete conversion and subsequent need for continual pastoral power (and expropriation of Indian land and labor). During the trial, the elites’ lawyer Tovar never denounces the land reform outright, but instead criticizes the way it was carried out. Fernando Ulloa bungled the land reform, and now “no quedaba sino tratar de remediarlo” (234). The “remedy” is to make an example out of Catalina and “reduce” (as in *reducir*) the dispersed Indians once again: “Esto aplacaría los ánimos de tanto chamula disperso en montes y cerros, haría volverle buen juicio a tanta cabeza extraviada por consejeros irresponsables” (234). Tovar then calls Mandujano to the stand and defends him for warning the state, “aunque a fin de cuentas el asunto no le incumbiera, pero sobre todo contra la autoridad de la Iglesia. Y antes de terminar no dejó de aludir, veladamente, a la intromisión abusiva del brazo secular en los problemas que, como éste, eran estrictamente de fuero religioso” (235). The

feigned separation between the Church and (the Coletos) state allows for both bodies to conspire against the central Mexican state and bring the Indians back under a new local-turned-national Coletos control.¹²

At this point Cifuentes becomes the figure to whom the Coletos will turn, eventually integrating themselves into the Mexican state by ensuring a race/land remedy more subservient to their property interests, both human and non-human. Castellanos brilliantly turns the concern over Indian dispersion on its head by having it apply to the ladinos. The fear of Indian dispersion, it turns out, has to do with the vulnerability of ladinos—few in number—to Indian attack, who might overtake them in number and force. In the disordered countryside, where both Indians and ladinos are dispersed, whites and white property are not safe. For as don Alfonso states, “el pastor debe vigilar a sus ovejas. Sin embargo, el rebaño de Chamula está mostrenco” (261). The problem for the Coletos is that Indian dispersion is equivalent to freedom from property relations, the people are sheep “without owners.” The solution must go beyond simple pastoral power (in which the pastor ought to keep watch over his sheep), and resort to more extreme measures beyond surveillance. Here the archbishop sacrifices one of his own by sending Manuel Mandujano again into Chamula, knowing full well he will incite the people to rebellion, likely culminating in his death. After the Chamula do rebel and kill Mandujano, Cifuentes calls for Indian genocide to defend society from itself in a display of biopolitical logic par excellence (Lund 111).

The question of genocide is indisputable here, and as Lund notes, the “endgame” of race war is genocidal biopolitics (111). However, race war does not operate alone over a “Society” separate from “Nature.” Rather than just a question of turning “society” against itself, this manufactured race war is a question of resources and of producing Cheap Natures that defined the

¹² Of Mandujano, Castellanos writes, “A él, como sacerdote, no le tocaba más que considerar el aspecto espiritual de la cuestión.” page?

trajectory of twentieth century Chiapas's organization of nature and labor. The moment is a pivotal moment that also involves a pact with the church. While don Alfonso had earlier advocated for Church pastoral power in the countryside to his protégé Manuel Mandujano, he retreats to the apathy of old age and allows for his presumable replacement, Padre Balcázar, to make an official alliance with the state. "Es confortador," says Padre Balázar to Leonardo Cifuentes, "ver cómo las contradicciones entre las potencias terrenales y la potestad espiritual, se anulan. Cómo todo se concilia cuando se persiguen metas comunes: la justicia, el orden, la paz" (356). The Church in Chiapas, now fully ready to ally with the state, suggests that after the genocidal terror of Cifuentes, a twentieth-century variant of congregación, pastoral care, and state hegemony will seem like the only reasonable option. The Coletos want their laborers to work for free, which as Cifuentes explains, is indistinguishable from other forms of nature that produce value (if indirectly) for them. The loss of this labor has, in the past, been an obstacle to complete obliteration of the Indians: "Hasta ahora han tenido escrúpulos de conciencia: no quieren que muera un indio como no quisieran que mermaran sus partidas de ganado. Sienten que son cosa suya y no acaban de entender que el Gobierno se los ha arrebatado" (340). After Cifuentes proposes scorched earth campaigns against the "rebeldes, sobresalidos, que nos han puesto entre la espada y la pared," Cifuentes' lover Julia asks, "Esos serán unos cuantos, las cabezas. ¿Y los demás?" To which he responds, "Que el Gobierno los mande a otra parte. El mapa del Estado está lleno de manchones de terrenos nacionales. Que los colonicen" (341). In fact, as Castellanos was writing *Oficio de tinieblas*, this is exactly what the state did by dolling out ejidal lands in the Chiapan jungle only to decide decades later that the peasants were a threat not only as potential rebels, but also to the latest stage of capitalism as a way of organizing nature.¹³ In the novel, this reterritorialization is force shrouded as

¹³ These historically produced natures require constant reorganization, and by the end of the twentieth century, the state began to turn community and ejidal lands into a "biosphere reserve" at the end of the twentieth century. In these conservation zones, the neoliberal state ensured that nature could be put to work toward other, more profitable, ends,

choice or the subjunctive suggestion (“que los colonicen”), and it hinges on the idolatry of dispersed Indians.

In Castellanos’s novel, it is through a capitalist relation of work that Pedro Winiktón comes to realize his identity as Indian and also articulate a sense of justice in terms of land (Lund 98). When his crops fail, and he cannot pay the highland ladinos rent, Pedro is forced to work as a migrant laborer on a German *finca* in the Chiapan lowlands. The owner, Adolfo Homel, believes in educating his workers and invites Lázaro Cárdenas—here only “the president”—to speak about land reform. Pedro begins to sense profound alienation, especially when a fellow worker calls him an “Indian,” a term he had typically experienced as a slur but now identifies him as racially like the other *enganchados*. As Lund explains, far from making Pedro feel empowered as a part of a larger “pan-indigenous community,” Pedro’s experience marks the limits of racial solidarity presented in the novel. The end result is that, “Race, with all of its seductive powers to unite, reveals its true face as it divides” (98). Castellanos astutely shows how Pedro’s racialization as Indian emerges together with his capitalist alienation into abstract exploited and *expropriated* labor. The *enganchador* drops his second last name Winiktón and simply refers to him as “Pedro González,” and all of the men “dejaron de ser Antonio Pérez Bolom, tocador de arpa, avecindado en Milpoleta; o Domingo Juárez Bequet, cazador de gatos de monte y famoso pulseador; o Manuel Domínguez Acubal, entendido en cuestiones de encantamientos y brujerías” (51). All of the men are abstracted as laborers for capital, and lose aspects of themselves that previously gave them communal value that was not necessarily exchangeable. Beyond the despair and poverty that he felt in Chamula, Pedro begins to articulate alienation from the land in terms of capitalist relations of value:

such as the creation of hydroelectric dams, mining, natural gas extraction, and eco-tourism. As I will discuss in chapter four, the Chiapan state again resorted to relocating “dispersed” peasants through the creation of the *Ciudad Rural Sustentable*, a project that was again originally intended to relocate peasant labor into the lowland Soconusco region, in the twenty-first century.

Eran solamente una huella digital al pie de un contrato...lo que andaba por los caminos era un hombre anónimo, solitario, que se había alquilado a otra voluntad, que se había enajenado a otros intereses.

Pedro resintió muy vivamente este cambio. Desde el momento en que entró a formar parte del grupo de enganchados la mirada de los otros se posó en él con una indiferencia que lo despojaba de su prestigio, de sus atributos y lo reducía a cosa, una cosa útil tal vez para algo, pero sin valor en sí. (52)

Like money, which has no value in and of itself, and like labor, which gives *things* value while reducing the worker to nothing but their ability to labor, Pedro is a useful *thing* for “something” (capital), but devoid of any meaningful (i.e. non-alienated) social relations (which depend on access to land). Of course, Adolfo Homel’s belief in education is not just an act of good will. In response to landowners who think that educated Indians jeopardize their labor supply—an “indio alzado es indio perdido”—Homel replies, “Al contrario...Los indios nos sirven de mala gana; como son cortos de alcances no pueden sernos muy útiles. Pero con la instrucción todo mejorará” (56). Education is a means of making the Indians as workers more useful to landowners, again, with no regard to their pre-existing value as dignified community members.

The new arrangement posed by Cifuentes does not actually produce total genocide and relocation, but rather, historically speaking, re-instantiates the Indians as racialized rural expropriable (slave like) subjects who actually undergird the “freedom” of the newly consolidated exploited, urban citizen-subject. Nancy Fraser has developed this framework, asserting that capitalism must be understood as also an “*institutionalized social order*,” and it is my contention that Castellanos is not only writing a regional history of a twentieth century capitalist order congealing in Chiapas, but also within the nation as a whole. Fraser writes:

No mere economic system, capitalist society also encompasses the extra-economic arrangements that enable the endless expansion and private appropriation of surplus value. Most relevant for our purposes here are the political powers that underwrite accumulation—in part by fabricating (at least) two distinct categories of subjects, one suitable for expropriation, another for exploitation. (173).

On these terms then, Chiapas was at least one of peripheries where expropriation reigned that

constituted the “Mexican Miracle” for the exploitation of the middle class in the regional center of Mexico City. Fraser also emphasizes that subjects can be classified as both expropriated and exploited subjects, but that the degree to which they are expropriated tends to fall along the color line, and this line is both created and maintained by force. Even when Castellanos does speak of Pedro Winiktón’s transformation into abstract labor, he is still closer to the expropriated subject of debt peonage than the “free” wage laborer. Where there existed for a brief moment the possibility of meaningful land reform, Cifuentes, who comes to embody the mestizo state (as a “whitened” mestizo subject), and the Church join forces to foreclose on it by appealing to the Governor of Chiapas’s latent racism and fear of rebellion. Together, they all create a more authoritarian, yet “comforting” and profitable social order that limits land reform, and by extension, Indian life.

In her fictional representation of history, Castellanos very accurately roots Pedro in the historical forces of racialization. Patrick Dove writes that the State “must also attend to, organize and regulate the nation’s internal boundaries, the divisions and vestigial marks (such as signs of ethnic and regional differences; accent, mannerism, complexion, etc.) that both stubbornly persist and become visible in new ways during new incursions of capital into the periphery in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (135). Similarly, the events of the real caste war in Chiapas display the negotiation of prior “vestigial marks” and new accumulation regimes. Porfirio Díaz identified the Soconusco region in Chiapas as ideal for foreign colonization and supported local elites in reorienting land use and population distribution toward a capitalist agricultural economy. But there was one problem: a large indigenous workforce did not live in the Soconusco. To address this issue, “se encontró con la necesidad de arrancar el ‘vicio’ de amor a la tierra, tan arraigado en el nativo mexicano” (Tovar González 399, 400). Once again, elites appeared to contradict themselves. Were the Indians dispersed nomads or were they so attached to their land that they could not be persuaded to leave it? Just as in the colonial era, the problem was that in reality

and discourse they were both. Indigenous peoples of diverse geographies practiced different land use patterns, from seasonal plot rotation to nomadic circulation, that gave credence to the appearance of dispersion. Of course, some of these practices were created by elites themselves, as peasants were forced from plot to plot as tenant farmers.

The case of the Soconusco was significant because it was one case where discourse and political economy met. The elite's vision of dispersion was relative, dependent on land use, and this concern came into focus when elites began fighting among themselves over modes of production, labor, and geography. Díaz's regime favored foreign investment, and thus created favorable conditions for export oriented German coffee fincas in the Soconusco. As such, Germans represented liberal progress, as demonstrated in the novel when Pedro Winiktón is forced to work as an *enganchado* on German Adolfo Homel's coffee plantation. Producing more than they could harvest, the plantations were badly in need of labor, but the traditional forms of debt peonage and indigenous communal life made migratory labor from the highlands to the lowlands either untenable or undesirable. Abolishing the debt peonage that highland elites around San Cristóbal de Las Casas were so fond of would motivate, or "free," workers to seek the higher wages offered by the German *cafetaleros*, but the old *hacendado* class felt entitled to "their" Indian labor.¹⁴ This labor conflict, an antagonism between different elite classes in the countryside of which Marx writes in the opening epitaph to this chapter, was inspired by liberalism's influence, and set in motion a tumultuous process of land reform and labor laws in late nineteenth-century Chiapas. According to María Elena Tovar González, "la idea fundamental era fraccionar las tierras ejidales y generar en el indio el concepto de pequeño propietario" (403). As in *Oficio de tinieblas*, elites aligned with the State—whether Porfirian or post-revolutionary—really did believe that small holdings of (eventual) private

¹⁴ For a time, growers were able to contract Guatemalan labor. Many Guatemalans even settled in the region, but after 1875, for various political reasons including debt and tensions with Guatemala over the borderline and migration, this was not so easy a solution (Tovar González 407-409).

property in concentrated areas would lead to more productive, hard-working Indians. It would contain them, while simultaneously allowing them to migrate as seasonal laborers. As Cifuentes begins to integrate Coletto interests with the Mexican State, he too proposes that dispersed and rebellious Indians be relocated to “colonize” the many supposedly “un-used” and up to that point “unproductive” national lands.

A transformation in land tenure would not only make the Indians better citizens, but it would more efficiently use the land. A discourse of conservationism loomed (only to be taken up in full force in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) by local officials such as Federico Gutiérrez, the municipal president of Tecpatán, Chiapas:

La razón es muy clara: antes, un individuo trabajaba en el ejido en distintas partes, sembrando una milpa aquí, un plantío allá y un cafetal acuyá como tenían a su arbitrio los montes del ejido los destruían y no se fijaban a un solo punto sus atenciones, dando por resultado que un año después los abandonaban porque encontraban otros montes mejores que destruir. (Tovar González 403-404)

The Church, highland hacendados, the cafetaleros, and state officials employed a variety of techniques to harness desperately needed Indian labor. Liberals and conservatives alike thought that the Chamula Indians who had risen up in the caste war would be pacified through work since they believed laziness to have been the cause of their rebellion. The State government passed vagrancy laws as they broke up surviving communal holdings and demanded titles to land that the indigenous did not have. The Church even supported Indian rebellions to a degree, but it got out of hand and culminated in the infamous death of Pedro Díaz Cuscat. Priests noted the absence of souls to baptize (414), while plantation workers, struggling to find docile labor, resorted to importing Polynesian labor that promptly died of smallpox upon landfall. Even so, privatization had drastically changed Indian life through forced shifts in land occupation and use (419).¹⁵ By any standard, the

¹⁵ To see how the process of “lotificación” occurred in Chiapas, and why it disadvantaged Indigenous peoples (culturally and structurally), see Tovar González, 403-405. Although the state government tried land reform, and Chiapas was

coffee plantations caused major shifts in settlement. The indigenous were migrating. Some left lands behind altogether; others fought to maintain claims as they sought work elsewhere. Many, especially those on the margins of state power, were demonized as untamed and destructive forces over the land without proper pastoral vigilance.

One of Castellanos's main interventions is that ladinos and the state wage and maintain race wars to secure their own interests over land, but this required the "peace" making component of pastoral power and ideas about nature. As racial capitalism shifted from more regional colonial power to centralized state power, geographically represented by highland versus lowland elites, the race/land remedy also saw a shift to conservationism that bears discussing beyond the historical time of the novel. On the one hand, colonial missionaries such as Las Casas emphasized the conservation of people and souls, arguing that the Indians should be under missionary control. The Coletos also felt that by divine right the Indians ought to be under their control as a necessary and natural work force. This is made evident when Cifuentes foreshadows his fellow ladino's initial objection to his plan to eradicate the rebellious Indians and relocate the rest. On the other hand, lowland "modern" elites in the Soconusco, also desperately in need of labor, would benefit from this Indian relocation. Eventually, as the twentieth century wore on and highland and lowland elites joined together, the sentiment transformed from a concern over preserving people to conserving land, which needed to be protected from marauding Indians practicing "slash and burn" agriculture. In other words, the historical paradigm mutated so that land conservation was a guise that paired well with the discipline and spatial concentration of the workforce to also allow for the unencumbered use and extraction of natural resources for voracious capitalist needs.

actually considered by the US to be the most successful state in having the highest number of "small farms," there was not enough "free" labor in the Soconusco.

In a conversation with the lawyer Tovar, Fernando Ulloa asserts that previous injustices should not matter in light of new modern laws that promise land distribution and progress. Tovar sternly reminds Fernando Ulloa that as a newcomer to Chiapas, he simply does not have the historical memory of race war, and that unless routine punishment is carried out, the Indians will attack the ladinos (even though a close reading of the novel reveals that these attacks are instigated by ladinos themselves). Fernando fails because he cannot reckon with colonial domination, and Pedro pushes up against the constraints of liberal law that cannot correct for the enshrined injustice of private property, instituted by colonialism and maintained by capitalism. Castellanos, like her character Tovar, obviously also remembered history, and foresaw that the developmentalist state of the twentieth century would come up short. White mestizo terror continued, often at the hands of the state. After decades of crisis and recurrent peasant guerilla movements in Central Mexico, Guerrero, and Chihuahua—in large part because the more radical elements of the 1917 Constitution and land reform could not be realized while also appeasing multi-national capitalist interests—the signing of NAFTA in 1994 would be seen by many as the official death knell of the revolution. The Zapatista rebellion erupted that same year to carve out a defensive autonomous space while working toward “otros mundos posibles,” a point to which I will return in the next chapter. They rejected the race/land remedy by resolving, on their own terms, to relate differently to nature in a way that Castellanos could not imagine.¹⁶ As we will see in Revueltas’s *El luto humano*, revolutionary memory does not figure in as a hopeful point in Castellanos’s world. Perhaps this is because, despite her

¹⁶ Part of what Castellanos could not imagine was the imminent arrival of Samuel Ruíz, initially assigned to Chiapas by the Church for his conservative background. His political transformation thereafter toward Liberation Theology was unexpected and a perpetual thorn in the side of Church and State power as he oversaw “missions” into the Chiapan lowlands, made indigenous men and women deacons, and eventually helped mediate the San Andrés Accords between the EZLN and the Mexican government in the mid 1990s. Nor could Castellanos foresee the student guerillas who would come to the Chiapan jungle in the 1980s and how, together with indigenous peoples, a new kind of revolutionary project formed, known today as the EZLN and the Autonomous Zapatista Juntas de buen gobierno.

incisive critique of the state, she was still constrained by a latent statist and INI inspired drive toward acculturation and developmentalism rather than autonomy.

El luto humano: The Aftermath of Rift

José Revueltas's *El luto humano* portrays the failure of congregación's renewed twentieth century utopian desires, even as capitalism proceeded apace. I do not mean to suggest that had colonial congregación "succeeded," or the aspects of land reform inspired by it, that the colonial and postcolonial condition of the Mexican peasant would have been better. Rather, I interrogate what this failure allows Revueltas to stage about the Mexican revolution and its relationship to race and land. Revueltas was a lifelong Marxist but perpetual pariah of socialist and communist party politics. Foreseeing that the left was headed toward dictatorship, he endlessly criticized orthodox positions and was banished from his own communist party. He was also imprisoned many times over the course of his life, most famously for allegedly organizing the 1968 student movement, and he remains an icon of tireless dissent, philosophical thought, and political action to this day.

El luto humano echoes the most rigorous historical studies of the period and offers its own theoretical perspective on Mexican history and the race/land remedy. The novel interrupted the teleological and ideological narratives of a Latin America poised for progress, and instead opened up reflection toward an alternative and more material revolutionary project. Revueltas therefore attempted to disarticulate race from an essentialized "spiritual" origin in the land, and by extension, a Mexican destiny. In this way, *El luto humano* proposes a new human-nature relation that rejects a racialized revolutionary subjectivity while simultaneously emerging from and mourning Mexico's racialized past. In his reading of Revueltas' incomplete and posthumous *Dialéctica de la conciencia*, written from his cell in Lecumberri and published in 1982 with a forward by Henri Lefebvre, Bruno Bosteels articulates Revueltas' theory on revolution, memory, and historical materialism, arguing for

his engagement with Marx and Freud, mediated by Benjamin. In this essay, Revueltas talks about the relationship between architecture and archaeology, significant here since *El luto humano* has the failure of a dam, a major piece of infrastructure, and surreal reflections on Mexico's pre-Colombian and colonial past at its center. Bosteels quoting Revueltas writes:

Archeology states: 'this piece of architecture will disappear'—not because of some vague Heraclitean awareness of the flow of time behind the rapid succession of architectural styles and fashions, 'but because archaeology as such consists in thinking about and questioning (in consciousness) the how and why of the contradictions by virtue of whose antagonisms culture and civilizations disappear.' (90)

Ultimately, Revueltas was influenced by Benjamin, argues Bosteels, writing that Revueltas conceived of a "a collective yet transhistorical memory that is closer to the unconscious than to consciousness, and in which experiences are accumulated, preserved, and repeated from time immemorial, until those rare moments when, as in a sudden act of awakening, they re-enter the field of vision." (87). I will show how Revueltas's much earlier *El luto humano*, also in conversation with Benjamin and Freud, put forth a kind of revolutionary praxis through an examination of the dam and the gendered and racialized social relations surrounding its construction and failure. These relations are symbolized in the novel most prominently as the *hilos* and *pasos* that bind the characters to each other and to the land.

The death of a young girl in a village too far from the parish priest to receive last rites serves as the point of departure for the novel. This was the very scenario colonial priests hoped to prevent with *congregación*. It opens with death sitting on a chair, keeping four peasant families company as the young Chonita, the last child in their community, takes her last breath. Death moves into Chonita's body, but it does not stay there for long, "porque la muerte no es morir, sino lo anterior al morir, lo inmediatamente anterior, cuando aún no entra al cuerpo y está, inmóvil y blanca, negra, violeta, cárdena, sentada en la más próxima silla" (9). It is from this temporal interim of life and death that the novel begins and to which it always returns. Although Cecilia, Chonita's mother, pleads with her

husband Úrsulo to get the priest to administer the last rites to their daughter, he is rendered immobile by his own indecision and ambivalence until Chonita dies and he sees the fear of God in Cecilia's eyes. This leads him to reflect about time, about whether or not purgatory exists, and if any form of life or death can truly be eternal. If the Church's teachings are true, he wonders, then he has condemned his daughter to an afterlife in purgatory more cruel than her earthly existence. Nevertheless, he sets out in a storm to find the priest, lamenting "¡Si aquí hubiese un cura...!" (13), indicating their distance from a church with a priest to save their souls. Úrsulo concludes that it wasn't God in Cecilia's eyes (and a lack of God in him), but the need to prepare the little body for the "misterio salvaje." In other words, what he sees in her eyes is the need to face death as an unknown and to mourn Chonita without knowing her fate—a metaphor for Mexico itself that I explore in what follows.

Rather than educating the reader about the perils of rural dispersion, the novel is a searing and lucid critique of the post-revolutionary state published in a moment otherwise marked by both domestic and foreign declarations of Mexico's success. In doing so, *Revueltas* showed that the material reverberations of colonialism still defined the conditions of possibility of the supposedly modern and secular state. Instead of *mestizaje* and the revolutionary family, in which every citizen acknowledged a mythical national identity and fulfilled their gendered societal role in the name of the state, *Revueltas* depicted pervasive and profound alienation between the nation and its citizen-subject and between society and the land. Mexican modernity was not incomplete and poised to catch up, but rather, dialectically conditioned by colonialism, it was tragic and destined toward eventual death. This death, however, was not necessarily pessimistic, but a potential moment from which historical memory could emerge to inform new political possibilities through different relations between humans and nature. Dispersion in the novel is not an essential quality of racialized peasants, but a produced alienation, and from this historical reality, *Revueltas* imagined other ways

of being together outside of the Christian nation state and racial capitalism. Far from a work of nihilism, the opening epigraph by Alberto Quintero Álvarez suggests otherwise: “porque la muerte es infinitamente un acto amoroso.” Through Chonita, *Revueltas* shows that the revolution *almost* reached an ultimately impossible salvation, but now the old is dying, and the new cannot be reborn. By letting it die but without forgetting, *Revueltas* leaves the door ajar to future political projects.

Structurally, the whole novel also takes place in the midst of an interregnum as the storm interrupts Chonita’s funeral and the four peasant families are forced to wade through a flooding river, having flashbacks until they eventually die. *Revueltas* intended to write a dialectical novel, and its experimental style utilizes a kind of stream of consciousness in which each thought or action is presented alongside its contradiction, negation, or alternative. The dialectical structure “is a matter of exposing the statist myth of a ‘full society’ (or a social space that has been cleansed of all contradictions and exclusions) to its secret truth: the subaltern qua originary exclusion” (Dove 10). As in the opening scene, *Revueltas* stages Úrsulo and Cecilia, man and wife, as opposing forces. After Úrsulo sets out to fetch the priest, he invokes the help of his enemy, Adán, a hired hitman for the government. The two temporarily put aside their differences because of Chonita’s death, and eventually manage to reach the priest who reluctantly joins them. As the flood waters rise and in their drunken, delirious, and grief induced states, the peasants and the priest die one by one. Of the peasant couples, Marcela and Jerónimo, Calixto and La Calixta, and Úrsulo and Cecilia, La Calixta dies first by simply wandering out into the storm alone, and later, the other four let Jerónimo drown because they cannot carry him. During the journey, the priest murders Adán, then drowns himself, and the remaining survivors realize that they have been going in circles. In the end, they are all washed up on a rooftop, devoured by vultures.

We learn that the town had all of the factions of the post-revolutionary moment: the *agraristas*, the radical communist Natividad, and the *Cristero* priest. Never appearing in its present, the

memory and wisdom of Natividad only haunt the novel. He was Cecilia's true love and an every-man who embodied the purest ideals of the revolution by inciting the people to strike over the construction of a dam before his life and political project were cut short by Adán. Shortly after, the strike and the dam, a representation of the Green Revolution's technological megaprojects, both fail. The dam is also the technology that, had it worked and had it been carried out with agroecological principals, and had the land been collectively held instead of doled out in by the revolution in the form of ejidal parcels, would have represented a tangible political step toward a more just future. The peasant agitators are forced to abandon the movement and the town, now nothing more than barren land. In their sorrow and desperation, the remaining couples are plagued with hunger, anger, and jealousy.

Mourning the tragedy of Mexican modernity and its inevitable failure, *El luto humano* asks how to live and die on Earth without God as a witness, and its implications for a revolutionary future without race and alienation of humans and nature. Consider two key assertions about religion from the novel. The first comes early on and describes Úrsulo's sense of religion:

Lo religioso tenía para su iglesia un sentido estricto y literal: re ligare, ligarse, atarse, volver a ser, regresar al origen o arribar a un destino; aunque lo trágico era que origen y destino habíanse perdido, no se encontraban ya, y los dos hombres caminando, los tres hombres caminando, dos y tres piedras religiosas bajo la tempestad, eran tan sólo una vocación y un esfuerzo sin meta verdadera. (38)

The notion of “re ligare” and a vocation without object stand out and set the tone for what Revueltas considers to be religion—a kind of connection between two things. The motifs of aimless searching and of the “hilo” or “the tie” recur and prove significant. The second assertion about religion appears toward the end of the novel and reiterates the difference between being religious and religion itself. Revueltas states that “Los campesinos no entendían la diferencia” between the *Cristeros*, represented by religious fanaticism, and the official Catholic Church:

En el fondo las dos iglesias no hacían más que partir de un mismo sentimiento oscuro, subterráneo, confuso y atormentado, que latía en el pueblo, pueblo carente de religión en el

estricto sentido pragmático de la palabra, pero religioso, uncioso, devoto, más bien en busca de la Divinidad, de su Divinidad, que poseedor de ella, que dueño ya de un dios. Hicieronlo mal los españoles cuando destruyeron, para construir otros católicos, los templos gentiles. Aquello no constituía realmente el acabar con una religión para que se implantase otra, sino el acabar con toda religión, con todo sentido de religión. (272)

When Revueltas is speaking in the “literal” or “pragmatic” sense of the word religion, he is speaking of *re ligare*, of *atarse*, of the thread that has been broken and cannot ever re-suture the divide between what colonial priests called *lo espiritual y lo temporal*, between the divine and the earthly. The Las Casian race/land remedy posited that the Indians were closer to nature and also spiritually purer since they were untouched by Christianity and Islam, thus the two could achieve harmony between the earthly and the divine. Revueltas, however, questions this specific form of racialization’s ability to resolve the tension between the religious binary of heaven and earth. The pre-Colombian Gods, who were not mutually exclusive to heaven or earth, operated under a different idea of the divine, as a kind of connection now lacking between humanity and the land.

Revueltas appears to have been rather obsessed with the question of religion, which for him was always rooted in pastoral power and land.¹⁷ Úrsulo’s, and symbolically Mexico’s, tragic fate is that his religion is the restoration of this connection between humanity and the land when in fact all religion has been rendered impossible. This wandering, for Revueltas, becomes symbolic of “la búsqueda” for another way. In short, Revueltas was consumed with the influence of God and religion over Mexico’s history, and how religion foreclosed on revolutionary possibility given its contradiction with materiality, that is, earth itself. That the people lack religion in the strict sense (*re ligare*), but are devout in their fruitless search for the divine is a direct consequence of a colonial caesura. The novel continues this reflection on religion and loss on the following page, “Algo quedó faltándole al pueblo desde entonces, la tierra, el dios, Tlaloc, Cristo, la tierra, sí. ¿Que podía esperar

¹⁷ Revueltas published his collection of short stories *Dios en la tierra* a year after *El luto humano*.

ya?” (273). This lack or “Aquello descomunal” (implied as something so vast it is like an abyss) has alienation from the land at its heart:

Sólo podía explicarse por la desposesión radical y terminante de que había sido objeto el hombre, que si defendía a Dios era porque en él defendía la vaga, temblorosa, empavorecida noción de sentirse dueño de algo...de algo que jamás había poseído, la tierra, la verdad, la luz o quién sabe qué, magnífico y poderoso. (273-274)

Ontologically the Christian God was a separate entity that ruled over earth, but Tlaloc, God of water, was *of* the earth, living in Mount Tlaloc, a place that could be visited. As the novel itself states, the river was “como un dios,” a stand-in for Tlaloc with whom Mexico is no longer in communion. The replacement of one god for another displaced man from land, and this dispossession leads to a clawing but impossible desire for ownership over land, which effectively equals truth, the indigenous essence, and the origin—all of which are either ultimately out of reach or never existed.

Raymond Williams observed that the change in the meaning of nature from its specific singular sense—“(i) the essential quality and character *of* something”—to the more abstract plural senses—“(ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings”—“is structurally and historically cognate with the emergence of *God* from *a god* or *the gods*” (220). For *Revueltas*, the essential quality and character *of* something—in this case the racialization (and the essentialization) of the Indians—is part of a transformation tied to the emergence of nature in the second and third senses, and it occurs during the historical moment when the conquest supplanted pre-Colombian *gods* with *God*. Not only did this render all religion impotent, according to *Revueltas*, but it also meant that because sense one (Indian essence) was irredeemable (if nonexistent), it could not influence nature in senses two and three as is assumed under the colonial race/land remedy. Rather than projecting a spiritually-infused utopian indigenous communion with the land before the conquest, the novel suggests that the point is moot, for there is no way to know and there is no way any religion—pre-Colombian or otherwise—could ever recover or achieve such a harmony. The

only answer is an imperfect collective work that seeks a different relationship to nature by mourning Mexico's past while also rejecting the divine.

This is readily apparent in the hilos that bind Cecilia, who has been traditionally overlooked in critical analyses of the novel in favor of the male characters Natividad and Adán, to her daughter, her husband, and the other peasant families. The death of Chonita is devastating for Cecilia and the remaining families, and has also been commonly read as symbolic of the Revolution's hopelessness, but it also allows for the liberatory possibilities represented by Cecilia, for "Cecilia era la tierra, las quince hectáreas de Úrsulo" (298). Advancing a positive interpretation of *Revueltas*, Lund and Sánchez argue for the radical possibility of the novel through a Spinozian reading of the relationship between Natividad, Adán, and Úrsulo and their *parcela*. Though it is an invaluable insight about the novel, their analysis overlooks the troubling fact that Úrsulo's ejido parcel is dependent on Cecilia belonging to him as his property. What follows, then, is an attempt to reckon with Cecilia as the land. In the end, it is Cecilia's autonomy as land, her freedom from property, that realizes her revolutionary subjectivity, which also factors in to the dialectical and revolutionary possibilities of Natividad's desire toward the land, constitutive of a new human-nature relationship.

Spinoza, against Hobbes, critiqued the notion that, "sovereignty is about authority, the governing power that keeps nature at bay and that protects man from other men, in short, that puts an end to endless war" (Lund and Sánchez). Natividad, an unarmed revolutionary, represents the opposite of force and authority, and instead, Lund and Sánchez put forth a reading of *Revueltas* as defending our incommensurable and inexchangeable *right*:

The idea emerges centrally in one of Spinoza's most challenging passages when, in a critique of absolute authority, he concludes: *Quare concedendum unumquemque multa sibi sui juris reservare, quae propterea a nullius decreto sed a suo solo pendent* (*Political Works* 148) (Section 3).

They continue by offering previous translations, but land on the Spanish version by Atiliano Domínguez, who translates the phrase as "*cada uno reserva muchas parcelas de su derecho*" (*Tratado* 351 in

Lund and Sánchez), interpreting *multa* as “parcelas.” The result is that, “The parcel, that smallest piece of land, which we never cede. Neither divine nor popular, nor even the sovereignty over the “self,” Spinoza’s parcel is the land where we stand, our inalienable condition of occupation. Let us call it *generic sovereignty*. As we will see, its force stands at the center of *El luto humano*.” While this reading is productive in thinking about a sovereignty not based in force of arms or a will to power, this reading of land is still rather figurative and reduced to the individual. Advancing this line of thought, Revueltas’s contribution goes a step further, through the figure of Cecilia, by juxtaposing this alternative “force” of individual generic sovereignty with the necessity of collective social relations, fundamentally premised on a different idea about nature and the political. Revueltas’s critique is then about the dialectical relationship and revolutionary potential in the generic sovereignty that *fails* to articulate itself into a web of more collective life-force, materially rooted in different agri(cultural) and economic systems.

Revueltas’ point of departure for the broken ties of religion, community, and land first register most materially in the body of Cecilia, whose breasts become engorged with milk upon Chonita’s death, which cuts “[d]el hilo lácteo, dulce, vital, que era antes Chonita viva y que, muerta, rompiera su cuerpecito fijo, quieto y sin respuesta” (51). With Chonita’s death, “Se habían roto todas las ataduras con el pasado. Su hija de yeso era como la cruz límite que en los pueblos señala las últimas casas. Adelante de ella sólo la tempestad” (56). It is no coincidence that Revueltas turns to spatialized Christian imagery here when the tie is broken between Cecilia and Úrsulo, a representation of the failed land reform. These broken ties also empower Cecilia who now, “era dueña de una fuerza ante la cual Ursulo se daba cuenta de la derrota; había crecido esa fuerza con la muerte de Chonita, como liberándose, y Ursulo no era su dueño ahora” (61). The life-giving force of Cecilia’s breastmilk is no good without the collective exchange between mother and nursing child, and it precipitates other forms of being-together. After Úrsulo returns with the priest, he becomes

wildly jealous when he realizes one of the other remaining men Calixto has been making advances toward Cecilia because the claim Úrsulo had over Cecilia, their child, is now literally dead in the water. Úrsulo hopes that “juntos en espera de la muerte, podrían haber futuros últimos minutos para amarse fundamentalmente, como pocas veces se puede sobre el mundo,” only to realize that “los ojos de Cecilia eran duramente extranjeros y sin dueño” (63). Where Úrsulo yearns for a moment of pure love and communion in the liminal moment of dying, Revueltas offers instead ungraspable but absolute freedom, in the stormy and unknown territory beyond the cross.

Initially everyone is tied together by a rope as they wade through the river, including of course, to Cecilia, “la tierra.” As these ties between them break, their simultaneously collective, yet singular, death sets the stage for a new relation not based in property ties or a tie between humanity and God. Nevertheless, Revueltas does not subscribe to radical and definitive historical breaks either, as evidenced by the recurrent reference to steps and shadows: “Se cree a veces que huir de la muerte es mudar de sitio, alejarse de la casa o no frecuentar el recuerdo; no puede comprenderse que la muerte es la sombra del cuerpo, el país, la patria, la sombra, adelante o atrás o debajo de los pasos” (64). While the Revolution is in its final death throes, Revueltas speaks of the residues of its memory in the *pasos* of its subjects, the footsteps that leave not just an immaterial memory, but an imprint on the earth itself. The inheritance as “la sombra,” which depending on one’s position or perspective can manifest “adelante o atrás o debajo de los pasos,” is not a linear notion of progress. Despite the internal divisions among the four couples, they are united by their shared exodus toward inevitable death, in their contradictory vocation to “huir permaneciendo, o, mejor, con un anhelo tan violento de permanecer que la huída no era otra cosa que una búsqueda y el deseo de encontrar un sitio de tierra, vital, donde pudieran levantarse” (87). Revueltas then offers a non-Christian kind of salvation, a salvation of historical memory that acknowledges the eventual death of not just the peasants, but the nation itself:

No salvarse de la muerte; salvar su sentido, su desolación propios. En efecto, iban a desaparecer para siempre: asimismo la región entera y el país y el mundo. Pero aquellos pasos, aquel buscar, perdurarían por los siglos, cuando el viento; cuando alguien se detuviera para escuchar la voz del polvo. (88)

This is the Revolutionary hope of Revueltas: death as memory, memory distorted as a shadow that accompanies each step with revolutionary intent, and each march without destination from which emerges future possibilities for the life of the collective. More concretely, however, is the *anhelo*, the desire, to find a piece of land from which to form different communal bonds. In Bosteel's interpretation of Revueltas's later work, he notes the centrality of desire: "Freud and Lacan had already insisted on the indestructible nature of the unconscious. The memory of desire is unlike any other form or kind of memory, precisely because of the fact that nothing is ever forgotten by desire" (87). Revueltas combines the perhaps ethereal nature of revolutionary theory with the very material, and incessant, question of access to land and social human-nature relations that provide not only for the individual, but for everyone.

This language of lack, desire, and memory, not to mention the novel's title, also conjures Freud's famous conception of mourning and melancholia. Bosteel's argues that Revueltas's theory of revolution could be summed up by a notion of subconscious or oblique historical memory resurfacing in the future. Bosteel's argues that, "For Revueltas, however, the aim of the profound acts of history is not symbolically, or at the level of the spirit, to *unmake* what *did* happen, but to allow that what *did not* happen be *made* to happen" (95). In other words, it was important not to disavow the past, but to mourn it, including the radical revolutionary projects that did not come to be. For Freud, mourning represented a healthy form of grief that occurred at a conscious level, but melancholia was a subconscious and ambivalent process that became a pathological inability to process loss, such that the subject begins to internalize (to objectify within themselves) the memory of the lost object. The melancholic cannot sever the tie with the lost object and displace its desire onto a new object. As Freud explained:

...the causes of melancholia have a much wider range than those of mourning, which is for the most part occasioned only by a real loss of the object, by its death. In melancholia, accordingly, countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault. (256)

The ambivalence, or perhaps as Revueltas thinks it, the dialectic, between love and hate is clear in all of the characters as they melancholically carry their grief of a failed revolution, Chonita's dead body, with them through the flood. Of course, the novel is not titled human melancholy, but human mourning, and indeed by the end, the characters' ties to each other are severed and they all die, having mourned the revolution and leaving a memory that might inspire future revolutions. In the beginning of the novel, Cecilia melancholically feels herself incorporate Chonita's dead body back into her body, but as discussed, by the end, she mournfully feels the tie break, not just between her and Chonita, but also with her husband Úrsulo.

Revueltas also personifies desire through the different characters to bring to bear the question of land on his analysis of revolutionary desire, mourning, and melancholia. Úrsulo and Calixto, who both desire Cecilia (symbolic of the land), display subconscious ambivalence as, "la transición amarga, ciega, sorda, compleja, contradictoria, hacia algo que aguarda en el porvenir. Eran el anhelo informulado, la esperanza confuse que se levanta para interrogar cuál es su camino" (299). They are consumed and limited by their contradiction. Natividad, however, represents a revolutionary desire oriented toward the future, "Natividad anhelaba transformar la tierra y su doctrina suponía un hombre nuevo y libre sobre una tierra nueva y libre. Por eso Cecilia, que era la tierra de México, lo amó, aunque de manera inconsciente e ignorando las fuerzas secretas, profundas, que determinaban tal amor." Here the mention of the "new man" and freedom foreshadows what was to come in the Cuban Revolution, but significantly Natividad's heroic future oriented project fails. In the end, it is still necessary to have a more historically conscious political project, but the language and power of desire, particularly with regard to the land, leaps from the page. Úrsulo

ultimately desires the possession of Cecilia and of land in its private propertied form, whereas Natividad desires the reciprocal exchange between lovers, but also between humans and the land such that the autonomy of both are preserved. Desire here is no less than the need of collective survival itself. What is to be remembered from Natividad is his indelible desire, materially realized, to go beyond the simple juridical partitioning of land and into less alienating relations between humans and nature. It is to this question that I now turn.

Revueltas, then, marks the necessity of making, and remembering, radical possibilities for a new human/nature relation that “did not happen,” but could be “made to happen.” As part of Jason Moore’s contention that capitalism ought to be viewed as a means of “organizing nature,” including humans as nature, he asks, “how is human history a co-produced history, through which humans have put nature to work—including other humans—in accumulating wealth and power?” (9). This question obviously concerns race, a primary mechanism by which humans have managed to put nature—both human and inhuman—to work. *Revueltas* similarly shows how the ideological separation between humans and nature is also rooted in race and has wrought mutual destruction. The last remaining humans, at least obliquely racialized as “campesinos” in the village die after the state’s attempt to make nature work harder and harder at a very low cost renders already bad land completely barren.

Before the dam, the villagers could survive, “¿de qué? La pregunta sobra” (258). Their existence was precarious until the state arrived to construct a dam and irrigation system over the “yermo calcinado...como si no fuera una presa sino una estatua, algo nada más bello, que esculpieran para adorno del paisaje gris.” The construction brought prosperity to the town for a few years and transformed “el antiguo, ancestral campesino, manejando hoy una revolvedora de cemento, en contacto firme, estrecho, con esa materia novísima y esbelta, era como un dios joven bajo el varonil traje de mezclilla.” The river “fué hecho prisionero,” but the engineers did not include

in their calculations “las cuarteaduras de la cortina,” or the cracks in the dam’s cement. After the dam began to fail, the rest of the villagers fled because there was nothing more than dirt to eat (297). In contrast to Vasconcelos’s land of inherent abundance and natural resources, the peasants lived miserably on land that provided nothing more than roots before the dam. But they survived. By the time the incomplete dam breaches, the land can support no life at all, and the novel culminates in everyone’s death. At least from roots things may grow, and collective work and communal landholding—political solutions and *not only* technological ones, offer the modest future of one day simply being able to survive.¹⁸ The problem is not dispersion, but capitalism as a way of organizing nature, which devastates the land and the communities it sustains through supposed technological “advancement.”

Before the decisive moment when life can no longer be sustained over an already marginal landscape, Natividad tours the system and, “sabiendo por experiencia que los métodos cambian según los climas y el cultivo,” asks Adán “Cómo trabajan aquí?” (211). What follows is an exchange where Adán explains in a rote manner the cycle of planting and harvesting and below in parentheses, Natividad contradicts each statement in an interior monologue of the historical material realities:

- pues primero es barbechar....—repuso Adán con voz queda y nostálgica.
(De cerca, sin embargo, el agua no era transparente; más bien blanquecina. Junto a las pequeñas compuertas de los drenes mostraba cierta espuma de salitre y materias perjudiciales).
- Luego viene la siembra...
- (A la larga este líquido impuro podría estropear la tierra, ya de suyo mala, dura, probablemente sin fosfatos en cantidad suficiente).
- En seguida se deja y hay que empezar a regar, con mucho tiento, hasta que la mata esté un poco crecida...

¹⁸ Lund and Sánchez describe Revueltas’s alternative relationship with land through a reading of Spinoza and sovereignty, juxtaposing Revueltas’s views with those of Vasconcelos: “*Huir permaneciendo*, ‘to flee while still remaining,’ enacts another relation with the land, one disarticulated from the fear of endless war that would motivate Hobbes, or the redistribution that Vasconcelos underwrites with the force of arms. If, with Schmitt, it represents the beginning of a new historical epoch, the stationary flight will not succumb to the appropriation of the land of another, but rather rest on the community itself. It connotes a relation *with* the land, even *in* the land, and not a form of domination over it. Neither propertied nor armed, its sovereignty is generic.”

- (con abonos, suministrados en apreciable cantidad, y estableciendo un Sistema de rotación que dejase descansar la tierra, podría explotarse aquello, no obstante, por un período más largo, pues de otra manera la vida de la unidad tenía el tiempo contado).
- Más tarde viene el desahije. Se quitan las malas yerbas dejando la mata limpiecita... (El modo de propiedad, por inadecuado, constituía, empero, un terrible obstáculo para cualquier reforma. Tal vez una cooperativa y a la implantación del trabajo colectivo, mejorarán todo).
- Después viene la primera cosecha... (Pero ahí había un Banco, unos políticos, intereses cuantiosos).

Revueltas traces the legacy of Mexico's tragic modernity from colonialism to the present. Underlying everything is the colonial violence that caused the disarticulation between man and the earth, but this passage more specifically identifies the revolution's relationship to capitalist technology, the economy (finance and trade with the US), and its duplicitous land reform. Natividad exposes here the capitalist structure underlying Adán's standard narrative of the natural harvest cycle. The ellipsis after "Después viene la primera cosecha," leaves a blank space where presumably the peasants nourish themselves with the fruits of their labor, but Natividad contradicts and fills in the blank space with the structural reality of banks and loans. Someone else ultimately owns the labor power of the peasant, and more crucially, its product or the food that never even materializes into words on the page, much less into hungry bellies. The metabolic rift that leaves the countryside land undernourished at an ever-accelerating rate registers visually through subtext and parentheses, but also conceptually through the contradictions to the official party line of progress. Natividad calls for crop rotation and letting the land lay fallow to let it "descansar," for a more sustainable and longer life cycle.¹⁹ "Capitalist production," wrote Marx, "only develops the techniques and the degree of

¹⁹ "Thus the need for social transformation, and the antagonism of the classes, reaches the same level in the countryside as it has attained in the towns. A conscious, technological application of science replaces the previous highly irrational and slothfully traditional way of working. The capitalist mode of production completes the disintegration of the primitive familial union which bound agriculture and manufacture together when they were both at an undeveloped and childlike stage... This has two results. On the one hand it concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return of the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil. Thus it destroys at the same time the physical health of the urban worker, and the intellectual life of the rural worker. But by destroying the circumstances surrounding that metabolism,

combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker” (638). Recalling Moore, we can also see here how nature has been exploited—made to work harder and cheaper—at the behest of banks and states (“unos políticos, intereses cuantiosos”) until the technological innovation of the dam’s inevitable collapse at the expense of the soil and the worker. The irrigation system attempts to completely subsume the river’s natural autonomy, but ultimately, in doing so, its autonomy, or perhaps as Lund and Sánchez might frame it via Spinoza, its generic sovereignty, brings utter destruction.

Keeping in mind that the town’s final tragedy is occasioned by the construction of this irrigation system and dam, Benjamin’s XI thesis on the philosophy of history, written two years before *El luto humano* was published, offers a parallel to Revueltas’s critiques of the left’s distortion of Marx regarding labor, technology, and nature. It is especially trenchant in considering the PRI’s pursuit of Green Revolution technologies that, as Moore states, found subterranean outlets (such as irrigation and deep water wells) to boost production rather than an expansion in cropland or truly collective forms of food production (254-5). The first part of the thesis concerns labor, and the second, nature. The first distortion rested, according to Benjamin, in the fact that the socialist party had come to see labor as the “source of all wealth and all culture” and that it thought “technological progress constituted a political achievement.” Benjamin writes, “nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded technological developments as the fall of the stream with which it thought it was moving” (393-4). Marx, “smelling a rat,” argued that the problem for the laborer rested in “possessing no other property than his labor power,” making him a “slave of other men who have made themselves owners.” Technology restrains the river in *El luto humano* for a time, perhaps leading the peasants-turned-

which originated in a merely natural and spontaneous fashion, it compels its systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production, and in a form adequate to the full development of the human race” (Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, 637-638).

modern-workers to believe they were moving with an inevitable flow of progress (“the stream with which it thought it was moving”), but in the end, they all end up dying in its current only after circling back to their miserable beginnings. The second distortion, Benjamin says, is that the socialist party’s view “recognizes only the progress in the mastery of nature, not the retrogression of society; it already displays the technocratic features later encountered in Fascism” (393). He then tries to rescue Charles Fourier’s notion of utopic socialism in which cooperative work would create a harmonious relationship with nature.

Benjamin’s praise of Fourier speaks to the dialectical relation between nature and society that recognizes that the mastery over Nature comes at the expense of Society (i.e. humans are ultimately an imposition over and against an ontologically separate thing called Nature). Moore cautions against this dualist relation between Nature and Society, arguing that if we are to confront inevitable capitalist ecological crisis, we must see ourselves *as* nature. However, it also important to recognize the autonomous strain running through Revueltas, which asserts the elements and actions of nature which cannot be controlled, abstracted, or subsumed. While Benjamin contrasts Fourier with proto-fascistic views, both Fourier and Fascism share the notion of “revealing” resources or “potentials” that can be extracted:

The new conception of labor is tantamount to the exploitation of nature, which, with naive complacency, is contrasted with the exploitation of the proletariat. Compared to this positivistic view, Fourier's fantasies, which have so often been ridiculed, prove surprisingly sound. According to Fourier, cooperative labor would increase efficiency to such an extent that four moons would illuminate the sky at night, the polar ice caps would recede, seawater would no longer taste salty, and beasts of prey would do man's bidding. All this illustrates a kind of labor which, far from exploiting nature, would help her give birth to the creations that now lie dormant in her womb. The sort of nature that (as Dietzgen puts it) "exists; gratis," is a complement to the corrupted conception of labor. (393-94)

Benjamin’s description of Fourier’s utopia paints humanity as kind of midwife to nature, whose collective labor would offer a more ethical exploitation of nature. The problem for Benjamin with Dietzgen’s formulation appears to be that he renders invisible the labor necessary in the extraction

of Nature, making it appear to “exist gratis.” Nature’s autonomy is lost along with the capitalist system’s (society’s) failure to reciprocally replenish what it expropriates. Nevertheless, the passage still suggests a mastery over nature by when it lauds a future where animals would work completely in the service of man (“beasts of prey would do man’s bidding”) and by feminizing nature as a womb, as though it were a passive agent of history. Although the connection between the first and second parts of the thesis is not explicit, the connection that Benjamin makes between labor (in both senses of the word) and nature is nevertheless a step away from dualist thinking and toward a more dialectical framework in which exploitative labor is recognized. Fourier, and later as I showed in Chapter Two, Pizarro and Altamirano all suggest collective agrarian societies in some way or another, but Revueltas makes an intervention that far from conjuring a colonial arcadia, poses instead the impossibility of a colonialized indigenous essentialism with land. On some level, Benjamin makes the connection between exploitation (or expropriation) of nature and labor. The process of producing “cheap natures” through expropriation and exploitation—capitalism—has already provoked crises. It has put nature to work, it has made humans enslave other humans through painful colonial conversion and racial formation, and in doing so it has compromised the autonomy of both that is more universally life giving. It has, in sum, made land unsuitable for any kind of life at all. Revueltas thus achieves no small feat by writing a novel of early eco-socialist criticism, all the while considering the Mexican condition and questioning the founding colonial articulation between race and land.

Revueltas’s critique of gender and colonialism extends beyond the figure of Cecilia and into Adam to further question the Nature/Society split. In the beginning of Genesis, Adam is neuter and refers to humankind.²⁰ Only later does Adam become divided to signify man in the male/female

²⁰ More specifically, “In the beginning, Adam refers to “earth creature” an ungendered being, in the middle, ‘adam refers to male human, and then “after the shared disobedience of the woman and the man, ‘adam designates the couple (3:22-24). It becomes generic language that highlights the male and hides the female” (Kvam, Shearing, and Ziegler, 441-442).

binary of the Christian creation paradigm where Eve, the female antagonistic force, tempts Adam to disobey the lord, and forever alienates humanity from paradise (an unspoiled and virginal rendering of “Nature” or “land”). Revueltas’s Adán is “la negación por la negación misma...la impotencia llena de vigor, la indiferencia cálida, la apatía activa. Representaba a las víboras que se matan a sí mismas con prometéica cólera cuando se las vence” (31). Contradiction incarnate, Adán kills the town’s last hope, Natividad, knowing that it will unleash a revolutionary fervor to come because Natividad is more than just one man. In other words, the state’s attempt to eliminate a part of itself to “defend society” as a whole is a fool’s errand because Natividad is not a discrete part that can be easily cut out, but a complicated and collective web of people, memories, and histories. Adán is a force of negation, who by killing Natividad, creates a powerful memory through which the Revolution may rise again in a different form, sometime in the future.

Directly after the description of Adán as “negación por la negación,” Úrsulo’s call to administer last rites to Chonita makes the priest think of the bible passage when Jesus says to one of his disciples, “let the dead bury the dead.” This strange phrase is meant to show that one must follow Jesus above all else, that burying a non-believer is pointless since they will not receive eternal life. In the bible, this is followed by Jesus saying, “I am without a home to wander and evangelize.” Both phrases evoke Foucault’s explanation of Christian pastoral power in which the shepherd wields power by guiding his flock *over* land rather than his power emanating *from* the land itself. Revueltas counters this and vindicates those outside of Jesus’ flock, those who wish to remain on their land even if they must “huir permaneciendo,” and writes that, “los muertos cobraban entonces una calidad viva y superior. De pronto eran ya, consagrados e inmortales, actitud, salvación, renuncia. Y este país era un país de muertos caminando, hondo país en busca del ancla, del sostén secreto” (31).

It is also interesting to note that Revueltas makes reference to Natividad as desiring a “New Man,” perhaps referencing its use in Christianity with Adam or in Fourier (before its use by ‘Che’ Guevara).

Later in the narrative, we learn that Úrsulo and the others buried Natividad, and the penultimate page reads, “Hoy, bajo la tierra, salvaríase también de los zopilotes.” (298). Úrsulo, destined to die alongside his fellow campesinos, is part of Mexico’s walking dead who buries his own, Natividad, ultimately saving his material legacy (literally his body, but figuratively what he represents as a new relation with land) and immaterial revolutionary memory from the zopilotes. The flood waters and his decaying body will nourish the land for future generations.

In another dialectical move, Revueltas juxtaposes man and woman to show how Christian gender binaries influence alienation of humans and nature. Cecilia is the explicit representation of “mother earth” whom the various male characters wish to possess, but these antagonisms eventually dissolve. In the final pages of the novel, as the remaining families are being eaten by vultures, Revueltas writes:

Antes, muchos años antes, el grupo de naufragos pertenecía a esa clase superior que se encuentra por encima de los zopilotes y que es capaz de vencerlos.
Cecilia era una mujer.
Marcela era una mujer.
Calixto era un hombre.
Úrsulo era un hombre.
Hoy no. No eran nada ni pertenecían a ninguna clase. (29)

The caesura between man and woman is also the foundation for the Christian formulation of the family. Like Marx, Revueltas also positions the family as a property relation. Upon the tragedy of the flood, however, the family and its property relations are water soluble, dissolving into a less hierarchical and ontotheological human/nature relation. As “naufragos,” they represent the interrupted journey of the Revolution. Their ruins, free of class, race, and gender, remain as the memory for a future whose base might not be private property and exploitation, but other forms of work and land made possible because they do not depend on the racial or gender differences created in the name of a colonial God and capitalist accumulation. This is not to say that Revueltas does away with all difference, but rather that he imagines a world where difference is neither defined by

capitalist social relations nor one of the driving forces “making nature work harder and harder for free.” Such a hope despite itself would mourn relations born of and dependent on the Christian and colonial alienation from nature, and thus remember past struggles to search for (and actively create) less alienating organizations of society and nature.

Conclusion

Both Castellanos and Revueltas extend land to mean more than just territory. According to Dove, “The function of ‘land’ within national discourse is thus akin to that of ‘culture,’ which provides an abstraction or idealization of social practices,” but both authors specifically interrogate this abstraction to reveal how land is used under capitalist modernity, and how it relates to notions of nature itself (135). The ultimate trajectory of capitalism creates an alienated division between Nature from Society. By racializing the Indians as a never fully converted entity in between Nature and Society, and Other than “whites”—who are ostensibly fully part of “Society”—Indian land and labor are made continuously available for transformation to meet the changing historical demands of capitalism. Race and racism became requisites of a capitalist system by making humans-as-nature work harder and harder for free. This framework was differentially applied to the Indians during and after the conquest, and therefore helped generate further profit and domination out of their transformation.

Castellanos and Revueltas observe something crucial about mid-century Mexican capitalism, the Green Revolution, and race. Moore notes that while many attribute massive influxes of capital and productivity to the Green Revolution’s success, it was in fact a process that looked more like primitive accumulation: “But insofar as this ‘revolutionary’ project appropriated, at *little or no cost to capital*, quality land, water access, and labor-power, the value composition of yields was in fact very low. Thus, Cheap Food. The long Green Revolution owed its revolutionary achievements to plunder

as much as productivity” (254-5). Cheap Food may also be characterized by “forced underconsumption,” or more plainly, hunger (228). Both novels, then, show the plunder of human and non-human natures (hungry peasants, stolen land, and engineered rivers) inherent in the “Mexican Miracle.” *Revueltas*, perhaps more than *Castellanos*, focused on the looming crisis of exhausted frontiers and forms of technology and their limited ability to generate more value (much less food for all).

As the previous chapters have shown, Mexican elites have repeatedly proposed to re-suture the supposed divide between the Indian and the land caused by the conquest as a means of achieving modernity and unity. If Vasconcelos’s *La raza cósmica* proposes unity via a mestizo destiny and a human mastery over nature, then *El luto humano* instead declares race itself to be the problem. For *Revueltas*, race in Mexico emerges from the colonial violence of conversion and dispossession from land, and therefore race, as either a homogenizing mestizaje or an Indian essence, cannot offer the solution. Mourning the impossibility of any messianic destiny (and of all religion) moving forward, the only hope lies in the death marches born of calls for non-alienated labor the dissolution of private property. *Revueltas* believed that these failed steps might reverberate into the future for new movements as a kind of historical memory.

The twentieth century saw the consolidation of two homogenizing identities: the mestizo and the *campesino*. Both, in their own way, de-emphasized racial particularity while still maintaining an important relationship to race and land. The mestizo, finally modern, was well poised to own and exploit Latin America’s resources, thus achieving its racial destiny. The *campesino* affirmed centuries of peasant strife, while allowing the government to gloss over the many conflicts over religion and land. While the *campesino* was still tied to state paternalism, these vaguely racialized peasants achieved state recognition that their poverty was inherently unjust. By moving away from classifiable racial difference, a structure that had once served the colonial state, and declaring racial homogeneity, the

post-revolutionary state made claims of race-based oppression less politically viable. Nevertheless, authors like Castellanos and Revueltas showed that race still operated as a violent function of racial capitalism with conflicts over land at its core.

If the common colonial refrain “reducir a poblado”—derived from the Latin *reducere*, to lead back, to restore—stands as a keystone for Mexican modernity, then it also presents a major roadblock to the creation of a more just society. Through Fernando Ulloa, Castellanos reminds us that education, which also shares the root *ducere*, goes wrong in the hands of the state because it “reduces” history in the name of a mythic progress and unity, conveniently forgetting the struggles of primitive accumulation. In his discussion of Alfonso Reyes, a peer to Vasconcelos in the *Ateneo de la juventud*, an intellectual and cultural organization whose members aimed to re center the humanities in culture and education after Mexico’s decades long positivist influence under the Porfiriato, Gareth Williams calls attention to Reyes’s curious dismissal of *Zapatismo* and *Villismo* in his accounts of Mexican history, and writes:

After all, for the “Ateneo” thinkers the overcoming of all disharmony, discord, disagreement, or dissonance in both culture and history was grounded not in the transformation of the relations of production in society (the precondition for the establishment of a “true” ethical state, in Gramsci’s words) but in the consolidation of a metaphysical anthropology of nation being, that is, in an aesthetic subjectivism anchored in a fully harmonious notion of national Mexican “Identity.” (92)

The search for harmony through acculturation of the Indian is reminiscent of the *primer socialismo*, and as I have also argued, colonial ideas about race and land, that influenced Nicolás Pizarro and Ignacio Altamirano of the nineteenth century. Where Castellanos finds frustration in the state’s project to educate the downtrodden, which we must not forget was also her own as an active member of the INI, Revueltas makes present “the possibility of a true ethical state” which “resides in the ability to call into question, in the name of freedom, the institutional, historical, and cultural positing power of subjectivity and its sovereign capture by the bourgeoisie and its intellectuals” (Williams 114). On the one hand, Castellanos blends the nineteenth century into her twentieth-

century novel as if the revolution never happened, calling attention to the unspoken continuity between positivism and the *Ateneo*, Justo Sierra and Alfonso Reyes or Altamirano and José Vasconcelos. *Revueltas*, on the other hand, reminds us that the revolution *did* happen—and that it will come back to haunt Mexico. Where the post-revolutionary state believed that Mexico's peasants were not yet ready to take on private property, *Revueltas* negates this *not yet* by telling the story of *almost* abolishing private property all together. In the midst of painful contradictions and crisis, the revolution died because something new could not be born. *El luto humano* argues that, in the last instance, the political may be found through the material search for sustenance, or put differently, an organization of nature based in non-capitalist social relations.

Both Castellanos and *Revueltas* depict alienated peasants whose failure to form an agrarian community sends them spiraling, eventually dying at the hands of capitalist social relations, and both novels also question the violence underwriting the state's same attempt. The pastoral power of the state ensures that the Indians (and later *campesinos*) are never fully converted or civilized, but never completely abandoned either. These novels are about when pastoral power fails and the state resorts to paramilitary violence to restart the clock, as when Adán kills Natividad or Leonardo Cifuentes draws up the *ordenanzas militares*. *Congregación* and its historical variants then appear as the only reasonable response to this crisis, which the state itself helped to produce, century after century. Castellanos and *Revueltas* definitively show that the colonial construction of race and land, *not* the so-called dispersed Indian, is the problem.

Chapter Four
**The Latest Development in Congregación: The *Ciudad Rural Sustentable* and the
Nature of Capitalism in Chiapas**

If people find the new arrangement, however efficient in principle, to be hostile to their dignity, their plans, and their tastes, they can make it an inefficient arrangement. (225)

—James Scott, *Seeing like a State*

*Y la dignidad es un puente.
Quiere dos lados que, siendo diferentes, distintos y distantes,
Se hacen uno en el puente sin dejar de ser diferentes y distintos,
Pero dejando ya de ser distantes.
Cuando el puente de la dignidad se tiende se habla el nosotros
Que somos y se habla el otro que no somos nosotros.
En el puente que es la dignidad hay el uno y el otro.
Y el uno no es más o mejor que el otro, ni el otro es más o mejor que el uno
La dignidad exige que seamos nosotros.
Pero la dignidad no es que sólo seamos nosotros.
Para que haya dignidad es necesario el otro.
Porque somos nosotros siempre en relación al otro
Y el otro es otro en relación a nosotros.*

...

*Entonces la dignidad es el mañana.
Pero el mañana no puede ser si no es para todos, para los que somos nosotros y para los que son otros.*

...

*Entonces la dignidad debiera ser el mundo, un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos.
La dignidad entonces no es todavía.
Entonces la dignidad está por ser.
La dignidad entonces es luchar porque la dignidad sea por fin el mundo.
Un mundo donde quepan todos los mundos.
Entonces la dignidad es y está por hacer.
Es camino por recorrer.
La dignidad es el mañana.*

---EZLN during the ‘March of Dignity,’ Puebla, February 2001.

In 2008, a coalition of Multi-National Corporations, the state of Chiapas, the Mexican government, and the United Nations unveiled their plans for the Ciudad Rural Sustentable (CRS). Ideally, over the next decade, the initiative would yield at least twenty-five new model villages that would provide modern medical clinics with obstetrics equipment, schools, factory jobs, and, according to the promotional materials, basic amenities like electricity, potable water, and internet that allegedly only high population density could afford. The renewed effort to combat dispersion and “inspire a change of life” in the peasantry began with the CRS Nuevo Juan de Grijalva. Although plans for the CRS were already in place, a 2007 landslide that devastated the old Juan de Grijalva and left an entire village displaced jumpstarted the project. The second CRS constructed was Santiago El Pinar, not but a few mountain tops over from the Zapatista Cultural Center of Oventik. Two more, Ixhuatán and Jaltenango, were the last two to be constructed before the project was cut short in 2012.

Initial reactions to the CRS’s ranged. The Zapatistas and many on the left declared Nuevo Juan de Grijalva as a classic form of “shock and awe” disaster capitalism, and Santiago El Pinar as a prime example of counterinsurgency and ongoing primitive accumulation (Klein 2008, Pickard, personal communication). In 2005 the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) had just formed several autonomous communities called *caracoles*—*the heart of which is Oventik*— that provided primary and secondary bilingual education, health care, water, and infrastructure -- all without any resources from the Mexican state. The strategic placement of the rural cities and new military bases, wrote Japhy Wilson, “is producing a space within which the Zapatista Autonomous territories are being reduced from spaces of possibility to zones of confinement” (1006). The CRS as a whole, then, was viewed by many as but one iteration of neoliberalism mixed with counterinsurgent dispossession in a nutshell (Pickard, CIEPAC, Otros Mundos, Wilson, Rocheleau, Soto and Banister). Wilson has further emphasized that while the project bears clear elements of neoliberal

ideology, it also contradictorily draws on ideas of social engineering and developmentalist politics through its use of spatial reorganization to control populations and cultivate (paradoxically) ‘free’ markets. For many others, the CRS was the only way for government to help the victims of natural disaster; however, this well meaning pro-CRS stance takes a limited perspective.

In 2010, a team of six M.B.A. students from the University of Michigan’s Ross School of business lauded the towns’ potential and even published a “handbook” of best practices for “Replicating Sustainable Rural Cities,” backed by the Ross school and two of the CRS’s major private funders, Fundación Azteca and Grupo Salinas. Lacking academic rigor and critical distance, the majority of the fifty-page report’s source material, including charts, statistics, photos, and interviews, is from then-governor of Chiapas Juan Sabines and other government offices. It also draws heavily from the UN and the CIA world factbook, enthusiastically mirroring the official narrative. The report closes with a section on resident recruitment, and proposes that “a potential strategy is to invite those less inclined to relocate for a community visit. By providing a tangible contrast to their current way of life and demonstrating how others have made the transition, initial resistors may be more inclined to move” (49).

But by 2012, Nuevo Juan de Grijalva faced mounting pressure from its residents and surrounding communities over what they viewed as land grabs and the failure to provide promised infrastructure. At the time of my visit in 2013, Santiago El Pinar was all but abandoned, with the shuttered factory full of expensive printing equipment and half built ice cream tricycle-carts stacked against the walls. Most of the homes had been stripped for what plumbing was installed with windows broken and doors ajar. The streetlights leaned and weeds were growing out of sidewalk cracks, and the state was offering small sums to residents to clean up the already overgrown brush on the hillsides of the CRSs.

The final two CRSs, Ixhuatán and Jaltenango, have received less attention, perhaps because

they are farther from San Cristobal de Las Casas, the main hub for academics, journalists, and tourists. They also differ from the first two in that they are not exactly free standing rural villages, but *colonias* tacked onto pre-existing urban centers. Of the four cities, Santiago el Pinar was the only one for which “dispersion” was the primary factor demanding relocation. Even so, there were certainly other towns with lower population density that could have been targeted first (Ruíz López 109). Though dispersion remained a factor in state discourse, the primary reason cited for the other three was to provide new shelter to communities displaced by environmental disaster. This suggests that the rhetoric of dispersion has a political function that also works in tandem with both the ideas and very real crises of environment.

Post mortem analyses of the CRS have varied, sometimes emphasizing that while the government may have meant well, and the idea was not all together bad, the project was doomed to fail for its lack of cultural sensitivity, funding, natural markets, and most of all, community input. There is also a consensus that, despite their initial intent, the projects failed to both successfully, or at least completely, dispossess and reorient citizens toward an idealized free market rural city, and instead, maintained and forged new semi-urban clientelistic relations between peasants and elites. Nevertheless, the very attempt at the project, the elite ideologies behind it, and the capitalist processes it was a part of, remain the most important objects of analysis to shed light on how racial capitalism operates in Mexico today.¹ Moving forward, I foreground the views critical of the CRS to explore its function as counterinsurgent and paradoxically neoliberal and developmentalist project. I also explore in greater depth the project’s environmental implications with respect to metabolic rift

¹ See Carlota McAllister, “In their concern to demonstrate that the actual anti-political effects of development interventions virtually never correspond to those intended by development planners, these studies dismiss the explanatory value of understanding the motivations behind development planning in general. Planners’ intentions, however, should be considered one of the anti-politics machine’s integral mechanisms. Development economics, as Timothy Mitchell shows, depended on the prior formation of “the economy” as the domain comprising the material substrate of all other varieties of human endeavor—politics, society, religion, and so forth” (353).

and racial capitalism. The ideologies that contributed to the CRS remain potent and will likely inform future racializing development schemes.

The backdrop on which the CRS appeared was decades in the making and involves bigger plans to reterritorialize Chiapas and make it more attractive to investors. The main sectors for investment are carbon credit conservation schemes, extractivism, agroindustry, the creation of free trade zones, and ecotourism, all to be connected by a circuit of highways and other transportation networks. The construction of race and nature in a certain way have been fundamental to the advancement of this public-private agenda. While the parallel to colonial *congregación* is often mentioned in passing, its real similarities and differences have not been examined in meaningful detail.² Furthermore, assertions that the project was neoliberal and racist, while true, in and of themselves do not necessarily make visible the work that the CRS performed (or hoped to perform) as a tool of racial capitalism's domination under the increasing duress of capitalism's world ecology. The project's resemblance to colonial *congregación* suggests that it drew on 500 years of colonial oppression and racism, but it also transformed the race/land remedy to meet twenty-first century needs.

In the case of Chiapas, this is most apparent in the recurrent elite preoccupation over dispersion and land use, which I will analyze in this chapter through development studies, proposals, projects, and in the conclusion, cultural production, including commercial videos and jungle novels about Chiapas. As a starting point, I offer a view consistent with Nemser's work on colonial *congregación* and "care," to argue that José Rabasa's notion of "love speech" was operative in the developmentalist tinged CRS and helps to explain the divergent views of the project (64). That is, the CRS was an act of accumulation by dispossession, with illusions of counterinsurgency, *and* a "love act," that together exercised a material (territorial, spatial, and lived) mode of racializing power.

² A notable exception is the epilogue to Nemser's *Infrastructures of Race* (2017).

It did so in order to advance the capitalist demand for the reorganization of nature and labor in the entire region. Nancy Fraser has also recently theorized that, “Forged through the joint, intertwined dynamics of “economy” and “polity,” racialization in capitalist society appears at the point where a hierarchy of political statuses meets an amalgamation of disparate mechanisms of accumulation. “‘Race’ emerges, accordingly, as the mark that distinguishes free subjects of exploitation from dependent subjects of expropriation” (172). Capitalism is obviously an economic system, but it is also an “institutionalized social order” comprised of political and legal regimes which along with liberalism, defines who is granted full citizenship as exploited wage laborer and who bears the “mark” along the color line of differential status as dependent and expropriated labor (for whom confiscation reigns rather than the contract and consent). Most importantly for the present historical moment, Fraser argues that “At the center sits a figure, already glimpsed in the previous era, but now generalized: the expropriable-and-exploitable citizen-worker, formally free but acutely vulnerable.” It is my contention that “dispersion” here is the political formation and subjectivization of expropriable-and-exploitable subjects. As Cedric Robinson observed in his theorization of racial capitalism, it creates difference as much as it homogenizes (Kelley). In Mexico, this translates to the construction of more general homogenizing categories like Indian, Indigenous, and dispersed populations that are in a dialectical relationship with their more particular racialized subjectivities, like the Lacandonos or the residents of Santiago el Pinar versus their mestizo counterparts of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva.

I show how dispersion and the race/land remedy, a colonial paradigm of care and violence, adapt and persist. Through Marx’s concept of “metabolic rift,” as elaborated by eco-Marxists, I argue that the CRS and the reterritorialization of Chiapas of which it was a part, can best be explained by a transformation in the race/land remedy to overcome internal ecological contradictions inherent to capitalism’s tendency toward crises of both underproduction and

overaccumulation. This metabolic rift also leaves many racialized people by the wayside as vulnerable, if not completely disposable, to the most oppressive forces of capitalist politics. The name itself, the *Ciudad Rural Sustentable*, suggests metabolic rift and the pursuit of an ultimately impossible remedy of a sustainable capitalist metabolism between town and country. The dispersed subjects to be concentrated into the CRS were racialized obliquely, characterized principally by their vulnerability in relation to precarious lands. In many cases they were forced to become “free” laborers who were under incorporated into a wage system that still left them bereft of state support and open to ongoing confiscation of their land and labor.

The Historical Natures of Chiapas: Finance Development and Metabolic Rift

The Mexican state’s use of developmentalist politics to realize sites and subjects of free market capital investment is more than a mere paradox. Rather, it is indicative of the need for projects, such as the CRS, to act as crisis “attenuating” measure of global capitalism’s organization of nature that, despite themselves, are also “crisis creating.”³ Brian Whitener argues that, historically, the “peripheral” Mexican developmentalist state of the mid twentieth century was not a “container” that restrained and redirected capital for the good of the people, but rather that it was one and the same with capital insofar as it helped create a peripheral “sink” for overaccumulated capital in the global “center” (354). This means that what is now imagined by many on the left, particularly those sympathetic to the “marea rosada,” as a mid-century Latin American developmentalist state with more power over capital’s regulation, was in fact a state made possible by large sums of capital that needed to expand its frontiers for profit. This argument finds a cognate in Moore who argues that

³ “Extending the key insights of the metabolic rift perspective, we might posit the accumulation of capital – in its manifold relations with actually existing regimes governing energy, labor, food, agriculture, and resources (inter alia) – **as an ecological crisis-generating, and crisis-attenuating, formation** (Moore, *Transcending Metabolic Rift*, 10, bold font mine). While *congregación* is clearly a measure of crisis response and creation, I would stress, differently from Moore, that at the end of the day Capitalism is ecologically crisis generating.

the expansion of profit frontiers in the twenty and twenty-first centuries has not been achieved primarily through advances in production, but in advances of the appropriation of nature, which are becoming increasingly expensive and causing the “rate of ecological surplus to fall.”⁴

In the absence of new frontiers for production, the current crisis looks a lot like a co-constituted crisis of underproduction and overaccumulation. If there is a crisis of overaccumulation (there is nowhere to invest surplus capital to make it grow), due at least in part to a crisis of underproduction (nature cannot be acquired and exploited cheaply enough to produce profit or perhaps at all, to produce raw materials or necessary infrastructure needed for production), financialization helps attenuate this crisis, but because it is not “real,” it leads to quicker and more intense boom and bust cycles. Inspired by Giovanni Arrighi’s *longue durée* approach, Moore writes that, “Accumulation crises take shape out of the contradictions of capital and world power, whose specific forms vary from one long century to the next. The way out of such crises is offered by organizational and technical innovations that are incubated by emergent world powers...” (159). Following Arrighi, different global arrangements of space emerge out of these contradictions, and in our present moment, accumulation and the geographies (natures) that it affects are characterized by an increasing dependence on financialization.

Development theory still guides elites and continues to inform notions of race that allow for financialized accumulation through projects like the CRS. Subjects are racialized, through the accretion and adaptation of previous historical variations, in ways that justify radical changes in their daily lives for the benefit of capital growth. The return to development theory is indicative of a crisis

⁴ See Moore, “Although some measure of borrowing was devoted to unproductive purposes, much of it, especially in Latin America, was committed to extending the agro-industrialization of the Fordist era. Cheap Money afforded by the combination of overaccumulated capital in the North and petro-dollars from the OPEC zone, therefore hoped to establish the conditions for sustained overcapacity in agricultural and raw materials sectors in the neoliberal era. These conditions were partly realized through infrastructure projects—such as the trans-Amazonian highway expansion—and partly through capital goods imports” (258).

of overaccumulation of northern capital and underproduction both globally and locally in Chiapas. To this end, the CRS—named so for its *sustainability*—was not actually oriented toward the sustainability of life or social needs. As a capitalist project, it was inherently fashioned as sustainable for the life cycle of capitalism. Given the antagonism between use value and exchange value, “sustainable development projects” cannot actually continue to prioritize both. The CRS masqueraded as the former, pretending to cultivate and manage the life-giving aspects of the Chiapan environment while more fully committing itself to the latter insofar as profit was the real guiding light.

Locating the project within a developmentalism for finance capital helps make sense of its scope, involving the US and Mexican governments, the UN, international NGOs, and MNCs. Rooted in Marx’s ideas about primitive accumulation, Moore notes interplay between different geographies (center/periphery, urban/rural, or empire/colony):

The original accumulation of capital was located in the world market and financial markets, whereas the original “accumulation of men” (Halpern, 1991, p. 6), that is, the production of new social relations and a new division of labor, occurred principally in rural areas. There are, then, at least two moments of original accumulation, one located in the world market and the other located in agrarian regions. (Moore, *Environmental Crises* 125)

This holds true today in which the UN and other international agencies work within the world market of a supposedly sustainable capitalism while agrarian regions like Chiapas see the racialized expropriation of labor framed in terms of “Sustainable Rural Development.” Analyses of the CRS must go beyond privatization, discipline, or primitive accumulation by dispossession, and consider the global markets at play and their attendant politics. “The exhaustion of commodity frontiers—and the slowed growth of system-wide unpaid work—is consequently linked strongly to the peculiar forms of financialization that have emerged since the 1970s,” writes Moore, who notes that, “of course, these financialized bets on the future must pay off—or the player must go broke” (227). In this vein, the CRS—particularly its failure— can also be understood as an “instant ruin” of

financialization (like the 2008 housing crisis) which produces ruins faster and faster due to the accelerated, near instant, velocity of finance capital. Whitener writes, “We have, then, since the fading of the post-war boom in the late 1960s/early 1970s, a third wave of attempted accumulation but one that is a false wave, a financial wave, an expansion of fictitious value and not of production, but a wave nonetheless” (361-362). Financialization does not correspond to a material expansion of production, but its creation of fictitious value, this wave, actually does produce a ripple current with real material effect, such as the reorganization of nature and the racialization of people. The public-private partnership of the CRS transformed people and land in ways that could be seen, felt, and lived. The wave it created had expired before the project could even be completed, but this did not stop development elites from courting investment and speculation through other means (carbon credit programs (REDD+, eco-tourism, and new infrastructure projects).

Moving forward, *congregación* as a race/land remedy is a crisis *attenuating* metabolism of power that also *produces* rift (eco-crises) on a world ecological scale, adapted to the exigencies of each stage of racial capitalism. Specifically, the race/land remedy manifested through the idea of Indian Dispersion and its fix, *congregación*, reterritorializes land and labor:

The distinctive explanatory power of the metabolic rift rests on three decisive, spatio-temporal connections: (1) primitive accumulation imposes value relations on the countryside, compelling rising labor productivity in primary production...there is no capitalist metabolic rift without *agricultural revolution*; (2) the subsequent generalization of value relations, implying a powerful contradiction between the ‘natural distinctiveness’ of commodities and their ‘economic equivalence’, necessitates the progressive ‘urbanization of the countryside’ (Marx 1973, 141, 479); and (3) the tension between the country and the city is therefore central, not simply as empirical fact, but as the geographical pivot of value accumulation, mediating biophysical flows from farm to factory through the *built environments of the circuit of capital*. In this view, ‘town and country’, no less than ‘bourgeois and proletarian’, emerges as a relational expression of the underlying *contradiction between value and use-value in historical capitalism*. (Moore, CWL, 7-8, emphasis mine)

The CRS tried to collapse the antagonistic distinction between town and country. It claimed that the urbanization of the countryside was necessary not just for development, but for the sustainability of capitalism and the planet. Yet, this urbanization of the countryside also aimed to create ostensibly

empty spaces suited to capital's needs. But instead, the contradiction was re-instantiated. The capitalist logic of exchange value was in no way curbed by the project to more fully recognize the "natural distinctiveness" of Chiapan nature and the commodities that are produced from it.⁵ The CRS ultimately produced a different kind of town and country dynamic, but it did not entirely urbanize the countryside. Rather, it created new and different exchanges between town and country, changing previous formations of what had been the town and country, and this could not have been done without racialization. Although I will revisit these histories throughout the chapter, and other aspects have been explored elsewhere in this project, the present reterritorialization of Chiapas has to do with reconfiguring its different regions: the Soconusco (the agroindustrial and coffee growing region of the Sierra Madre and the lowlands), the Altos (the highland indigenous and ladino regions, home to San Cristóbal de Las Casas and Comitán), and the Selva Lacandona (one of the world's most biodiverse semi-tropical rainforests).

Since colonization, the Selva Lacandona has been perceived as an impenetrable wilderness only made more so by its dispersed and bellicose indigenous inhabitants (and the occasional cimarrón of lore).⁶ Repeated attempts were made to colonize the rainforest, but none were

⁵ Gómez and Gómez have a similar reading of the conflict between use and exchange value as it relates to the Ciudad Rural Sustentable, Santiago el Pinar: "La crisis del sistema económico capitalista que surge a raíz de las modernas guerras contra territorios no sólo es en México ni América Latina, en todas las geografías se refleja la catástrofe multidimensional, la estructura caótica del edificio sistémico, incitado fundamentalmente por las contradicciones en la lógica de acumulación, en la que el valor de cambio se impone sobre el valor de uso, y tanto la feurza de trabajo socialmente necesaria como la satisfacción de las primeras necesidades, quedan en Segundo plano para dar mayor prioridad a la acumulación del plusvalor (trabajo no remunerado)" (29).

⁶ Anti-blackness is evident in the Tzotzil version of "El Negro Cimarrón" an indigenous myth from the highlands of Chiapas about an escaped slave who kidnaps a married woman, takes her to his cave, and rapes her. After three days, she gives birth to a son who grows big in a matter of months, turns against his father, and helps his mother return home. The woman dies not long after because of fear and trauma, and her distraught son kills all of the other black people, believing them to be evil: "Es por eso que en la actualidad ya no existen negros" (26). The story warns of the dangers of indigenous communities not properly protecting their women and the fact that cimarrónes sometimes pillaged to survive. See Antonio Gómez Gómez for this version, although the introduction and conclusion, in my opinion, reproduce the anti-blackness of the myth. Other versions are similar to "El Sombrero," a Mexican myth about a trickster with an enormous sombrero who coaxes young women away from their bedrooms. Finally, it is also highly likely that in many instances, there was a more complex, and maybe less antagonistic, relationship between many indigenous communities and African slaves, as is only recently receiving attention by scholars.

successful save for a handful of congregaciones around its edges. One of these was Bachajón, which I will revisit in the conclusion. The first “modern” incursion into the selva was made by *madereros* from Tabasco who set up *monterías* (lumber camps) in the 1880s.⁷ After extracting nearly all of the Mahogany, they left the forest in 1949. The technical advances of the Green Revolution made it possible to finally “colonize” the rainforest in the 1950s and 1960s. The oil boom made petro fertilizers widely available and agriculture and cattle ranching viable in the Lacandón. It also released political pressure by allowing the state to grant more ejidos without expropriating more large landholdings. Mexicans from all over participated in this process—former Zapatistas from Morelos, Indigenous Chiapans, and even Sonorans. The state must now, however, undo many of these settlements in both the Sierra Madre and Lacandón forests for the UN brokered carbon credit program REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and resettle them in the Soconusco, still “underpopulated” and strapped for labor as in the nineteenth century, for agro-industry of export crops like coffee and African Palm. Indeed, the Soconusco was where the CRS project initially hoped to concentrate its efforts (Pickard). Infrastructure projects for eco-tourism, energy, water, and extractivism also necessitate the concentration and redistribution of people across the regions, each of which in the eyes of elites, can be put to work more rationally.

The standard environmental discourse has cast blame on peasants who practice slash and burn and have moved further into the forest after exhausting the shallow and supposedly fragile tropical soils. This is both a historical half truth and bad science. In the 1970s and 1980s, the state by and large stopped offering the credit and technology necessary to continue to farm with the same intensity of the mid century in both the Lacandón and the Sierra Madre regions. Many peasant communities, having no other option and depending on the land to survive, were actually at the forefront of rescuing more traditional forms of agriculture and adopting new innovative agro-

⁷ See Jan de Vos, *Oro Verde*.

ecological methods.⁸ New research on the Selva Lacandona and El Petén (environmentally part of the same region, but nationally belonging to Guatemala) has revealed that the Ancient Maya likely treated the entire forest as a managed garden, and that it sustained a population far greater than ever assumed. It also questions the notion that the Maya collapsed due to improper management of their resources, an unfounded argument advanced by developmentalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The “Maya Biosphere” was not a virginal rainforest undisturbed since time immemorial, but a massive, mixed use, environment. This runs counter to the “fortress conservation” ethos touted by many an international NGO—Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund being perhaps the worst among them (Ford and Nigh). This history, then, more or less adheres to Moore’s three conditions of metabolic rift, 1) the green revolution is arguably *the* agricultural revolution of our time, the research for which was in large part pioneered in Mexico 2) urbanization and imposition of value relations, creating an antagonism which plays out on ecologies as “rift” in need of repair (rural-city) and 3) as an antagonism that is both real and produced between the country and the city, use-value and value (sustainability, resource use, and potential social conflict, all for which the CRS is remedy). What follows is a more in depth consideration of race and concentration efforts aimed at the intensification of capitalist accumulation in Mexico, particularly in the south.

CRS: Marketing Dispersion and Tragic Nature

I will primarily focus on the CRS as part of a larger plan to reorganize Chiapas and its people, but a brief overview of the project merits attention before moving forward. The layout of

⁸ Ecologically speaking, the common notion that rainforest soil is thin and easily eroded often lacks specificity and does not necessarily account for the regenerative power of mixed use methods. Anthropologists were the first to question condemnation of swidden agriculture and tropical soil upon discovering overwhelming evidence that the indigenous had managed to sustain a far larger population, using swidden and forest agriculture than previously believed. See Anabel Ford and Ron Nigh, *The Maya Forest Garden: Eight Millennia of Sustainable Cultivation of the Tropical Woodlands*, 2015.

the towns has been subjected to the greatest criticism, with most pointing out both its lack of basic functionality and the planners' clear desires to remake rural life, its subjects and its land, in the image of neoliberal progress. Like colonial congregación, the CRS imposed a gridded pattern in contrast to the less dense and more fluid pattern between the home and agricultural plots of many peasant and indigenous communities. The CRS houses themselves were more like tiny cabins, sized at 60 square meters or approximately 640 square feet with only one bedroom, a very small bathroom with a standup shower, and an efficiency style kitchen. Many families added outdoor kitchens to the back of the cabins in the style of their original pueblos, roughly the same size as the CRS house itself. After widespread complaints, the government added official cement patios onto some of the CRS homes for the use of indoor/outdoor kitchens used by many indigenous women to cook over an open fire, but even still, many preferred the dirt floors they had before, and further extended the kitchen beyond the official patios. Some have seen this mediation with the government as a method of resistance, while noting its limited scope (Soto and Banister, Ruiz).

These kitchens were then supplied by *milpas* defiantly planted in the hilly easements between the houses' small lots to alleviate the new reality of the CRS where, according to one resident, “todo se compra.” In several documentaries, articles, and interviews, residents have routinely stated that the lot sizes made it hard for them to raise domestic animals like chickens, keep a kitchen garden, or have any privacy from their neighbors. Of the cramped space, one resident exclaimed, “Ya casi vamos a vivir nosotros con las gallinas!” (CIEPAC, 2010). Embodied for so long in the plaza, a hallmark tool of colonial domination, the CRS also changed the idea of public space:

In Nuevo Juan de Grijalva the plaza has been replaced by a 'commercial corridor', a narrow covered lane of shops that simulates the privatised space of the shopping mall. The bustling market of the traditional Mexican town has been replaced by a supermarket chain, and the local amenities and public services within the Rural City are emblazoned with the names of the corporate foundations that are funding them. This reorganisation of social space not only replaces the communality of the ejido but also transforms its relations with nature. There are no designated green spaces in the town, and whereas the ejido opens onto the surrounding fields, with which it is both socially and spatially intertwined, Nuevo Juan de Grijalva is

physically separated from the peasants' land by several kilometres and is socially severed from it by the reorientation of agricultural production from the needs of the community to the demands of the world market. (Wilson, Notes 1002)

It is well known, however, that the plaza has been appropriated for an array of activities, chief among them political protest. In time, residents also began to repurpose the only green space they had, the school's playground, to better serve community needs by using it as a grazing pasture for their goats.⁹ Even so, the CRS achieved what it inarguably set out to do by changing, or at least making more difficult, prior everyday socio-spatial relations. Seeing past what Diane Rocheleau terms “the fog of greening”—achieved by a network of Conservation NGOs, the UN, corporations, academics, and governments claiming to both conserve nature and care for the poor—Wilson captures that at the heart of Chiapas's story has been the elite prioritization of “the demands of the world market” over “the needs of the community” (2015).

In his seminal work, *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott argues that the model village, besides claims of efficiency, also have “a powerful aesthetic dimension” and “the assumption is that if the arrangement looks right, it will also, ipso facto, function well. The importance of such representations is manifested in a tendency to miniaturize, to create such microenvironments of apparent order as model villages, demonstration projects, new capitals and so on” (224-225). During my visit, even though Santiago el Pinar was already in ruins, a business woman declared upon arrival that the region at least looked “so much cleaner” (Personal conversation, 2013). Projects like the CRS are often referred to as “megaprojects,” because in many ways they require the massive reordering of land and people, but they do “miniaturize” in so far as that they tend to work at the regional or state level, ready to be neatly articulated into a larger development web of global capital. Often, the racializing language of cleanliness is inscribed on bodies that are perceived as “dirty,” but

⁹ See Figure 6, page 127 in Soto and Banister for a photo of the repurposed green space.

here it is also extended not just to territories, but to the land itself.¹⁰ Such thinking allowed elites to imagine this small corner of Chiapas as blank slate ready for development. Besides having rather obvious racist undertones, the CRS was praised as an important first aesthetic step to ‘functioning well,’ understood at least in part as a having performed the necessary preparation to plug people and resources into a larger, more productive capitalist circuit. This was only one way in which the land and people were portrayed as vulnerable and in need of “care.” Nowhere is this more clear than in the promotional materials and development documents about Chiapas.

Marketing Dispersion

The initial promotional video for Nuevo Juan de Grijalva begins with black and white images of peasants, trekking across mountainous terrain with wood strapped to their backs or scooping plastic buckets into dirty water. Set to the tone of saccharine music to elicit empathy, naked children look on the camera from a distance. Soon after, male and female voiceovers take turns reciting statistics of low population density in Chiapas, followed by more statistics about its causal effects on marginalization, poverty, poor nutrition, and the destructive environmental practices of the peasantry, who “queman o tiran la basura a una barranca.” The male narrator furthers the narrative by asserting that, “La realidad es que la tragedia se vive todos los días, y en ocasiones, la naturaleza lo agudiza.” Then, it shows the murky aftermath of the landslide and resulting “tsunami” that destroyed Juan de Grijalva, killing twenty-six, such that “ni casas ni templos resistieron la fuerza de la naturaleza.” Poverty, the woman’s voice says, “es amarga, oscura, silenciosa, y lastima...,” as a clip of then governor Juan Sabines states of the CRS: “Amigos y

¹⁰ See Santana Pinho on “The Dirty Body that Cleans,” about Brazilian Domestic workers and the “common sense” that guides the paradoxical ideas about racialized Afro-Brazilians whose bodies are essential dirty but whose station in society is to clean. In Brazil, race and region are also interrelated, but here I wish to note that it isn’t simply being “from” a certain region that racializes, but that ideas about cleanliness are extended to the land itself.

amigas, permiten eso, es vivir mejor. Vivir en una ciudad planeada...puedan contar con un sentido verdadero de comunidad.” The CRSs will allow habitants to “romper con su pasado de dispersión y pobreza,” an habituated and ensnaring vice, by fomenting “productividad,” “valor agregado,” and “gobernanza.” Finally, the CRS, the video reminds us, supports conservation since, “Los habitantes conservan sus tierras, y se implementa un programa de reconversión productiva en sus parcelas de origen con la sustitución de sus cultivos tradicionales por otros de alto valor comercial y en armonía con el medio ambiente.”

In the face of an unpredictable, menacing, and often violent “Nature,” the CRS identified not just vulnerable people, but “tierras de alto riesgo.” While Nuevo Juan de Grijalva arguably provided refuge for those of the original Juan de Grijalva, it also concentrated ten other communities who were either “too dispersed” (if indeed they could be considered communities at all by elite conceptions), *or*, who lived in lands deemed as potentially “de alto riesgo.” The CRS project harnessed the disciplinary and pastoral power of colonial congregación and intensified its exercise of biopolitical power through the creation of a new government agency, the Instituto de Población y Ciudades Rurales. Risk to all life forms was quantified in statistics of population density over precarious land. Like colonial missionaries, who often drew on the New World’s edenic potential, the government played the role of shepherd leading its flock to “una tierra prometida,” an imagery which had itself been called upon by liberation theologians during the indigenous peasant land struggles in the Lacandón Selva of the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹ The flock was portrayed as socially isolated and destitute. The lamentation that “Poverty is... dark, silent...” suggests that in fact the dispersed are outside of sociality and language itself. Dispersion does not represent real community, but a false idolatrous one, for in the CRS the people will come to know a “true sense of community.” This discourse does not paint the entire region as a promised land, but rather as one

¹¹ Jesus Morales Bermúdez describes this history in his 1992 novel, *Ceremonial*.

containing enclaves of refuge that must first be constructed and then the dispersed led to them.

The video also stated that no man-made structures, not even temples, were left unscathed in the face of Chiapas's savage natural forces. This turned out not to represent actual elite ideas about the management of nature. Within a few short months, some residents had sold their lands for a petty sum, and they were soon flooded by the construction of a new dam (a move that was later protested by residents who claimed they had not been clearly informed). The lands were considered perfectly suitable for feats of hyper engineered megaprojects, just not for everyday peasant agriculture. In the unconverted state of dispersion, the tragedy of one natural disaster became the tragedy of daily life itself, simply exacerbated by an equally unrestrained nature and unstable land. By declaring the "dispersed" peasant life as tragic—itsself a concept rooted in the predetermined outcome of death or exile from city social life (the ban)-- it foreclosed any possibility of debate about whether or not their everyday lives were sufficiently life giving.¹² In fact, many targeted by the CRS did indeed argue that their subsistence form of social reproduction was far superior to the rural city.

The CRS was a product of biopolitical capitalist reason, a politics of the calculation of life for profit. It was all the paradigms that result in the state and market's efforts to "make life live," thus allowing for the resuscitation of the market over and over again. Wilson explains the state's

¹² See Giorgio Agamben on "The Ban." I invoke the 'ban' or the exception here to highlight the perception of the city as a place of civilization, sociality, and law, but in agreement with Nemser, the CRS can be read as a form of congregación, which "constitutes, rather than suspends, the social order" (168). Again, this helps to explain its function as a mechanism of "colonial care." Building on Nemser's work, which acknowledges possible genealogical links between the congregación and the camp, it seems to me that the historical recurrence of 'polos de desarrollo,' which I discuss below, is indicative of the extremely close, sometimes even indistinguishable slippage and lineage, between the Latin American model village or 'polo de desarrollo' (which predates the Guatemalan aldeas vietnamitas) as both counterinsurgent camp and foundational of a new capitalist/colonial order. In other words, it is counterinsurgent *because* it constitutes an economic and social order, sometimes creating an exceptional space to do away with the old and usher in the new (such is the case model villages as free trade zones). I am hesitant on the constitutive difference between "nominal war" time camp and (neo)colonial "peace" concentration, particularly in its twentieth century manifestations in Guatemala, Honduras, Guerrero, Chiapas, and other Mexican states. The use of aldeas estratégicas during the "dirty war" in Guerrero, Mexico, as its name suggests, was not acknowledged by the Mexican state (or any other official state actors) until the PRI's seventy year rule came to an end in 2000 and military documents were declassified. Present day Chiapas could also be described as an instance of low-intensity war. Nevertheless, the question merits on going discussion.

contradictory efforts to implement free market policies through a developmentalist model, “as a rough draft for a new and apparently paradoxical phase of neoliberal development, which aims to create a fully commodified society through the direct and total administration of everyday life by the state” (2011, 1007). The “total administration of everyday life by the state,” however, should not be understood as a neoliberal construct, but instead as a fully colonial mode of power, in which the CRS may be considered as an intensified continuity of a capitalism that cannot be separated from its colonial roots.

The project was widely publicized through these promotional materials, plastered with the slogan “hechos, no palabras.” Within a few short years, the Instituto de Población y Ciudades Rurales would be dismantled and the majority of its online presence erased, except for clips on Youtube. It did, then, leave behind few words and many “facts”—having foreclosed spaces of debate and disagreement by generating statistics of dispersion that would have many afterlives beyond their initial colonial and nineteenth century reincarnations. It demonstrated neoliberalism’s absence of language by, as Brett Levinson has observed, forming consensus through the assertion that the free market is reason itself, and this consensus, this “fact”, “goes without saying” (77).

Race in the CRS

In the beginning, the CRS project’s targets were simply “poblaciones dispersas.” Over time, the development planners tended to see Nuevo Juan de Grijalva (peasant ladino) as more successful than Santiago El Pinar (Indigenous Tzotziles), and their reasoning came down to race. A fundamental part of biopolitics and the “total administration of everyday life by the state” is its use of space as a racializing force. If race works, at least in part, to make nature work harder for less, as I argue in Chapter Three, dispersion as a problem was the initial racializing discourse that was met with a material complement in the CRS as cure. However, as the project confronted the reality of

peasant resistance and other obstacles, discourse began to change, and soon echoed the “Indian Problem” of the previous two centuries.

Concretely, the CRS achieved a process of “semi-urbanization” for the residents of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, and rearticulated them toward a new state-citizen-market relationship, whereas those of Santiago El Pinar exercised resistance by simply returning to their original communities or refusing to relocate in the first place. The residents of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva were forced into tactics of mediation with the state, even if “In talking with the residents of Nuevo Juan del Grijalva one gets the sense that the SRCs [Ciudad Rural Sustentable] are a failing social experiment that no one seems to know how to wind down. Yet, in the eyes of development planners and politicians, the SRCs continue to offer hope for a new approach to rural development.” (Soto and Banister 127). Soto and Banister argue that despite the “territorial turn” in Latin America, “in the context of Chiapas, territorial governance strategies continue to be presented as straightforward economic development initiatives, leaving aside any recognition of indigenous and peasants demands for territory” or communal property rights (128). “They constitute a political technology for reworking the relationship between state, capital, citizens, and nature” (112). Initial documents and promotional material for the CRS consistently cited Chiapas’s disproportionately rural population in comparison to other Mexican states, which made it impossible, the government said, to provide basic infrastructure and services to Chiapan peasants. As previously mentioned, the CRS project was kicked off by a devastating landslide that displaced several communities, who before being officially relocated, lived in a *campamento*. “The relocation to Nuevo Juan del Grijalva...collapsed some of the networks of self-organization that had quickly formed in the campamentos, as people quarrelled over the location of houses, the jobs, and the assignment of businesses,” explain Soto and Banister. The resulting arrangement in the CRS divided up residents into eleven neighborhoods with each representing a former community. This, “is now one of the major limitations of self-organization, as

it has fragmented any sense of collective solidarity, minimizing the possibilities for broader collective action within a space that is quite distinct from people's original places of origin" (121).

This division was not done out of a Machiavellian desire to divide and conquer. It was an inherent quality of the ideology that guided the project. Since Las Casas, elites have claimed that dispersion is a less social state of being, remedied only by city life. Of course, this argument breaks down when one considers the upending of prior social bonds required by congregación, particularly when communities are misread as "dispersed," as is and was often the case. Likewise, the CRS fragmented and individualized people, even within communities, such that the only "collective" identity left was that of the individual wage laborer, for whom productivity, efficiency, and the wage became, by necessity, a main goal. Those of Nuevo Juan del Grijalva became formerly dispersed, in essence racialized through the very process of de-Indianization, but considered further along on the evolutionary scale of development.

Indigeneity was never mentioned by officials, until the project began to fail most obviously in Santiago El Pinar. It is worth citing from Soto and Banister at length. First, they quote the planning director:

Currently we close the term [in office] with two cities launched, completed. Totally different, totally opposite. One [Nuevo Juan del Grijalva] is in an area completely built with regulations, with a higher socio-cultural level, with different circumstances. But the other [Santiago el Pinar] [was formed] with municipalities of marginalization and socio-political and cultural conflicts because they are also indigenous communities that additionally came from a situation of Zapatismo and all of that. It has been very difficult, but it was built to see how well it functioned. And the results are completely different, everything is different. (Interview 6, July 2012)

But also consider Soto and Banister's response:

This kind of paternalistic, hubristic, and technocratic rationality, involving the direct manipulation of the lives and life chances of specific sectors of the most marginalized of Mexico's population operates largely without restrictions or accountability. It has sought to use vulnerable (displaced, indigenous, poor) peoples as subjects in a governance experiment, restricting communities' and individuals' ability to determine either the parameters of their own relocation or to shape their communities. The Tzotziles of Santiago el Pinar, likely because of the cohesiveness of their ethnic identity and the shared historical experience of

seasonal labor migration, were able to maintain some semblance of autonomy by simply abandoning the SRC [CRS] project altogether. Residents of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva, by contrast, were not in a position to do this, and the results have been largely disastrous for them..." (124-125).

Soto and Banister's use of ethnicity is common in Latin American Studies, but I choose to foreground processes of racial domination from the colonial era to the present to de-naturalize group identity (see Nemser, forthcoming). I also want to highlight the particular strength of the second part of their observation and relate it specifically to racialization; "the shared historical experience." As Mariana Mora demonstrates, the Zapatista's historical understanding of themselves and their movement is most consistently expressed in terms of their memories as racialized *mozos*, who were often coerced or forced, seasonal, plantation workers. That is, this historical experience of seasonal labor migration is "shared" precisely because it was through this capitalist labor regime that they became racialized as Indian into a collective indigenous identity in the first place, as I argued in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, Soto and Banister also use the framework of vulnerability, but Ruth Wilson Gilmore goes uncited as one of the concept's original theorists. Cheng and Shabazz also note that Gilmore's quote is often reproduced without the essential final clause emphasizing geography:

However, in a more elaborated iteration, Gilmore's definition actually reads, "Racism is the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, *in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies.*" In other words, geography is integral to understanding the practices of racism and white supremacy.

Their creation as vulnerable *racialized* subjects has been made historically possible by iteration after iteration of control over their geographies. They are not vulnerable *because* they are displaced, indigenous, or poor. Rather, they are displaced and poor because they are racialized as not just indigenous, but Indian, and their "Indianness" is not a racial fact (no such thing biologically exists). It is a construct, born specifically from their "shared history" of Capital's annihilation of space by time that forced them to work as migrant, circulating, *Indian labor*. In any case, where Soto and

Banister credit Santiago el Pinar with “cohesiveness,” the development planner claims “socio-political and cultural conflicts.” The planner, then, both makes the residents of Santiago el Pinar inferior on the evolutionary scale of development, but also refuses to recognize history itself, which is no less than the racialization of people into *mozos* on Capitalist plantations (into forms of nature that work harder for cheaper). These former *mozos* simply become resistant Indians who “came from a situation of *Zapatismo*, *and all of that*,” rather than the violent machinations of colonial and neocolonial domination. Or, again, as Lund frames Castellanos’ thinking on race as one where “indigenous identity always emerges, indeed, can emerge only from this historical trauma” (81).

Like the colonial *congregación*, the CRS intensified the imposition of the division of labor, the wage, and coercive labor regimes, as well. The small houses and lots also spatially forced the nuclear family, which became a shaping factor of new social relations of reproductive labor over which residents had little say. By transforming the family and social reproduction, women were forced to work for wages to buy food and maintain their families in the CRS while the men camped out for weeks at a time in their original plots. This gender-segregated process of semi-urbanization contributed to the overall perception of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva’s greater success.

Dispersion, then, was a colonial construct given new life that prefigured all that it captured as vulnerable, “(displaced, Indigenous, poor),” to deploy a form of racial domination rooted not just in geographic space, but environment, too. The CRS project, initially widened the parameters of racialization-as-Indian, given the term’s long history as a gloss for “Indianness,” (itself tied to ideas about land use, as I have argued throughout) to expand the number of people who would need to be dispossessed as part of Chiapas’s reterritorialization. Those of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva were eventually recognized for their “difference,” for their mestizo character in opposition to the indigenous of Santiago el Pinar, which in the eyes of elites afforded those of Grijalva a more inherent ability to settle, assimilate, and live in civilized community. In asserting racial difference,

and thus character and degree of civilization, between the residents of Nuevo Juan de Grijalva and Santiago El Pinar, the fiction of race as an actually existing category was reaffirmed. As Soto and Banister warn, the CRS “continues to offer hope” to elites. It is to development that I now turn, discussing both historical and contemporary development plans in Chiapas.

The Evolution of Race and Development Theory: Capitalism’s New World Ecology

The CRS fits within a larger development and conservation plan in Southern Mexico. This modern trajectory has as much to do with narratives of the region’s Maya past as it does with its future. Since colonization proceeded more slowly in what is today Southern Mexico and the Yucatan, there is a continued perception that it was never completely conquered and assimilated. Many are often quick to note that Southern Mexico shares more in common with its Central American neighbor, Guatemala than the rest of the country. Such statements clearly index indigeneity, poverty, a sense of periphery to modern cores, and an overall lack of development. The South and its people, however “ungovernable,” have long been fully immersed subjects of capitalist history and therefore, the object of elite attentions of everyone from Bartolomé de Las Casas to the UN, not to mention the various interests in the interregnum, such as German coffee *finca* owners, Porfirian lumber magnates, oil prospectors, post-revolutionary agronomists, the Mexican military, and bioprospectors, funded by pharmaceutical companies and universities.

This history did not stop President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) from leveraging the perception of its incomplete colonization in his 2000 Plan Puebla-Panama (PPP). The plan’s main objectives were to build a major highway system, implement energy and oil infrastructure, and take advantage of Southern Mexico and Central America’s other natural resources, including its people. This circuit was not so different from the railways and mule paths created during the Porfiriato for Mahogany. It also had a counterinsurgent function to pacify Chiapas after the Zapatista rebellion (Wilson, 2011).

By 2008, the PPP was nominally abandoned because of peasant resistance, but Governor Sabines simply recycled its framework that same year, adapting it to the UN's Millennium Development goals, recommendations that represented a 180 degree turn from the UN's mid-century calls to promote the small family farm.

Such developmentalism, then and now, may serve the same function as a sink for over accumulated capital, but to revive this ability, allied state and capital interests need to create new ecologies and subjects of accumulation. According to Dianne Rocheleau, the PPP, renamed MesoAmerica Project (2008), “linked regional development plans to US and regional military, policing, Drug War and border control strategies” (701-702). The UN advocated for the concentration of dispersed populations to create sites amenable to capitalist reproduction, a main necessity of which was new infrastructure, reterritorialization, and security. Whereas giving credit to small farmers in the 1960s and 1970s may have proved effective in Chiapas, intensified financialization now requires vast forest “reserves” and more productive land to extract more profit and create more value. Then president Felipe Calderón (2006-2012), also of the PAN, seemed to carry the torch of Fox's PPP and visited Nuevo Juan de Grijalva. He even promoted the CRS as a potential model for all of Mexico, and according to Cinthia Fabiola Ruiz, “manifestó que “la causa estructural de la pobreza en México es la dispersión de la gente [...]” (107). The narrative of incomplete colonization, proven by the continuation of dispersion, again allowed elites to identify and manufacture new sites of development.

So-called conservation and sustainability were crucial tools in this process. Initially tied to the PPP, the Palenque Integrated Planned Center (CIPP) was a megaproject for a tourist circuit that survived the 2008 demise of PPP and on which Juan Sabines would run for governor, plotting to build “Cancun in the rainforest.” Up to this point, the PPP, the CIPP, and the CRS have all been hindered by peasant resistance, resulting in the inability to secure enough territory to realize their

gargantuan utopian task. Despite the incomplete realization of the PPP, the CIPP remains on the docket for the Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo (FONATUR)—Mexico’s national tourism agency, as a “Programa Especial de Desarrollo Turístico del Corredor Palenque, Cerro Azul, Comitán, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapa de Corzo, Chiapas” (Rocheleau 2014, FONATUR). The plan as elaborated by FONATUR in 2014, responds to Peña Nieto’s desire to diversify tourist offerings to places other than the beach, and prioritize infrastructure for places with potential for tourism development, like expanding the number of “pueblos mágicos,” cities restored and cultivated as picturesque colonial relics. Héctor Gómez Barraza, the director of FONATUR, is quoted in a boletín titled, “El Plan Nacional de Infraestructura contempla el fortalecimiento del sector turístico” as saying, “Se considera...a Palenque, Chichen Itzá, Teotihuacán y Calakmul. Lo que vamos a hacer primero es desarrollar un plan de desarrollo urbano que nos permita identificar las reserva territorial y cuáles son los productos que pueden detonar los destinos turísticos en estas entidades.” The need to identify and secure territorial reserves is reiterated, and elites hoped the CRS, initially slated for 25 rural cities and villages, would help achieve this goal by relocating towns that also served as investment hubs.

The return to the model village is a relic of colonialism and a harbinger of developmentalism in Southern Mexico and Central America. Scott writes that the recurrence of model villages across the globe, “suggest that we have stumbled across something generic about the projects of the modern developmentalist state” (224). The colonial model village began with the Spanish policy of congregación and has cropped up repeatedly in a number of colonial and post colonial contexts.¹³ Projects like the CRS depend on both the creation of an urban/rural dichotomy

¹³ Cuba, Vietnam, the Soviet Union, Tanzania, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (Guerrero, and Chiapas have all been sites of model villages aimed at concentrating “dispersed” populations. In Honduras, multi-national elites have advocated and begun land grabs on an island linked to the mainland by a land bridge to construct free trade model villages (ZEDE). The following quote indicates the capitalism’s ever accelerating pace: “According to a 2014 interview with Klugmann in World Post, the project, ‘if it accomplishes what it’s capable of doing, will demonstrate inside of

while also claiming a need to bridge that gap. Both Mariana Mora, Carlota McAllister, and most famously, Arturo Escobar, have located these processes in the mid twentieth century. Of Latin America, and Colombia more specifically, Escobar reads a 1950 development report from the International Bank, and emphasizes its use of religious language like salvation to put forth a depoliticized dogma:

The messianic feeling and the quasi-religious fervor expressed in the notion of salvation are noticeable. In this representation, “salvation” entails the conviction that there is one right way, namely, development; only through development will Colombia become an “inspiring example” for the rest of the underdeveloped world. Nevertheless, the task of salvation/development is complex. Fortunately, adequate tools (science, technology, planning, and international organizations) have already been created for such a task, the value of which has already been proved by their successful application in the West. Moreover, these tools are neutral, desirable, and universally applicable. Before development, there was nothing: only “reliance on natural forces” which did not produce “the most happy results.” Development brings the light, that is, the possibility to meet “scientifically ascertained social requirements.” The country must thus awaken from its lethargic past and follow the one way to salvation, which is undoubtedly, “an opportunity unique in its long history” (of darkness, one might add).

Developmentalism understood this way re-inscribes colonial relations of power and depoliticizes major transformations in land and daily life by insisting on a scientific evolutionary “common sense” in which rural geographies must be remade (McCallister 352). The logical follow up for development economics, then, is the creation of ideal subjects to realize and inhabit this supposedly depoliticized economic domain. “The Only Way,” this Salvific Global Capitalism, is premised on the construction of indigenous and peasant peoples *and* their land as “vulnerable” (Gilmore, Nemser, Mora).

In the case of Southern Mexico, this is done primarily through claims of dispersion and its subsequent environmental destruction or inefficiency, if not both at once, while also claiming that

Honduras and to the world that capacity of solving problems and creating jobs in particular can go forward with a velocity that very few people have been expecting.”
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/23/there-are-no-peasants-here-honduras-zedes-land-grabs/>

new laws and territorial formations are needed to counter “political” obstacles like corruption (or dissent). In his study of the CRS, Wilson also highlights the depoliticization of space on which developmentalism depends (Urbanization 219-220). Writing about the community of La Montaña, Guerrero, Mora shows that present day racialization in Mexico continues to draw from what Aguirre Beltrán called “Regions of Refuge” that are characterized as “still” barbaric and inherently culturally deficient rather than having suffered from structural violence. She thus highlights the spatialized character of racialization in Mexico, arguing that Aguirre Beltrán’s theory reactivated the sharp dichotomy between the urban and the rural, that presented the latter as earlier on the evolutionary scale of historical and human progress. These zones are still perceived as backward, under criminal cacique control, and in need of assimilation to learn more civilized forms of liberal political expression (i.e., “legal” and in many cases, those effective at securing autonomy and resisting their transformation into “disposable” populations. The use of state sponsored violence is justified by claiming that these racialized regions of refuge have ingrained “cultures of violence” that need to be transformed into “cultures of peace,” recalling Las Casas’s transformation of La Tierra de Guerra into Alta Verapaz.¹⁴ In case there was any doubt about the racialized nature of these processes, discourse in the media and government about the conflict is also accompanied by colorism and discrimination against rural peoples constructed as unruly Indians, particularly those fighting for land rights (La Montaña, 2017, 72-73).

Mora is right to emphasize an important moment in the anthropological machine’s racialization of rural spaces. As I argued in chapter 3, Aguirre Beltrán’s influence was operable for Rosario Castellanos and many other mid twentieth-century development elites. The significance of this is that it makes visible certain tendencies of capitalism. By considering the colonial era as the

¹⁴ Cimarrón communities (also known as *palenques* and *quilombos*) functioned autonomously as places of refuge for escaped slaves, but congregación functioned as a colonial technology of power by disciplining and making labor available as it also provided a **certain** degree of “refuge.” See Chapter One.

beginning of capitalism, then it is reasonable to claim that ideas and material projects reinforcing the rural/urban divide (while also claiming the need to overcome it) date back to this period and form part of its very fiber (that is, its mechanisms of power and accumulation). In this way Dependency Theory was rather astute in its analysis of cores and peripheries and the role that such a produced division played in the “World System” (Wallerstein). These developmentalist anthropological ideas have an economic analogue that, like Aguirre Beltrán, proposed integration into the global economy through the creation of “poles of development,” themselves curiously like *congregación*.

Dispersion and Development Poles: Concentration and the Maquilización de Chiapas

Dispersion as a problem is a persistent ideology which upon further examination, reveals a larger web of racializing practices involving infrastructure, development, and nature under capitalism. Recent academic and news coverage about Chiapas and Guerrero indicate a resurgence (or perhaps continuation) of Development Theory’s “Poles of Growth,” which generally appears as “Development Poles” or *Polos de desarrollo* in work about Latin America.¹⁵ French economist Francois Perroux (1903–1987) introduced the theory in 1949, and although its intended application was for “abstract economics,” not “geographic space,” geographers translated the idea for use in spatial analyses and development theory. It is this latter understanding that saw enduring influence throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Mette 1974), and as I show, into the present, giving further credence to Gilmore’s observation about the geographic nature of racialization.

The theory was most prominently applied by the Guatemalan army in the 1980s as a

¹⁵ The invocation of Development Poles and the problem of dispersion is not confined to Hausmann et.al, but is represented by INEGI (Institución Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) and in articles in Spanish language versions of Forbes and the Economist. They generally target Mexico’s southern states, particularly Guerrero, which has been a site of ongoing social unrest and state sponsored violence. See also the following sites promoting the creation of ZEEs as Development Poles in Guerrero: <https://www.iadb.org/es/project/ME-T1334>, <https://heraldodemexico.com.mx/opinion/mexico-zonas-economicas-especiales-zee/>, <http://www.revistacomercioexterior.com/articulo.php?id=115&t=las-zonas-economicas-especiales>

“security-qua-development” tactic to commit genocide and then concentrate the remaining, mostly indigenous, peoples into *aldeas modelos* (Schirmer 64-68). These model villages were outlined in a 1984 military booklet titled “Polos de Desarrollo,” and were to be overseen by “Inter-Institutional Coordinators” (committees that brokered millions of US-AID funds for “displaced persons resettlement”) as per Organic Law 111-84 and Decree-Law 65-84. They described “Poles of Development” as:

Organized population center[s] with an infrastructure which allows for the mobilizing of subsistence elements for the rural social well-being in the poorest areas in order to radiate a new dynamic to all the region contiguous with the whole country, as a means for correcting economic-social underdevelopment, improving the standard of living of Guatemalans as part of the countersubversive strategy, with integral participation of the Government and Army by way of the Inter-Institutional Coordinators; it is the population [that is] a fundamental factor in its own development, guaranteeing the adhesion of the population’s support and participation with the Armed Institution. (Ejército 1985a; 73 in Schirmer 69)

The above description bears much in common with the CRS project proposals twenty-five years later, despite the fact that one has its origins in a genocidal military regime while the other occurred under ostensibly civilian democratic rule. Of Guatemala’s villages, Schirmer concludes that, “Such forceful restructuring of socio-cultural, economic, and settlement patterns of indigenous life within the Development Poles represents the most significant reorganization of the indigenous population since the Conquest, when *pueblos de indios* were established” (73).

Development Poles took center stage in Mexico, however, long before Guatemala. In 1952, the Mexican government inaugurated Ciudad Sahagún (named after the Spanish missionary Fray Bernardino de Sahagún) in the state of Hidalgo as a model city and industrial center, although it has since struggled economically. Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) continued this plan, building several model industrial centers outside of Mexico City and Northern Mexico (Vásquez-Castillo 61-62). National policies such as these favored development in the north, often marginalizing the south. However, Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) continued the policies of Díaz Ordaz and pursued a national

development strategy to create the “poles of development” of Acapulco, Guerrero and Southern Veracruz as part of its “stabilizing development” national plan (Vásquez-Castillo 60-63).

Development poles, as in Guatemala and Vietnam, also had a counterinsurgent function in Mexico. During what is now called Mexico’s “Dirty War,” the worst of which occurred under the Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría sexenios, the military tortured and disappeared hundreds of dissidents in Guerrero, Chihuahua, and other guerrilla movements across the country. Among its many techniques, including scorched earth campaigns, rape, torture, and death flights, the Mexican military concentrated peasant communities in the highlands and along the Costa Chica into *aldeas estratégicas* (Aviña 13, 130, 158-159, 174). These communities were often in protracted land battles with logging companies, and the Ayotzinapa Escuela Rural Normal became a hotbed of a unique peasant politics.¹⁶ Guerrero would find itself in the spotlight again after forty-three normal school students from Ayotzinapa went missing at the hands of the military. As previously mentioned, Development Poles have again been proposed in recent publications as a response to Southern Mexico’s economic and social unrest.

A 2016 study of Chiapas titled, “Towards a Prosperous and Productive Chiapas: Institutions, Policies, and Public-Private Dialog to Promote Inclusive Growth,” finds dispersion to be the main deterrent of economic progress and proposes the creation of “development poles” to combat it. Conducted in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Mexican Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP in Spanish), it was led by Venezuelan Ricardo Hausmann, professor of economic development at the Kennedy School and the director of Harvard’s Center for International Development. The study represents work done over a ten-month period by a team

¹⁶ See Gareth Williams, *The Mexican Exception: Sovereignty, Police, and Democracy*, Chapter 6 for an excellent reading of Carlos Montemayor’s novel *Guerra en el paraíso* about Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor in Guerrero. See also Tanalis Padilla’s *Rural resistance in the land of Zapata* about the years leading up to the “dirty war,” 1940-1968, about on-going struggle during the so-called “Mexican Miracle” or “Pax Priista.”

of twelve “experts.” It was also part and parcel in the Mexican Atlas of Economic Complexity, whose goal was to create a digital map for investors seeking regions of economic potential, indicating a modern iteration of the colonial tool of map making (3).¹⁷ I have also chosen to analyze it here because given its institutional backers, and as the study itself states, this is exactly the kind of work guiding major development projects like the CRS.

From the beginning, Hausmann frequently resorts to ecological metaphor to extend his remedies for underdevelopment into nearly all forms of life. “Our conclusion,” he determines, “is that the main obstacles are found at the level of location, not the individual. It’s not the people of Chiapas, it’s Chiapas.” At face level, this is an attempt to skirt age-old racism, yet this breaks down when he also identifies “dispersion” as “one of the main challenges that Chiapas faces” (5). He elaborates that the problem is not the “people” but the “place,” that “The individual characteristics of their inhabitants (indigenous background, years of schooling) do not determine productivity in these towns, or at least not as much as one characteristic specific to their location: connectivity” (11). The following passage reveals the inevitable dispossession of peasants reminiscent of the later years of the Green Revolution:

For rural communities located far from the cities, gradual improvements in farming methods currently being used could be the only option. However, if one thing can be expected from more advanced agricultural technology is the freeing of labor, which returns the emphasis to the development process in urban centers and the strategy for linking rural communities to this process. In addition to analyzing the productive ecosystem, detecting most binding constraints to growth, and solving the lack of coordination, this process should lead to rethinking other areas of social policy, such as housing or public transportation. (5)

¹⁷ “[The goal] is to map existing productive capacities in terms of exports and economic activities at the subnational level, and to identify specific expansion trajectories and product diversification for each region. Consequently, our research in Chiapas is the first based on the statistics and visualizations on that on-line tool. It was designed as a showcase of the tool’s potential for crafting productive development policies (PDP) tailored to each region.” (Hausmann, 3). Hausmann has also collaborated on a similar Atlas for Colombia. An entire project could be pursued on mapping practices in Mexico, like the Bowman Expeditions. The Atlas project is in partnership with “The National Digital Strategy Coordination” which reports directly to the office of the president whose “mission is to develop, monitor and periodically assess the National Digital Strategy.” <http://www.oecd.org/gov/mexico-digital-strategy.pdf>

Consequently, the solutions the study offers are threefold: infrastructure (public transportation to compel highland emigration to the lowlands), “reformulate housing policy,” (which he later describes should be done by creating “habitats” for the transplanted to thrive), and extend credit (the main barrier to which is conceived as a location issue). This plan will on no uncertain terms transform a formerly underproductive “ecosystem” with the creation of a more modern and productive one (5).

Hausmann’s logic proceeds in the following manner: education level turned out to be statistically insignificant and matters little, anyway—the indigenous and ladino peasants are, for the most part, uneducated, and the most productive people (determined by ability to earn a wage) were not necessarily the most educated. The solution, then, is not education. In fact, it is unnecessary, since peasants can become perfectly adequate workers without it. The problem is dispersion, a condition “forcing them to work in activities that exist in the area where they live” (14), and the solution is to geographically concentrate peasants into “poles of development.” Dispersion then indicates a lack of “labor mobility” or the need to “free labor” in sparsely populated regions “which depend on subsistence agriculture and social transfers” (8). In a slippage between the problem of “people” versus “place,” the study reinforces evolutionary understandings of development through the circular explanation that: “Modern methods of production never reached the poorest and remotest regions of Chiapas, which explains why productive capabilities and knowledge did not develop there” (4). Beyond this historical inaccuracy (which one might start to correct by reading Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas*), it becomes apparent that the problem of “Chiapas’s backwardness,” plainly stated just so by Hausmann, is determined by the region’s level of market integration, thus ipso facto denigrating subsistence agriculture and “social transfers” (use value, mutual aid, in-kind exchanges, etc.) regardless of their efficacy in satisfying social needs (1). Although Hausmann would like to see improved transportation networks, the ideal scenario is a general urbanization of the

countryside (or one in which the countryside is emptied of peasants and filled with industrial agriculture with rationalized “rural cities”), and this is best achieved through a Growth Pole model. One can see how a project like the CRS might quickly resurface as a one stop shop for “progress” defined as such.

Much of the study is framed in terms of the quest for “economic complexity,” or the division of labor and value-added potential for diverse imports and exports. Economic complexity, Hausmann claims, can be realized through the urbanization of Chiapas. A central thread throughout the study is that Chiapas can be developed by capitalizing on its peripheral-waiting-to-be-center status. Where accumulation has stalled in formerly successful, less dispersed regions due to a falling rate of profit, or as Hausmann phrases it, regions that were “victims of their own success,” due to rising wages, decreasing surplus labor, and lower returns from other competitive international markets, Chiapas offers even cheaper labor and resources: “Los Altos, with its greater availability of cheap labor, is the city that poses the greatest challenges and at the same time, offers the greatest opportunities” (5). Never mind that no such city of “Los Altos” exists, and that the author most likely means San Cristóbal de Las Casas and its surrounding indigenous towns. Recalling the proposals of colonial missionaries, Hausmann suggests that the region capitalize on its indigenous handiwork:

However, the greatest potential for building a new export base in San Cristóbal is one centered on handmade textiles, given the number of skilled artisanal workers. These industries include complex textiles that earn more with greater work detail (for example, borders and openwork on curtains and white goods), the use of sophisticated materials, and furs. (22)

These textiles, particularly furs, directly implicate indigenous groups, like the Chamula. This is nothing short of a rural maquilización, which have repeatedly given way to only temporary jobs since they are wont to move overseas for lower wages and new incentives, not to mention their

implication in arduous migration, low wages, worker abuse, and worse, femicide.¹⁸

Chiapas has a huge surplus population willing to work for low wages who, rather than migrate internally, choose to migrate to places like Cancun and the United States. This is a major concern for Hausmann, who generalizes the following:

Successful economies, at both the regional and national level, follow the same pattern of connection with the outside world: strong external flows of goods and services (exports and imports), together with the influx of migrant labor and net outflows of taxes and transfers. Chiapas operates in exactly the opposite mood: net importer of goods and services, exporter of skilled workers, with massive inflows of public transfers and remittances. (23)

Despite his claims to the contrary, Hausmann's framing of dispersion actually just merges the "problem" of the "the place" (Chiapas) with the "people," such that "the people" are in the "wrong" place, and by extension, are performing the wrong kinds of labour. While education and other cultural traits might not be the problem, their land use methods are. This relationship between the two is another iteration of the race/land remedy adapted to the 21st century that requires the "urbanization of the countryside:" "Consequently, in some cases, these communities could be linked and integrated into the growth and development process of urban areas" (Hausmann 5). That Chiapas is a manufactured periphery of racial capitalism is ignored by Hausmann and replaced with a race/land remedy that in colorblind fashion, refuses to see colonialism and race, in short, history, as operable and necessary forces of accumulation.

The coup de grâce of Hausmann's plan to combat dispersion is a legal proposition. The creation of a new agency that is not just another agency, but one which could potentially take over and merge all others, while maintaining "relative autonomy." Places like Puerto Chiapas, a Zona

¹⁸ Hausmann's report also says that, "Our analysis identifies that San Cristobal has a high potential in metal backings, and food and beverage manufacturing," but it must be noted that Coca Cola's disastrous effects on San Cristobal's water table go unremarked, suggesting, again, that capitalism arranges ecologies that put nature to work for profit by underpaying for it (22). This also resonates with President Enrique Peña Nieto's recent moves toward the privatization of water in Mexico, which are surprisingly backed by the World Wildlife Fund. See "Coca Cola Sucks Wells Dry in Chiapas," https://www.salon.com/2017/09/16/coca-cola-sucks-wells-dry-in-chiapas-forcing-residents-to-buy-water_partner/ Coca-Cola's influence and its role in the lack of clean water has also been widely reported on in the New York Times and the Guardian.

Especial Económica (ZEE) that Hausmann admires, mixed with concentration efforts, could start to look a lot like the current effort to make “ZEDE” (Zonas especiales de desarrollo económico) model villages in Honduras. Similarly, their legal exceptionalism is justified by a need to override Honduran “corruption.” The Honduran people, the logic goes, will be in better, more democratic, hands because the free market and democracy are one and the same such that there is no need for politics at all.

Of Capital and Carbon Sinks: Fortress Conservation, Payment for Environmental Services (PES), Carbon Credits, and Sustainability Bonds

The CRS was an early, somewhat haphazard attempt, to implement the reterritorialization of Chiapas, which would help realize at least five development initiatives that the Mexican state sees as related and depend on the reorganization of land and people. The first was REDD+ (a PES/Conservation scheme), the second, agroindustry, the third, the creation of ZEEs (Zonas Económicas Especiales), the fourth, energy and extractivism (mining, fracking, oil, and water), and the fifth, ecotourism. As dictated by the state and development elites, all would require a rethinking of infrastructure, territory, and population distribution. Mexico is broadly applying UN development goals and its REDD+ program to not only create carbon markets and conserve its forests, but to make its poorest, yet most resource rich states (Chiapas and the Yucatan) into investment opportunities for ecotourism.

One of the most common discourses, which date back to at least the nineteenth century, is the Malthusian-inflected notion that increasing peasant populations are not only deforesting the jungle but do so to destructive, irrational, and non-market oriented ends. In Mexico, such thought is found in the rhetoric of dispersion, and the method advanced under this ideology is “fortress conservation,” which refers to the creation of protected areas (PAs) that use threats or brute force

to either vacate or prevent people from inhabiting territories. The above-mentioned CRS promotional video echoed such thought by paradoxically claiming that dispersed Chiapan subsistence peasants deforested and trashed the same land that they depend on for survival. Often, a coalition of actors aligned with the state promote notions of virginal rain forests in need of preservation, while less visibly making concessions for oil, gas, and minerals and developing the land for hydro-electric energy, agroindustrial mono-cropping, or ecotourism. These policies are often reinforced by the creation of “environmental police” who ostensibly protect natural resources, but also aid in the dispossession of people from the land.¹⁹

REDD+

Another function of supposed undisturbed and ancient forests is their potential to act as carbon sinks to combat greenhouse gases through programs like REDD+. Refereed by the UN, REDD+ is an agreement with resource rich and underdeveloped or developing nations to either “restore” or conserve their forests so that high polluters (sovereigns like China or India, but also corporations) can buy carbon credits. They are more, however, than just a carbon sink. These deals are also “sinks” for overaccumulated capital, and to better serve this function, the Mexican state has taken REDD+ and sustainability as a point of departure for capital intensive projects, carried out in the name of “development.” The ENAREDD+ document (Mexico’s national REDD+ plan) often circles back to the inconvenient fact that some of Mexico’s most ‘valuable’ lands, measured by forest cover, water, biodiversity, and land fertility are already occupied by its indigenous and peasant populations. By casting both the people and their lands as vulnerable, as in need of conservation to reach “sustainable productivity,” the more politically neutral framework of development can be

¹⁹ <https://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/2016/11/19/residents-of-the-lacandon-jungle-reject-the-presence-of-environmental-police/>

applied to the region at large. That capitalism jeopardizes its own reproduction by eroding that which it depends—nature in all its forms—is often shorthand as “The Second Contradiction of Capitalism,” a pioneering intervention made by Marxist ecologist James O’Connor, who long before Moore, theorized ecological crises of *underproduction*. O’ Connor took an ecological angle on the critique of Keynesianism’s crises of underconsumption by placing capitalist crisis as one of both over accumulation and underproduction. It follows, then, that there can be no such thing as sustainable capitalism—whether in terms of just wages or a regulated use of nature.

Fortress conservation and PES [Payments for Environmental Services] have also been roundly criticized by activists, scholars, and communities for some time. While many point out the natural ecological limits of planet earth and the ways in which capitalism exhausts them, “Conserving forests in poorer countries using ‘innovative’ mechanisms such as PES and REDD+ displaces the burden of consumption reduction on those who are already underconsuming, so that industrial and post-industrial countries need only marginally deviate from their high consumption path” (Ness and Cope 981). Carbon transfer and debt for nature swaps are attractive to capitalists because they represent a supposedly sensible market-based solution to climate change, but such proposals overlook the science of forests and the peasant communities that manage them. Mexican peasants are not only “underconsuming,” but communal land holding regimes, particularly those in Mexico, have continuously proven to be the most sustainable forms of forest management. If the goal really were to conserve forests, David Bray argues, REDD+ should look no further than expanding and providing further resources to the creation of truly communal lands, instead, it has required an exploding bureaucracy, millions of dollars, the creation of new agencies and laws, the involvement of questionable NGOs, multinational corporations, and the dispossession of indigenous and peasant communities. Bray contends that, “Common property represents a ‘third way’ of economic development and forest rights, beyond just public and private; when forest

resources are large enough, the incentives are present for concerted collective action to retain forests for their multiple values” (7).

As a longstanding laboratory for the Rockefeller Foundation and the Green Revolution, Mexico was one of the first countries to sign on to REDD+ as a classic PES scheme, and is also positioning itself as a pioneer for REDD+ development possibilities. As of January 2018, Mexico was also the first country to implement a Safeguard Information System (SIS), to insure implementation of REDD+'s goals alongside transparency and respect for indigenous people. At the time of writing, very little information was made available about actual implementation of the SIS, and by looking at the national REDD+ plan, it would not be surprising if such safeguards came to look less like indigenous self determination and more like congregación for the 21st century. The fast tracking of the SIS, along with Mexico's rapid creation of REDD+ policy, is evidence that Mexico continues to be an experiment for global capital's environment making. According to Trench, Larson, and Amico, “From the start, Mexico adopted a broad definition of REDD+, envisioning it as an integrated, territorial low-emissions development strategy [LED] for rural areas, and not simply a mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and conserving forests.” The Mexican state, however, must grapple with the ghosts of its past, and the fact is that even though the ejido structure has largely been sidelined since 1992, many communities still exercise some power and control over land and mineral rights while NGOs, state governments, and an array of state institutions make a seamless transition difficult (2). Perhaps for this reason many elites, like Hausmann, recommend the creation of Zonas Económicas Especiales (ZEE) with new government agencies that bypass existing structures that they claim are too corrupt, archaic, and bureaucratic. The first of these zones exists in Puerto Chiapas in the municipality of Tapachula. This is a rather clear example of the way in which states increasingly, and willingly, work for the control not of vast and interrupted swaths of territory united under a single legal framework, but a

fragmented network that still allows for the production of value and circulation (Hale 2011).

In the face of this complicated and networked “green grabbing,” race is a fundamental weapon. Hale relates this territorial turn to neoliberal multiculturalism and racialization. Mexican national identity formation has been extensively studied and critiqued, particularly in the post-revolutionary period. These prior formations, however, have shifted given a different set of material circumstances. Land reform in the ejido had ideological roots in a mythical Indian past, but in practice it disarticulated economic peasant matters (such as land, property titles, or even communal governance) from issues reserved for “culture” (language, education, separate legal systems) (Saldaña-Portillo, *Age of Development*). The “territorial turn” in Latin America began to concede certain rights to indigenous groups in Latin America, including land, but it defined indigeneity primarily in terms of language and custom. In Mexico, much of this recognition was done in the late nineties as response to the Zapatista rebellion in order to temper the radicality of what would eventually become a social movement rooted in autonomy from the state all together. Despite expanded cultural rights, it often deepened communities’ paternalistic and dependent relationship to the state. Nevertheless, claiming indigeneity became politically efficacious, especially on an international level. In other words, when the Zapatistas began to further articulate themselves in terms of their history as a racialized and exploited population, and that this history conferred upon them the right to not just land use rights (as in the ejido), but full territorial and political control, the state began to question not just their authenticity as indigenous, but as Mexican all together, often by claiming they were “insurgents” from Guatemala.

Conservation, again, played an important role. Groups willing to make an alliance with the state, often having to accept less than they bargained for, were deemed as the “true” original inhabitants of “sacred” lands and were allowed to live, albeit with severe use restrictions, in PAs. In the case of Chiapas, the elite network bestowed this honor on the Lacandón peoples who live in the

Lacantún and Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve. The history, however, of inter-communal conflict, public-private alliances, land reform, conservation, and resettlement in Chiapas is truly dizzying. The seemingly ancient and homogenous “lacandonés,” were actually the product of several multi lingual peasant groups, including Chol and Tzeltal, who had been resettled into the rainforest in the 60s. According to Hector Calleros-Rodriguez’s study of inter-community conflicts in green grabs in the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (MABR), “In February 2005, settlers of Nuevo Centro de Población Montes Azules agreed before SRA to vacate its lands in MABR and relocated to a new town near the city of Palenque; however, since the 200 hectares they were promised were not titled and public services not in place, on 21 March 2011, settlers blocked a highway in protest,” suggesting that planned towns were also in the works across Chiapas as a technology of dispossession and resettlement (147n25).

The national ENAREDD+ plan reinforces its development plan through an imagined utopic use of the land on the website of the Comisión Nacional Forestal (CONAFOR). This state led conservationism bears resemblance to earlier Cárdenas inspired conservation, but instead resorts to colorblind abstraction. Putting together two graphics, one from the 1940s and another currently found on the CONAFOR’s website, shows this continued imagination of national space:



Figure 1. Cover of *Memoria del Departamento Agrario* (1941-1942), in Boyer and Wakild.

MANEJO INTEGRADO DEL TERRITORIO

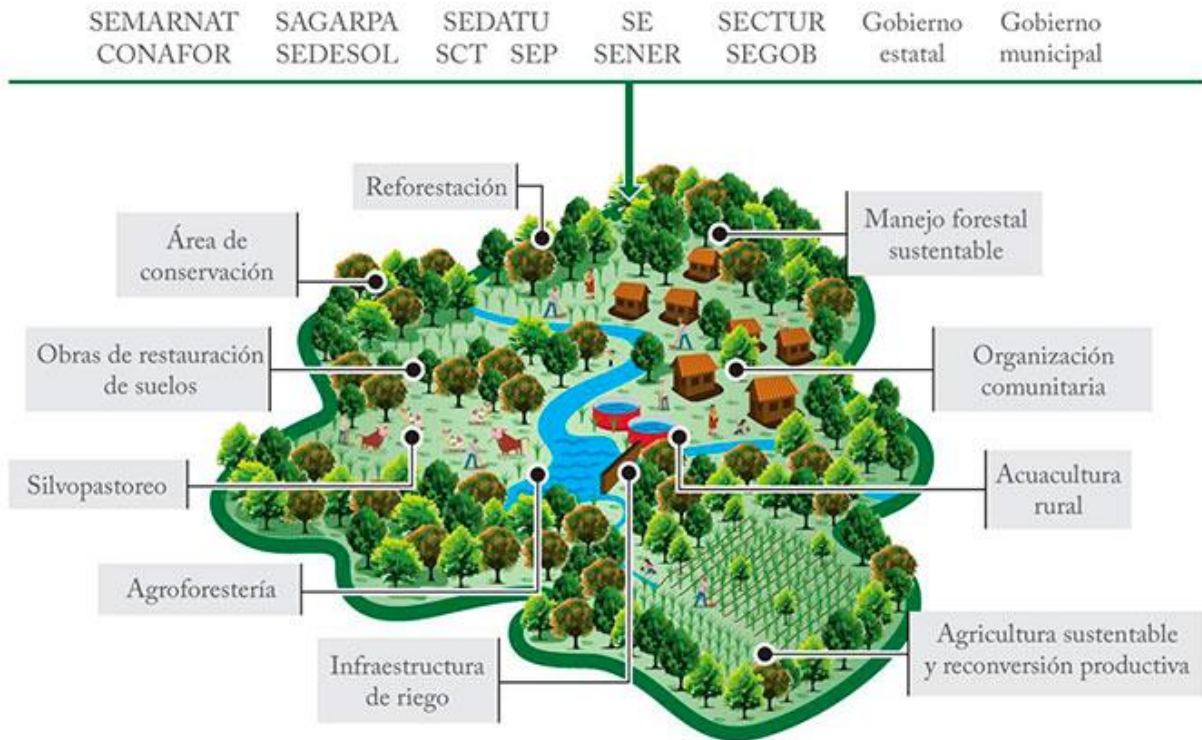


Figure 2. CONAFOR National Territorial Management (2017)

In the former, a campesino literally holds the map-like image, while in the more recent computer graphic, the campesinos are actually part of the landscape. Boyer and Wakild offer a keen reading of the earlier image:

A huarache-clad campesino surrounded by lush cornstalks and preternaturally large sheaves of wheat gazes delightedly at an idealized map of a (seemingly indigenous) ejidal community. This was far from the first time that cartographers had used maps to reify the country and depict it as a more-or-less uniform national space comprised of interlocking parts. But this map was different. It did not purport to describe a real place but rather proffered an idealized representation of how a rural community *might* spatially organize its use of the land. The “map” included ejidal and common lands, an irrigation district, grazing land, a communal forest, and a national park. It set each district off using a distinct color and straight-lined boundaries that figuratively distinguished one form of land use from another or, in the case of the collective ejido, one labor regime from another. The landscape became an orderly mosaic, more an expression of an environmental aesthetic than an actual topography.

CONAFOR describes the REDD+ program in Mexico in the following manner:

En México, REDD+ debe entenderse como un conjunto de líneas estratégicas que promueven de manera simultánea acciones de mitigación y adaptación, a través de un manejo inteREDD+ en México gral del territorio que promueva el “Desarrollo Rural Sustentable (DRS)” bajo en carbono, y por tanto, que apunte a una convergencia entre la agenda ambiental y de desarrollo.

A través de la implementación de este modelo integral, la conservación de los bosques permite no únicamente hacer frente al fenómeno del cambio climático, sino garantizar el mantenimiento de la calidad de vida de las comunidades humanas, lo cual incluye el fomentar la provisión de los servicios ambientales que permiten la producción de alimentos, garantizando con esto el alcanzar un nivel aceptable de seguridad alimentaria para el país.

Notably, the language of Desarrollo Rural Sustentable is present, and was likely in place before the CRS. Its broad meaning is also made explicit as the project moves from environmental sustainability to development and human “quality of life”, reviving the old Green Revolution for the “New Green Revolution” advocated by the Gates Foundation. Although exoticized to be sure, the indigenous campesino in the 1941 Cardenista image at least holds the blueprints to the new national space, in an acknowledgement of the historical racial dynamics at play. The title of the CONAFOR computer graphic promotes integrated territorial management, lists a number of governmental agencies below

it, and is suggestive of its intended broad scope.²⁰ The “integrated” approach shows how the CIPP and MesoAmerica Projects, of which REDD+ is a central player, “commits Mexico, Central America and Colombia to joint ventures by state and private capital, with major US participation. The initiative focuses on transportation and energy infrastructure, with much of the power destined for mining and manufacturing industries, as well as energy consumers in the US” (Rocheleau, 701).²¹ Notably, no community organizations are “integrated” into this map or its making.

This unnamed, imagined use of land, suggests fortress conservation by the border of trees that guard it, with only one outlet by land to the west. While there are many different kinds of maps, from geopolitical to topographical, this one, like the Memoria del Departamento Agrario, represents an action plan for sustainable land use, but the river is the only predetermined feature of the landscape. There are no mountains or roads, just a flat projection of a managed landscape, with neatly divided zones each serving an exclusive purpose, regardless of their ecology. The “area de conservación” is quite small compared to the other ventures, and reduces the distinction between “agroforestería,” “manejo forestal sustentable,” “área de conservación,” or “reforestación,” all of which look very different in practice. For example, despite the mixed-use nature of agroforestry, it bears no visible difference from the depictions of sustainable forest management or the conservation area. In fact, no areas show mixed use. The homes are also more or less also concentrated into one area. The political boundaries of this map are even less clear, continuing the de-politicization of peoples, spaces, and ecologies so common not just to development ideology, but the first town plans of colonial congregación. The scale is also ambiguous: is it a municipality, an

²⁰ They include the Secretaría de Economía (SE), the Secretaría de Energía (SENER), the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo rural, Pesca, y Alimentación (SAGARPA), the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL), the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT), Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB), the Secretaría de Desarrollo Agrario, Territorial, y Urbano (SEDATU)—a newly formed agency in 2013, and the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT)—formed in 2000, with CONAFOR, the older national forestry commission, underneath it. <https://www.gob.mx/conafor/documentos/redd-en-mexico>.

²¹ See a more realistic map of the multi-layered interests at stake made by the Chiapas and Oaxaca based organization, *Otros Mundos*.

ecological region, a state (Chiapas or Guerrero, perhaps)? Does the map itself suggest the ideal composition for new jurisdictions like the ZEEs? Within the creation of such a graphic emerges a contradiction. Truly environmentally sustainable plans cannot be universalized. They must attend to the particularities of specific ecologies.

STARBUCKS AND JALTENANGO

Other initiatives surrounding REDD+ and development in Chiapas more directly involve financialization. In 2006, before CRS Jaltenango was built in 2012, a coffee cooperative—Campesinos Ecológicos de la Sierra Madre (CESMACH) in Jaltenango—boldly asserted its rights by breaking a contract with Starbucks and Conservation International (CI). CESMACH, a democratic consensus-based coffee cooperative, had of its own volition transitioned itself to organic, shade grown methods in the early 1980s and 1990s. In 1999, on the condition that they would pursue sustainable methods, Starbucks and Conservation International approached CESMACH and offered it a loan to cover the infamous post-harvest coffee production costs (a highly desirable deal since many coffee producers become beholden to exploitative middle men that cover everything from deskinning the beans to international distribution). Since they had already converted their farming methods to meet CI and Starbucks requirements, they found the deal advantageous and in it, a steady buyer and path to increased sovereignty over the entire production process. Soon after, however, Starbucks and CI demanded more and more out of CESMACH to meet increased demand, forcing their hand in production methods and their rhythms of daily life. The last straw proved to be when Starbucks recanted and tried to force CESMACH to give them back the newly acquired post-production process to them, in the name of efficiency, simply cloaking themselves as a coyote in a sheep's green clothing. The conglomerate tried to splinter CESMACH, but was largely unsuccessful since the cooperative's longstanding democratic tradition allowed for rigorous debate

and information sharing. The group also had a long history of providing other social needs, such as education, healthcare, and food sovereignty. Finding the relationship “hostile to their dignity,” as in the epigraph from James Scott that opens this chapter, CESMACH took a risk, terminated the contract, and managed to find friendlier buyers in Europe.

The Mexican government considered Jaltenango (in the municipality of Albino de Corzo) to suffer from “very high marginalization,” meeting the trifecta of vulnerability--poverty, dispersion, and risk of natural disaster--that supposedly triggered the CRS-Jaltengango’s implementation. There is a grain of truth in this characterization: many of CESMACH producers are hours away from the city of Jaltenango where the cooperative’s main office is located and are sometimes isolated due to heavy rain and mudslides. However, a 2015 study found that the two coffee communities closest to Jaltenango, one being the CRS Jaltenango, suffered far greater rates of poverty and hunger because they were at the whims of urban cash markets and isolated from community safety nets, such as credit and larger land parcels capable of true subsistence farming (Fernández). As Quiroga’s *pueblo-hospitales* regulated labor, particularly through time, discipline, and gender, the CRS had similar goals, only accelerated given capitalism’s historical progression of what Marx termed “the annihilation of space by time.” The community of Jaltengango was pressured to exert greater amounts of their own labor to make their land more productive. When they resisted, they became “dispersed” (and expropriable) subjects who were vulnerable, dependent, and whose land would ideally be subject to expropriation through the CRS, as well.

Jaltenango remains one of the world’s premier coffee growing regions. In May 2016, Starbucks announced that it would be the first US corporation to issue a “sustainability bond” in the amount of 500 million dollars to work with farmers who comply with CAFE, Starbuck’s own sustainability certification program designed with the help of none other than Conservation

International in Jaltenango.²² The language surrounding the bond suggests that Starbucks and CI will lead the charge, teaching supposedly uneducated and inefficient farmers about their own lands and production methods, even though cooperatives like CESMACH offer sufficient evidence to the contrary. The bond project is directly tied to CI, which is directly tied to REDD+. Farmers are given funds to plant new coffee trees, which fulfills REDD+ reforestation requirements, but these new trees were designed as a Rust resistant breed, the most common and pervasive disease threatening coffee yields throughout Mexico and Central America. In other words, Starbucks is clearly investing in the protection of its own supply and calling it conservation. In a suspiciously convenient statement about the “donation” of rust resistant trees that defies all prior agro-ecological wisdom, “Farmers have found that by increasing the density of plants per hectare, the coffee trees are revitalized and that increases the crop’s disease resistance, quality and yield.”²³

The time of finance forces the time of nature to operate on its clock, which in this case is ten years with a 2.45% interest rate. Ten years is long in financial times, but barely a blip in geological terms.²⁴ The financialization schemes are not always done cynically, or at least that is not how they need to be analyzed or thought of (i.e. as a kind of moral failing), but rather as a way for capitalism to continue to make nature work for less to produce more. As these articles describe it, Starbucks’ investment will pay off by helping to fund and maintain its supply chain over the next decade.

²² For more information on sustainability bonds, see <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/how-starbucks-brewed-stronger-sustainability-bond>. “But when a company has ambitious long-term sustainability goals, it pays to plan strategically for the health of the communities and natural resources from which it sources its coffee. In May of 2016, Starbucks issued a \$495.6 million sustainability bond, about one month after Wolff began his role. “I knew a lot about green bonds [debts issued to investors by companies in order to fund environmental projects], just where the use of proceeds goes towards renewable energy and carbon-reducing projects,” said Wolff. “So we kind of created this new category called a sustainability bond that has elements that a green bond would have. “While green bonds solely apply to projects that advance energy efficiency, renewable energy, climate change mitigation and other areas, sustainability bonds have a broader brush stroke.”

²³ Starbucks 2015. <https://news.starbucks.com/news/starbucks-mexico-donates-coffee-plants-to-farmers-in-chiapas>

²⁴ Since the late 1990s, bond terms have only gotten longer. A ten year bond is not the longest bond, but it means that this is relatively riskier than, say, a five year bond. Longer bond terms push the limit by eking more out of investors. Starbucks also hoped to target a new market for investment by attracting different kinds of investors (‘moral investors’ who believe in green capitalism). Tautvydas Marciulaitis. <https://seekingalpha.com/article/4130422-u-s-corporate-debt-2018?page=6>

Ecologically speaking, ten years does not provide much long term “protection” (if it can be said to have provided any in the first place).²⁵ Meanwhile, Starbucks and CI are evasive about reforestation and production methods. Coffee traditionally grows best in shade, and this is also the most sustainable method. Reading through the sleights of hand in Starbucks press releases and CI statements, the Rust resistant trees do not seem to be shade varieties, but a designer band-aid to suture the metabolic rift of disease prone monocropping, a method which until now, has been necessary to supply the Starbucks storefronts located on nearly every city street corner around the world.

The Cultural Production of Chiapas

Those behind Green Capitalism also needed a cultural project which could be found in ecotourism. A series of 2010 tourism videos celebrating Mexico’s bicentennial, produced by Televisa, provide a powerful image of a Chiapan jungle still wild enough for exhilarating adventure, yet tame enough from which a tourist may come back alive. It appeals to the bourgeois tourists’ appetite to “find oneself” through the neo-colonial exploration of supposedly virgin lands, guided by the hand of the Other who gently pulls them off the beaten (and paved) path. They return to “pueblos mágicos,” towns designated as such to give tourists the fantasy of returning to colonial space-time, a key element of which is the spectacle of indigenous women in their colorful huipiles weaving in the market. According to Rocheleau:

International and national tourism industry actors also play a major role: linking tourism to reserves, parks and greening; lobbying central governments and selected agencies to deploy

²⁵ Nick Brown. <https://dailycoffeenews.com/2016/05/17/starbucks-500-million-bond-a-new-model-for-supply-sustainability/>
Kraig Kraft. <https://dailycoffeenews.com/2016/06/06/the-broader-implications-of-the-starbucks-sustainability-bond/>
Ignacio Fariza. “El gobierno mexicano abre la puerta a la concesión de aguas protegidas.” *El País*, June 18, 218.
Dawn Paley. <http://www.wrongkindofgreen.org/2012/03/14/green-monopolists-starbucks-and-conservation-international-in-chiapas/>

police and military force to provide a greater sense of security for investors and tourists; and promoting the region as a vast untrammelled wilderness for eco-adventure, discovery and spectacular vistas. (703)

Far from the Latin American “Jungle Novels” of the first half of the twentieth century that depicted environments as hostile as the imperial powers exploiting them, the videos have more in common with colonial travel chronicles trying to convince the crown to fund the colonial project. After all, they, too, are courting potential investors and tourist explorers seeking to accumulate and spend their riches.

A more “city” themed video, “Traditions of Chiapas,” features a song by Chiapan artist Reyli Barba “Reyli” called, “Todos caben,” a clear neoliberal appropriation of the more radical Zapatista call to create “un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos.” The camera pans across different women wearing huipiles as they look off to the side in profile, with the camera frame cutting off the top half of their faces, as if to let their humanity and perspective fade into the past like a 2-dimensional ancient cave drawing. Never mind that the huipil designs are themselves colonial constructs that the Spanish imposed to distinguish and divide the newly created congregaciones, or that in the video the huipiles are not different *pueblo* designs, but only different colors (suggesting that these women are likely from just one village that obviously agreed to ally with the state). Other images include indigenous men climbing a pyramid together, flashes of San Cristobal and its cathedral, scenes of indigenous religious ceremonies, fisherman off the coast, an ice cream vendor, and finally, the same Lacandón man featured in other videos splashing his face with crystalline water. The commercial upholds that the “traditions” of Chiapas are simultaneously colonial and indigenous, as it hides the forces behind colonization that make one man a fisher or a farmer and another an ambulant street vendor in San Cristobal. Relatively speaking, this is tame in comparison to the more “selva” themed commercial that features women in flowing dresses jumping over waterfalls with scarlet macaws, swimming, napping, and snuggling with jaguars, and riding alligators. In the Chiapas of Televisa, we

are sold, this is not a telenovela, but as natural as it gets.²⁶

Today, Agua Azul, part of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, is a principle site for ecotourist development, and the town of Bachajón is not far. It was described as “independent” by B. Traven, author of the well-known “Jungle Novels” about Chiapan mahogany plantations, because it was the product of a famed concentration effort of the Lacandón selva by the Las Casas protégé, Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada. In the 1960s, liberation theologians would again enter the town as missionaries, and at present, certain factions of the town are adherents of the Zapatista’s *Sexta declaración de la selva lacandona*. In the latest ecotourist and state development plans, Bachajón is simply not included on the map, because as organized Zapatista sympathizers, they resist the ecotourist development plans. Colonization has always acted on and through space, and as I have argued, more specifically as a mutual articulation between race and land and environment-making process. Colonial and capitalist domination envisioned a certain kind of environment, one organized to feed early markets, and it required not just the redistribution of people, but the reterritorialization of land, too, through the diversion and blockage of rivers, the demolition of mountains, the extraction of metals and petroleum, and much more. Not even Bachajón, one of the region’s oldest *pueblos de indios*, having retained a certain degree of independence for centuries, is now spared displacement. By claiming incomplete colonization, the logic of capitalism continuously does what it must: transforms old and new infrastructures to maintain the energy starved metabolism of capitalism.²⁷

²⁶ “Tradiciones Chiapas”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsLToh3GIao>

“Estrellas del bicentenario Chiapas”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0r3hepR4HQ>

The scene with the woman riding the alligator is both highly produced and ‘real’ in so far as it is not CGI’d. As a behind the scenes video documents, the actress is actually straddled atop a sedated and tied-up alligator.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Pz0K5u98>

²⁷ See Moore on the trouble with the “footprint” metaphor which reinforces an ontological separation between Society and Nature and has been taken up by many a “fortress” conservationist. See Andreas Malm, “The Progress of this Storm,” for a defense of more Marxian dialectics (against Moore’s “monist” conception) and the autonomy of nature.

Conclusion

When I began research on the CRS, I struggled to reconcile what I saw as a contradiction: why, in a time of increasing globalization, and as many have theorized, the increasing subordination of the state to capital, and exploding surplus or “disposable” populations forced into migration or incarceration, and death, did Chiapas pursue a project which dispossessed people, but which also sought to contain them within state borders? Were elites still trying to save souls in the age of disposability? What was to be made of the project’s failure? Of its attempt to care for and develop entire populations? I found answers by looking deeper into the project’s reorganization of nature for capitalist profit, by looking forward toward the ever-faster pace of financial speculation, and looking backward, to its colonial roots.

Chiapas still faces an age-old problem of underproduction: effective circulation of goods *and* labor, thus all recent development plans in Chiapas include the “freeing” of labor through dispossession and better transportation networks. In some respects, elites did, and still do, want to keep the low wage Chiapan labor force in one place (rather than migrating to Cancun or elsewhere), but they also want them to be more mobile within Chiapas. While allied academic-business interests, represented in Hausmann or the UM Ross School of Business students, suggest the creation of more suitable “habitats” for newly urbanized peasants so that they are compelled to migrate, it matters little to the elites of yesterday and today that peasants may not want to trade their life-giving milpas for maquilas.

While Wilson has noted that the UN millennium development goals resonated throughout the “developing world” and that model villages have popped up in a number of postcolonial regions, Rocheleau contrasts Chiapas to what she calls “mega-parcel” land grabs in Africa. In Chiapas, where the revolution is erroneously said to have never arrived, the specter of the Mexican revolution and continued peasant resistance has made such largescale land acquisition much more difficult. For this

reason, both land grabbers and resisters, argue Rocheleau, act in a “networked” and “dispersed” fashion, forming broad and sometimes unpredictable coalitions. When land grabbers speak of the dispersed in need of development, they are in some ways very keenly aware of what makes their opposition strong.

The reality of Chiapas is that lines of purity are impossible to draw among its rural populations. Like most of Mexico, campesino is not necessarily interchangeable with Indian, but capitalism’s racializing metabolic rift demands the urbanization of a supposedly dispersed, unproductive, and therefore Indian, countryside. In reality, the country has never worked harder for the city. Two factors help explain the persistence of dispersion as a racializing discourse. The first is that in the age of “neoliberal multiculturalism,” to be indigenous means to be exploited, but it has also helped many realize a path to toward certain cultural and property rights, often with the support of international NGOs and solidarity organizations. At the same time, the state and broad coalitions of capital interests have counteracted this political opening with “dispossession by delegitimation,” or the cherry picking of allied communities as the “authentic” indigenous (Rocheleau 704). In this framework, not everyone can be indigenous—often narrowly defined in terms of language or certain customs—because a far greater number of campesinos would be able to claim land rights. This is not a new challenge. Amidst the ongoing debates about Indian humanity, colonial *pueblos de indios* were both subjugated but also granted certain privileges. The liberal *Reforma’s* expropriation of these church and Indian lands was essential for capital accumulation. Since conservationism became a dominant interest in the Selva Lacandona in the 1970s, a particular group of the Lacandones have been seen as the legitimate inhabitants of the forest at the expense of other peasant communities. With more “colorblind” racial politics, it has also been less viable for the government to plainly speak of reforming indigenous, much less Indian, communities.

The rhetoric of dispersion has thus widened the parameters of racialization and exploitation of

nature (including humans). A larger number of people, campesinos (indigenous or otherwise), needed to be dispossessed to realize the capitalist utopian project that elites envisioned. The rhetoric of dispersion racialized a large swath of rural peoples, regardless of how they might self-identify, as neither fully assimilated nor indigenous enough. Dispersion also goes hand in hand with “tierras de alto riesgo” to craft a picture of vulnerability in need of development. This vulnerability bears many of the same characteristics of colonial care and pastoral power exercised by missionaries through congregación, but a new kind of discourse about nature has also emerged. Rather than crafting “Nature” exclusively as a reserve, it is a subject of wisdom alongside certain authentic indigenous inhabitants who are translators or founts of this wisdom.²⁸ In other words, some Indians and some nature must be saved so that some other forms of nature, human and non-human, may be sacrificed to resurrect an increasingly tapped out capitalism. They are racialized as dispersed to perform this labor.

Dispersion maintains its power because it is a geographical and ecological discourse, one which asserts that people must be redistributed and lands put to work toward more productive and sustainable ends. The significance of congregación’s many lives isn’t that it always racializes or reorders in the exact same way, but rather that it seeks to racialize and reorder at all. What it shares in common across moments and geographies is that it appropriates, homogenizes, and glosses over prior historical formations of community and land use, that is, prior historical formations of nature itself. Saldaña-Portillo’s notion of heterotemporal constructions of the *Indio*, in which the Indian can mean different things at different times, and is always articulated, if non-linearly, to its past iterations, is also at work in contemporary Chiapas. Those who are successfully congregated become legitimized as Indian/indigenous under a number of categories (Christian, colonial subject, citizen,

²⁸ See Goldstein and Johnston on biomimicry and primitive accumulation.

steward of the forest), while the resisters and the abandoned are but under-converted Indians or de-Indianized Indian criminals. As history suggests, the status of converted is always subject to change in the eyes of elites, particularly when metabolic rift demands a new race/land remedy.

Open warfare is bad for business in Chiapas. A more preferable articulation of power lies in the contemporary form of colonial care framed as “development.” This is not to say that low intensity warfare isn’t a rather effective means of securing capital interests, or that it isn’t being exercised every day in Chiapas, but uncontrolled conflict is perceived as destabilizing to potential investors and must be done inconspicuously or avoided when possible. Theorization of capitalism’s most violent tactics (murder, incarceration, or abandon) and the creation of disposable subjects is necessary, but all of these theories do not fully explain the “softer” tactics that seek a passive *and* productive population. Congregación in Chiapas pioneered the technology of care over which it shows little signs of abandoning in the future. However, Chiapas is a place that remembers not just genocide and exploitation, but also rebellion and revolution.

It should come as no surprise that the Zapatistas, a group which has survived through the creation of autonomous territories, should choose a spatial and infrastructural metaphor of the bridge to represent their struggle. Unlike the many development planners before them who have used “infrastructures of race” to disregard the dignity and desires of those they aim to transform, the Zapatistas offer us what Mariana Mora calls “Kuxlejal politics,” roughly “life-existence,” defined as “the sum of activities in such arenas that allow for the dignified reproduction of life, not only as a physical presence but as a series of cultural processes that allow for the perpetuation of *kuxlejal* in its collective form and as a collective force” (19).²⁹ Following Gilmore, Cheng and Shabazz argue

²⁹ Kuxlejal politics “differs from biopower in that rather than fueling sovereign power, it directs autonomous practices toward the sovereign’s destruction”(22) and, “Rather than defining the political as the culminating point of an event, such as the final speech at a mobilization or the moment when community life condenses into a series of public political participations, such as in an assembly, this expression of life politics emerges through the constant, albeit low-decibel, registers of biocollective actions” (Mora 23).

“not only that geography is at the center of social justice struggles but also that critical spatial thinking is necessary to understand and make visible contestations over space, place, and mobility.” Kuxlejal politics, then, depends on collective affirmations of life (nature) and territory in a way that defines indigenous bodies and their communities (but also all bodies and communities) as beings destined for something other than a naturalized labor force for the benefit of capitalist elites:

When the foundational stone of political action emerges in rejection of that which negates a collective’s humanity, the subsequent act affirms a call to humanness as that which references not only the individual but a collective of bodies in relation to nature and to a constructed sense of territory...for indigenous Zapatista community members, as for many Afrodescendant and indigenous organized peoples throughout the continent, the very act of living as part of a dignified commitment to the reproduction of social life directly confronts the dehumanizing conditions of racialized colonial states of being” (Mora 23).

It is a revolution with social reproduction at its heart, which imagines labor organized around the fulfillment of needs other than those determined by capitalist value production. The bridge is not capitalism arriving to Chiapas, framed within developmentalist politics as the depoliticized and obscuring discourse of modernity and backwardness. It is not an infrastructure which allows capital to cross it and return again, in its circulatory flows that transform capital into more capital, made possible only by the constant reorganization of nature, planting livelihoods only to unearth them.

In a different kind of circulation, the parallel phrasing used in *El Puente de dignidad* speech is common in Tzotzil, often acknowledging the role of the interlocutor. A cultural promotor in Oventik once explained to me that if one says, “I speak” in Tzotzil, they also follow it with something like, “you listen.” In the speech, the Zapatistas speak as a “nosotros” that also recognizes the speech of the other. This parallel act of speaking and listening is both discrete and constitutive of the “we” to assert a universal imperative. “We” are of the same world ecosystem that contains many different ecosystems by necessity, practicing dignity that is strived for today but is also tomorrow, where inclusion does not depend on some or many others’ exclusion. Nor does it depend

on one having power over the other. This is the same imperative that demands that bridges be built toward something *other* than capitalism as world order—and the liberal state as its co-conspirator. Humans must work not as abstract labor but as a political kind of labor which is and realizes dignity. In turn, this labor would recognize the dialectical autonomy of nature. Dignity *is* (in its essence) the temporary condition (*estar*) of the about to be, becoming, and being through doing. True to its autonomist spirit, “*la dignidad es y está por hacer*” expresses, through a linguistic play on the difference between the Spanish *ser* and *estar*, the importance of materially building the tomorrow today, recognizing and negating the difference between the revolutionary *ser* and *estar* at once, perhaps redefining what it means *to be* humans *as*, but also distinct from, nature in the first and last place.

Coda
Chronicling the Flows of Twenty-First Century Ecology

Todo lo hacen en zigzag. Así echaron bala en la Revolución, así cultivan sus milpas, así hacen sus trámites, así se refocilan en sus petates, así bailan cuando se emborrachan.”

—*Se escabecharon al gringo—informó Eleno.*

—*Indios zigzagueantes—dijo Donasiano.*

—*El testigo, Juan Villoro*

Juan Villoro’s 2004 novel *El testigo*, like Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas*, is a novel that again looks back to the colonial era and nineteenth century to understand the twentieth. It also asks what possibilities the twenty first century might hold for the Mexican state and national identity by highlighting historical rupture, return, and fragmentation. After 71 years of corrupt rule, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) lost the presidency in 2000 to the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), a party with roots in the less militant and more urban branches of the conservative Pro-Catholic *Cristeros* movement. In the countryside, the *cristeros* manifested as an armed rebellion in the 1920s and 30s, a fact which figures centrally in *El testigo*. One of the main ways that the novel explores this political moment is through Julio Valdivieso’s return to Mexico and the family hacienda, *Los Cominos*, after 24 years of self-imposed exile in Europe. His conservative and nostalgic uncle, Donasiano, stubbornly refuses to leave the hacienda in decline. In the spirit of a nineteenth century intellectual, Donasiano spends his days collecting regional artefacts and all things related to Mexico’s “national poet,” Ramón López Velarde, and curates a personal archive. He also operates under the belief that Mexico’s modernity comes from its rural and hierarchical Catholic colonial traditions rather than the secular urban globalization advanced by the PRI.

El testigo intuits something fundamental about the resurgence of a colonial inflected post-PRI moment and what it portended. In what follows, the novel guides a reflection on some of the main themes of this project: the 2008 CRS project and the larger development plans it has been a part of, dispersion and concentration, colonial nostalgia, and their implications for the political ecology of the present. The CRS project in Chiapas, though inaugurated and supported by PAN president Felipe Calderón (2006-2012), was most closely overseen by the Chiapan state's PRI coalition. Therefore, I want to suggest that there was something about this period, structurally, which allowed for one of the most uncanny resurrections of congregación by multiple political parties, as something more deeply rooted and inherent in Mexican modernity than the now ephemeral power of the political party.¹ As Villoro posits, with the shift from the PRI to the PAN, all of the attendant strategies to maintain peace (even if through constant low intensity warfare) became dismantled and were not “replaced with another order” (Long and Villoro).² The Drug War began by Calderón (PAN) has been continued by Peña Nieto (PRI) to devastating humanitarian consequences, contributing to the results of the recent July 2018 elections that realized Andrés Manuel López Obrador's long awaited triumph. Nevertheless, the elections were comprised of candidates who defected from their parties or formed new coalitions that as of yet, have failed to coalesce into a political order other than what could be called an uneasy embrace between developmentalism and unbridled capitalism, upheld by troubling nationalist and white supremacist tendencies. The CRS

¹ For a broader perspective on this point, see Gareth William's “The Collapse of the Katechon & the End of Hegemony” in *The Anomie of the Earth: Philosophy, Politics, and Autonomy in Europe and the Americas*.

² “In the novel, I venture that the conservative party in power was going to be connected to the restoration of a moral order that we thought had been relegated to the past—the moral order of the Catholic Church, restrictions on some individual freedoms, and so on. And at the same time I depict—and this I really underestimated—social disintegration at the moment that the established order is lost. The order of impunity that defined the old authoritarian party, the PRI, not having been replaced with another order, helped create a chaotic context in which organized crime finds fantastic opportunities. The new powers that be are television, soap operas, narcotrafficking, and fanaticism. Sadly, since Mexican reality is truly hyperbolic, all of these tendencies are much more pronounced in real life than in my novel, *El testigo*.” (Long)

that emerged in this chaotic period is perhaps more closely aligned with what the EZLN has characterized as the preponderance of a capitalist archipelago, each island a *finca*.

In August of 2018, the Zapatistas published “300,” a three-part series with the first titled, “Una finca, un mundo, una guerra, pocas probabilidades.” They project that the splintering of power will result in enclaves for the rich (but also potentially in spaces of resistance for the poor), in a way reminiscent of the days of the nineteenth-century *finca*: “Hoy pensamos que así está el capitalismo ahora. Quiere convertir en finca el mundo. O sea, pero son los empresarios transnacionales: ‘Voy a mi finca La Mexicana,’ según lo que le antoja; ‘voy a mi finca La Guatemalteca, La Hondureña’, y así.” In this eco- and capitalist-crisis ridden and divvied up world, they predict “legal” walls, borders, and the force of arms to “defenderse de la migración que ellos mismos provocaron:”

y se está tratando de volver a mapear el mundo, sus recursos y sus catástrofes, para que los primeros se administren para que el capital mantenga su funcionamiento, y las segundas no afecten tanto a los centros donde se agrupa el Poder. Estos muros van a seguir proliferando, según nosotros, hasta que se vaya construyendo una especie de archipiélago “de arriba” donde, dentro de “islas” protegidas, queden los dueños, digamos, los que tienen la riqueza; y afuera de esos archipiélagos quedamos todos los demás. Un archipiélago con islas para los patrones, y con islas diferenciadas –como las fincas– con labores específicas. Y, muy aparte, las islas perdidas, las de l@s desechables. Y en el mar abierto, millones de barcazas deambulando de una a otra isla, buscando un lugar para atracar.

The Zapatistas have always been critical of the leftist populism of López Obrador, known by many simply as AMLO. Though defrauded of his likely 2006 win of the presidency, the Zapatistas were no more supportive then than they are today, opting instead to support María de Jesús Patricia Martínez, or Marichuy, the first indigenous woman candidate. Our present moment is confounding. Brazil and the United States have swung to the fascist far-right, while Mexico has finally elected a leftist candidate of whom the Zapatistas and the nation’s indigenous groups are deeply suspicious.³

³ En “300: Parte III” the Zapatistas question the notion of a legally recognized autonomy within the nation-state form: “Y en y sobre nuestra autonomía -con esto que se está manejando de que sí se va a reconocer, o no se va a reconocer-

But perhaps for good reason. AMLO campaigned on the “Mayan Train,” a major development project to connect tourist sites in the southeast of Mexico, the cost for which doubled from \$3.2 billion during his campaign to between \$6 and \$8 billion this past August, “financed over six years through both public and private investment, including tourism taxes...” The “folly” of the expanded project, for some, is that it hopes to cut through “virtually undeveloped” territory, with others wondering if the train is also about transporting the labor force within the Yucatan to various eco-tourist and beachfront locations (Stevenson).⁴ One cannot also help but think of the Porfirian rail system, a massive infrastructural undertaking with accumulation as a driving force.

If the Zapatistas have accurately signaled something about our current moment, it is that the modern state does in fact have a problem of economic and political refugees, albeit of an inverse nature from that of the colonial era and *congregación*. For James C. Scott, “Control of population is more important than territory” in state formation because settling a population goes hand in hand with the creation of “economic surplus” (Scott 185). Speaking about Southeast Asia, Scott extracts a general rule about “state spaces and nonstate spaces:”

State spaces and nonstate spaces were not merely preexisting ecological and geographical settings that encouraged or discouraged the formation of states. A major objective of would-be rulers was to create and then expand state spaces by building irrigation works, capturing subjects in wars, forcing settlement, codifying religions, and so on. The classical state envisaged a concentrated population, within easy range, producing a steady supply of easily transportable, storable grain and tribute and providing a surplus of manpower for security, war, and public works. (186)

nosotros hicimos este razonamiento: la autonomía oficial y la autonomía real. La oficial es la que reconozcan las leyes. La lógica sería ésta: tienes una autonomía, ahora la reconozco en una ley y entonces tu autonomía empieza a depender de esa ley y ya no sigue sosteniendo sus formas, y luego, cuando va a haber un cambio de gobierno, entonces tienes que apoyar al gobierno “bueno”, y votar por él, promover el voto por él, porque si entra otro gobierno van a quitar la ley que te protege. Entonces nos convertimos en los peones de los partidos políticos, como ha pasado con movimientos sociales en todo el mundo. Ya no importa lo que se esté operando en la realidad, lo que se esté defendiendo, sino lo que la ley reconozca. La lucha por la libertad se transforma así en la lucha por el reconocimiento legal de la lucha misma.”

⁴ I certainly do not mean to collapse the very real differences between the fascist tendencies of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro and the leftism of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. However, I do wish to emphasize the Zapatista’s point that unless rethinking and undoing Capitalism itself and its relationship to the state is at the center of any eco-political project, it is prone to deepen the violence of the inevitable ecocrisis that we are headed toward.

By depending on dispossession, the modern state has created dispersed populations anew who must migrate to survive to be part of the capitalist-state nexus. The recent development projects targeting Chiapas and the Yucatan seek to address this contradiction. AMLO's "Maya Train" would allow people to migrate within the capitalist eco-tourist economy while remaining within a closed circuit. Not to mention, the project obviously commodifies the Mayan identity, a move not so different from the PRI's playbook of state formation. The CRS hoped to perform a similar function of creating a closed circuit of *fincas* for national development.

As discussed in the fourth chapter, new schemes of reterritorialization and attempts to capture uninterrupted tracts of land are stymied by the legacy of the Revolution's land reform; itself a constant battle between the *minifundia* and the capitalist *latifundia*. In an attempt to wrangle the nation back together under a solidified state, I have argued that dispersion continues to be a powerful discursive and racializing representation of potentially rebellious forces paired with the "solution" of *congregación*, a material means of reordering territory, space, and nature itself. Unlike its prior iterations, finding national unity and progress through small landholdings was not the function of the CRS. Instead, it sought to fully transform its inhabitants into market laborers, potentially dispossessing them of their land to extract a greater surplus. The current strategy, though, slowly secures fragmented bits, disconnected *fincas*, as citadels of power and accumulation.

Many have recognized the magnitude of *congregación* in reordering the New World and its societies. In our simultaneously connected yet fragmented global world, it can be hard to think of individual finance and development schemes as paradigm shifting, but their slow remapping is a form of "green grabbing," and it often goes hand in hand with racialized criminalization, or bloody accumulation with an eco conscious face. In her 2017 piece on racialization in Guerrero, another place that elites have identified as suffering from dispersion, Mariana Mora contends that "securitization" is inextricably linked to development, and criminalizes "illicit" economic activities in

predominantly indigenous geographies. “Such activities included,” writes Mora, “returning from their fields carrying a low caliber-hunting rifle, traveling with dry wood collected for the community celebration of Day of the Dead, and driving a recently purchased vehicle that happened to include a stolen auto part” (78). These daily actions that become criminalized “lend themselves to an overrepresentation of the exceptional,” and have resulted in terror against brown bodies, against those who might object to private-public development schemes. One such example regarding the especially cruel assassination of Ayotzinapa student Julio César Mondragón follows:

...some accounts suggest that he defended himself by spitting on his attackers, who responded by flaying him alive. They left his faceless body on the streets on September 27 as part of a public spectacle and punishment for others to see. Weeks later, Peña Nieto, while not referring directly to the assassination, commented on television that the dramatic events in Iguala invited the state to create a “new face,” a “modern face for Guerrero” that can eradicate violence and move forward. The killing and the literal removal of the brown face of Julio César became the justification for the reinscription of sovereign power in the region and the pretext to intervene so as to activate particular forms of economic and cultural development. (Mora, “La Montaña” 79)

Maps have been and will continue to be redrawn along the color line, increasingly commodifying and financializing nature, “securitized” by violence, and in the name of development. But as Arturo Escobar has cautioned, “we should dare to reverse the picture: to entertain the idea that the problem of this region [Latin America], is not underdevelopment but, in fact, excessive development. Recognizing this opens possibilities for new thinking based on alternative notions of human and ecological well-being.”⁵

El testigo does gesture toward a reversal of this picture, particularly through a careful critique of colonial thinking. By the end, the question of the archive as a concentrating force of history, nation, and culture comes to the fore, alongside the question of land and water as they relate to race and terror. Julio’s old schoolmate is producing a telenovela to be filmed on Los Cominos about the

⁵ <https://www.greattransition.org/publication/farewell-to-development>

Cristeros, allowing Villoro to reveal the history of estate to the reader as Julio himself discovers the hacienda's origins through archival research done for the telenovela:

Gracias a los papeles que le dio el Vikingo, Julio reconstruyó datos de Los Cominos. En el siglo XVIII fue una hacienda de beneficio que dependió de la minera. En el tercer patio estaban las muelas de piedra que molían el mercurio y la capellina de la que se sacaban bolsones de oro. En ese espacio se <<beneficiaba>> el mineral (63).

Haciendas de beneficio transformed silver and gold ore into bullion from nearby mines, literally serving as the site of value production and profit. In the racist projections of Donasiano, the mines are exhausted not by the voracious appetite for minerals in the colonial era and nineteenth century, but because the agraristas flooded and sabotaged them all during the revolution. Similarly, he says that the agraristas are also to blame for the dried up or slurry filled water sources. Julio is also called upon by Donasiano and the priest Monteverde, an expert on López Velarde, to aid in his canonization as a saint, another kitsch plotline that traverses the novel. The proof of his miracles, they claim, is encoded in his poetry and writings that Donasiano has amassed, and every miracle involves López Velarde saving victims who have fallen into *pozas*, one of which is the last functional source of water on Los Cominos hacienda.

Throughout, *El testigo's* action unfolds by nature of Julio as a witness to the events around him instead of as protagonist. The plagiarism of his thesis from a Uruguayan *desaparecido* and the novel's title (The Witness) recall testimonio—the dominant narrative form that engaged with Latin America's dictatorships and civil wars of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. To be sure, much attention has been dedicated to the witness as a figure within testimonio as either unreliable or of fragmented subjectivity, but in an interview between literary scholar Ryan Long and Villoro in *World Literature Today*, the novelist states that he is interested in who might constitute “the best literary witness of an event.” The answer, for Villoro, is someone who occupies an interstitial space between closeness and identification (as a Mexican citizen) and distance and alienation (as an expat and academic fake). Julio fails to articulate himself back into old relationships and new alliances, and ultimately abandons

any effort to do so for a life with Ignacia, a peasant woman, in the desert.

The novel culminates in Julio's transformation from witness to protagonist, although significantly this is where the novel ends, in the "emptiness" of the desert and out of view from the witness of the reader. When Ignacia, gives him a drink of *agua con semillas*, she asks him what it tastes like. His response, the final line of the novel, invokes an actual conversation between Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges about López Velarde's *La suave patria*: "sabe a tierra" (470). Villoro explains that:

Borges didn't know the word "chia" in the poem, so he asked Paz what it referred to. Paz explained that it was a seed used locally in drinks, such as lemonade. Borges asked him what these drinks tasted like, and Paz simply responded that they tasted like earth. Chia seeds do have a rather earthy taste, but Paz's response was beyond literal. He was alluding to the homeland, linking it to "La suave patria," defining it as something that you can drink on a daily basis without realizing it. (Interview with Villoro by Fonseca & Lawrence)

In the novel, this line comes to represent the moment where Julio is finally able to inhabit Mexico after two decades of self-imposed exile, and a lifetime of being a liminal, often unwilling yet unavoidable, witness to the events around him. This is closely related in the novel to the question of the archive, the concentration and categorization of Mexican (natural and cultural) history, the burden of saintly proof, and the role of the landed estate and its water sources.

In the end, Julio's final "return" to a home that is not his family home of Los Cominos, but to a small peasant land holding, a *minifundia*, is marked by his refusal to help canonize López Velarde by burning down Donasiano's archive of papers that would have potentially provided the necessary proof of his final miracle for the Vatican. Julio's decision to destroy the archive is fueled by his brush with death but pages before, where he, too, falls into the hacienda's oasis, the miraculous poza. He is eventually rescued, clenching a coin that his deceased cousin and lover Nieves supposedly threw in the hacienda's *pozop* (not its poza) years ago. He becomes sick and hallucinatory afterward, and when he awakes from his delirious state, he is no longer sure if he has actually

experienced “el tercer milagro” necessary for López Velarde’s canonization, or if it has all been a strange dream. The conflagration finds Julio a different path home, one where he ultimately disavows the reinscription of a Catholic colonial state and becomes the protagonist in his own life.

As previously mentioned, Donasiano blames Los Cominos dwindling water resources on the agraristas of the revolution, yet stubbornly remains attached to the family hacienda with his nostalgic vision of its past.⁶ He has curated a personal archive of the Cristeros, López Velarde, indigenous artefacts, and the flora and fauna of the region, taxonomizing nature and history. In the novel, the actual taxonomy of strange animals, like the family dog for example, offer an almost comical perspective of how Donasiano fancies himself as a chronicler in the spirit of the colonial or nineteenth century intellectual, penning poorly written articles for the regional newspaper.⁷ It is worth mentioning that Donasiano’s nostalgia for the days before the Revolution does not exactly manifest as a romanticization of the Porfiriato, a point raised in reference to an honorary plaque that some have made for the nineteenth century dictator in the novel. Donasiano is deeply racist and too colonial and Catholic, as the narrative voice explains, “no simpatizaba con Porfirio Díaz, un oaxaqueño de la ralea de Benito Juárez, pero encontraba lógico que un disidente contemporáneo se remontara a una arcadía anterior a la Revolución” (79). As this dissertation hopes to have demonstrated, this vague desire for something before the time of land distribution and the often only nominal recognition of the indigenous-tinged *campesino* as a victim of historical injustice, cannot be disarticulated from colonial desires, curiously blended with historical memories from the nineteenth century. The accusation by Donasiano that the indios do everything in “zig zags” is but

⁶ Page 79-80 and on page 93, “¿Le parecen pocos setenta y un años con el PRI en el poder? Vea esta hacienda. Los Cominos era un vergel. Ahora está hundida, como el resto del país, devastada por el agrarismo. ¿Y qué me dice de los cristeros, gente masacrada por su fe?”

⁷ Hasta antes de que el padre Torres lo desacreditara en la prensa de San Luis, el tío había escrito monografías de pésima distribución y no muy fácil lectura. Su curiosidad era inagotable y siempre local. El universo cabía en Los Cominos y sus alrededores. Coleccionaba fósiles, hacía excavaciones en busca de cuescomates –los depósitos de granos de las tribus chichimecas–, clasificaba la fauna, la flora, los minerales, recuperaba corridos, anotaba con pasión y desorden.” Loc 1558

another stand in for the racialization of so-called dispersed populations, behind which lies land and resources.

Land reform, writes Villoro, had made the family believe that they possessed greater and better landholdings than they really had before the Revolution, particularly that there were more wells for irrigation.⁸ Donasiano equates the time before the Revolution, and the struggle of the Cristeros to preserve this time, with a certain kind of political ecology. The complexity of the Cristeros conflict also cannot be dealt with here, diverse in its interests—the “first” *crisiada* is different than the second, for instance—but the relevance is how it gets reimagined by Donasiano as an on-going war between pious peasants and bellicose *agrarristas*. Donasiano often slips between the language of *agrarristas* and *indios*, to describe those who robbed him of his family’s God given right to good land. In other words, rebellious and malevolent *agrarristas* are always *indios*, but *indios* are not always *agrarristas*. The Cristeros are simply Cristeros, possibly indian but of a different ilk, defined by their obedience to an order which preserves Donasiano’s racial and landed supremacy in the purity of a colonial order.

In the chapter titled “La Puerta de Babilonia,” the reader is introduced to James Galluzo, a “jipi” gringo who for many years had been a squatter tenant on one of Donasiano’s more minor and “unproductive” haciendas, renaming it *Arcadia*. Galluzo, recently murdered, became obsessed by peyote and began to illegally traffic the cactus that produces powerful narcotic and hallucinogenic effects. Donasiano attributes his death to the “*indios zigzageantes*,” *agrarristas* who took revenge on the gringo for his heavy water use needed to support the peyote on a quasi-industrial scale. The name *Arcadia*, suggesting pastoral harmony with nature, signals a deep irony for a venture that is actually a social and ecological impossibility, truly the no-place of utopia. In reality, of course, it is

⁸ La Revolución y los repartos agrarios privaron a los Valdivieso de suficientes propiedades para que creyeran que habían tenido muchas más cosas de las que alguna vez tuvieron. Su agraviada memoria dilatava las haciendas y hacía brotar viñedos en breñales más bien secos” (44).

likely the narcos who have killed him. Known for years by the indigenous, “el gringo” employs the help of locals to harvest peyote, described by Donasiano as, “indios rarísimos, que ya no eran huicholes; venían contratados desde lejos, indios de exportación, con gorras de beisbolista y collares de brujos de feria, de esos que han cruzado mil veces la frontera y ya no son ni de aquí ni de allá, o sólo son de la frontera. Un anciano dirigía las mezclas. Él sí tenía tipo huichol.” (115-116).

Donasiano, who possesses old hydrological maps of the region, decides to help Galluzzo, “Nunca le he hecho el feo a las costumbres de aquí. Sólo el agrarismo me espeluzna. Tal vez por eso quise ayudar a Galluzzo. Los indios tenían una pureza que se perdió con la Revolución. Él lo veía de otro modo, con su mística jipi, pero teníamos los mismos enemigos...” (115). Land reform, for Donasiano, dispersed the indians across the border, making them less indian, less pure, and therefore less national, and this loss also implies a loss for the conservative political ecology of the nation as a whole. It is quite literally contributing to its desertification.

By the end of the chapter, after many references up until that point about the fact that the water sources had been connected prior to the revolution, he obliquely references the Jesuit and then Franciscan missions in the north:

Las represas estaban conectadas; hay ductos para llevar agua de los pozos a los jagüeyes, pero están azolvados. ... Los yacimientos de la mina fueron inundados en la Revolución. Desde entonces no han sido drenados....Saqué estos planos; le enseñé la ruta que desviaron los Jiménez, le hice un croquis de la presa del Ciprés, le expliqué por dónde pasaba el acueducto de los franciscanos, hay ramales tapados por todas partes.” (118).

Of note here is also the subterranean nature of all of these water sources, a fact of Mexico’s geology that has come to occupy a principle role in the cultural and political articulation between its indigenous past and its progress as a nation, as explored in Chapter Two. The indio agrarista is racialized here as a saboteur that ruined productive infrastructure, and worse still, they are totally illegible, “Nadie puede intuirlos [los indios],” warns Donasiano. The racialization of the Indian is sexualized by Donasiano who says that they “delight in each other” on their sleeping mats “in zig

zag” patterns. Their collective pleasure, resistance, and vice are all rendered illegible. Their sexuality is deviant, it does not uphold the traditional codes of masculine honor which portend the nation state form. It is also threatening, the agraristas “quemaron altares, violaron mujeres, inundaron las minas,” a departure from the stereotype of the Indian as childlike and naïve (79).⁹ Nevermind that Julio and his cousin are lovers, aberrant behavior that Julio’s family desperately tries to suppress alongside other sexual transgressions, like his Aunt Florinda’s love affair that results in an abortion. Like Castellanos’s novel that “reverses the blood flow,” by emphasizing the violence wrought by whites rather than indigenous rebellion, Villoro takes up this project by focusing on the white landowners who are as stagnant as their dwindling water resources. By extension, for Donasiano, Mexico’s order and progress will be restored by reinstating the finca, by concentrating and connecting previous infrastructures that once constituted a more successful and bountiful colonial state. The recovery and re-examination of old maps, powerful information that Donasiano possesses, helps to reveal the successes of the mission, and the recovery of a past that might also purify the indian and the water.

These nostalgic desires are again accompanied by terror, motivated by the white fear of property loss. This fear is registered geographically at the beginning of Chapter Five when “Julio caminó hacia los cerros, bañados de una luz dorada. De niño, Donasiano le contaba que en esos cerros había más comida que en las selvas tropicales. Lo decía como si alguna vez fueran a refugiarse ahí” (102). Donasiano is forever paranoid about Revolution and passes this fear onto his nephew, Julio, absurdly proposing to take refuge in the mountains where in fact colonial terror has forced the indigenous into what the anthropologist Aguirre Beltran called “regiones de refugio.” Later in the

⁹ This is a notable shift in perceptions of race and indigeneity in Mexico, given that historically speaking, there are fewer representations of Indian men as threats to White women than there are of Black men in the American South), who as a trope, are hyper sexualized (along with Black women). See Angela Davis and the myth of the black rapist on this point, with which Mariana Mora also engages, noting how those from rural indigenous zones are criminalized, but also emasculated as vulnerable (in PoLAR, May 2017).

chapter, Donasiano proclaims that “El peyote es dosorientador para el hombre blanco. ¿Cómo regresas a la vida de los supermercados después de sentirte parte del desierto?”(115). In other words, this experience has differential effects based on race, again, quite real for Donasiano, who simultaneously recognizes a conflict between the globalized urban supermarkets and the desert. In sum, Donasiano is an excess, an antagonism produced by racial capitalism’s hierarchy, who no longer has a place in the city or the country. The archiving of information, poetry, and natural history is explicitly linked to the fantasy of the violent accumulation of land:

Está en mi naturaleza almacenar. Soy hombre de troje. El padre Torres tenía razón; lo mío no es el discernimiento sino la suma. Demasiadas generaciones vivieron antes que yo en este desierto. Aquí todo opera por acumulación. Necesitas una inmensidad de terreno para salvar unas cuantas plantas. Eso se organizó hace siglos, a punta de machete, pero se organizó. La revolufia fue una diseminación, ahí estuvo su fallo, la tierra quedó reducida a terrones y luego la gente tuvo que salir disparada al otro lado. Sólo el gringo Galluzzo juntó suficientes tierras inútiles para volver a las cactáceas, y ya ves cómo le fue. Me han llegado noticias de que sus clientes eran narcos. (453).

The “dissemination” could very well be exchanged with “dispersion” of both land and people.

Beyond the archival concentration of natural history and culture, the re-establishment of this finca system means war. It means fighting to stake out one’s place on the archipelago, in which brown bodies are racialized as simultaneously threatening and vulnerable.

Much more could be drawn from the reference to Babylon and the violence discussed in chapter five of the novel, but there is a very concrete relation to Revolutionary agronomy and its importance to the present. In the novel, Donasiano is representative of a centuries long rhetorical tendency to consider deserts as completely unproductive barren landscapes, often the victims of ignorant peasant methods which have further degraded what potential they had. He repeatedly refers to the *vergel*, or garden, that were the family’s prerevolutionary haciendas. Villoro’s narration implies that this is a fictive nostalgia. Similarly, definitive evidence of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, long considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, has never actually been found. Babylon

was but one of many Mesopotamian cities that managed to effectively store rainwater from one season to the next, much like many pre-Colombian Mexican peoples. As discussed in Chapter Two, the early capitalist success of North-Central Mexico's Bajío region was also due in large part to successful methods of rainwater storage and irrigation that were abandoned after independence, known as *cajas de agua* or farther north, *aniego* irrigation. Mexican revolutionary agronomy was on the forefront of what is known as dryfarming, a smallholding agricultural approach that similarly incorporates both water storage, drought resistant crops, and particular methods, and is in large part based on peasant knowledge. Dryfarming research was funded by the United States government in the early twentieth century to help the railroad industry's real estate speculation. If lands could be marketed as viable for agriculture and mass settlement, they were of course, more valuable.

The U.S. looked particularly to Mexico and Palestine (and the greater Middle East) as two places where dry land farming had been practiced for "millennia." Omar Imseeh Tesdell explores this transnational exchange through the Mexican agronomist, Rómulo Escobar, who was in frequent dialogue with U.S. agronomists:

Writing at the height of the Mexican Revolution, there is no doubt that the upheavals and devastation wrought by the war informed his work...Escobar saw modern dry farming as a means of developing the drylands into agroecological zones for settlement. As with his U.S.-based colleagues, he sought to establish and sustain agricultural settlements in dry areas in no uncertain terms: *It is in all of these zones where we have seen that in the future agricultural colonies will be established, serving those areas which are now deserts to sustain a population that is better nourished, more educated, and with more requirements than our current rural population.*"

This project was fundamentally political and ecological, a marriage to occasion the settlement of people for post-revolutionary state formation. To what extent these settlement initiatives could be traced back to congregación should be explored by future research, or whether resettlement on the part of the state is ever "reasonable," early revolutionary agronomists often promoted less hierarchical understandings of land use and peasant knowledge. These frameworks were sidelined in

favor of technological advancements in irrigation and fertilizers that had political ramifications, in capitalist accumulation of land and resources, thus stifling the revolution's most promising projects. The Mexican Miracle's Green Revolution was premised on a betrayal of the revolution as it became agro-industrial in scale, capitalist in its logic, and ironically, a driving factor in emptying out the countryside and urbanizing the nation.

Returning to Donasiano's assessment of the water table in Mexico, though twisted and distorted through his anti-agrarismo, points to the very real environmental effects of an abandoned agrarian revolution in favor of dazzling "envirotech," like high dams and pumps. His racial invectives are lies linked to the truth of contaminated and trapped water. The post-revolutionary governments, particularly under President Miguel Alemán and beyond, glorified "grand hydraulic infrastructures," effectively extracting, enclosing, and sequestering water into reservoirs that would not be recycled back as it had been under *aniego* rain based irrigation systems (Wolfe). Infrastructure was also reoriented to the cities to provide water for the daily life of industrialization but also as a source of an ever-increasing need for electricity. Over time, these post revolutionary policies have brought the nation to the brink of crisis, having nearly devastated through exhaustion and contamination fluvial ecologies and the nation's water supply.

For this reason, there is now a renewed interest in the practice of dryfarming given the desertification of Northern Mexico and the American West due to climate change. Small farming is often ecologically sound and makes good use of water because it replenishes the soil's nutrients and the water table. In other words, it does not depend on the metabolic rift of capitalism, which counts on externalizing its environmental costs. It is always and again land consolidation itself, violent capital accumulation, that depletes. When Donasiano claims that he needs larger landholdings, he is either hiding or cannot see the actual metabolic rift of capitalism that he wrongly attributes to the most radical peasant based elements of the Revolution. There is enough to go around if there is a

political and not just technological solution, as José Revueltas observed as early as 1943.

In his assessment of the desert as “empty,” a colonial projection of space to be sure, Donasiano quips that “Las grandes religiones sólo podían inventarse en el desierto, o en alguna montaña loca...si naces en un lugar vacío, la cabeza se te llena de otro modo. El más allá lo inventó un pastor al que se le perdió una borrega en el desierto” (461). Religion keeps the flock together over desperate land, it imposes logic and order over tabula rasa terrains. But the desert is not actually an empty ecology, nor is it inherently barren or life giving. Landscapes also have histories inseparable from the humans who have managed them. Anthropogenic environmental change can take the form of desertification or the vibrant cultivation of agricultural abundance.

In *El testigo*, Julio emerges from his near-death hallucination with a sense of emptiness, too, but it is in reference to the hacienda: “Los Cominos, muchas nadas” (427). The final chapter operates on the opposite imagery of fullness, focusing on Ignacia’s small landholding desert ecology. Julio walks away from his life based on the theft of his thesis and from the colonial legacy of plunder that Los Cominos represents. Julio is not just a legal or literary witness, but a potential neocolonial chronicler, like his Uncle Donasiano, witnessing and relating New World miracles and the potential wealth to be exploited from Mexican land and people to constitute the nation anew. Julio, now as in the past, is unable to fulfill his role as a writer, determined by his initial plagiarism, and so he ultimately refuses to reclaim himself as a witness/author of neocolonial desire. He decides to save one relic from the archive—the taxidermy dog that his Aunt Florinda killed for witnessing her shame, precipitated by passion from one of López Velarde’s miracles. The dog was bolted to Julio’s desk in the guesthouse at Los Cominos, and like Julio, is forced into the act of unwilling witness. That the dog is attached to the desk, a writing surface, evokes the albatross of Julio’s original sin of plagiarism and how it weighs on his ability to produce his own narratives (in his actions and in his writing). He gives the dog a more dignified burial next to the poza, relieving it from its duties as

eternal witness.

After a heavy rain, the novel closes with Julio returning to Ignacia's humble *choza*, "Avanzó hasta llegar a unos cinco metros de la cuenca de madera anegada de agua de lluvia. El terreno estaba moteado de huellas de charcos como cráteres rojizos" (469-70). He enters her house, and sees her young son writing, eyes close to the page, in "Letras redondas, cerradas, firmes. Una gota cayó sobre el papel. Julio estaba llorando." Ignacia is sweetly unfazed and then offers him the chia water. Besides the classic symbolism of rain as a purifying rite of passage, the end recalls the often overlooked double imperative of Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution: el reparto de tierra *and* el reparto de agua. Villoro paints a picture of a lunar landscape, with small craters that hold water, along with an overflowing wooden crate. The open-ended conclusion suggests that the next generation might live and write from a different place, closer to the paper and more firmly rooted in a land watered more modestly and sustainably by captured rain water. Just maybe it will not write in service of the crown, capital, or perhaps even the nation. This minifundia ecology is not empty, but full, and its protagonists are overwhelmed by tears of joy rather than violent nostalgia.

As the Bird Flies

Migrating birds often fly in zig zag patterns, adding miles and miles to their journey, despite their reputation to the contrary. This seemingly irrational practice, however, shaves two-thirds of the time it would have taken had they flown in a straight line. The birds' zig zagging takes advantage of wind streams that propel them and allow them to exert less energy.

So many of the figures studied here, even in their failure, believed that things could be different then, and remind us that they could be different now. There was constant resistance to defend peasant agriculture, throughout the colonial era and the nineteenth century, and of course in the twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution, the Jaramillistas, Lucio Cabañas's Party of the Poor,

the present day EZLN in Chiapas, and the *normalistas* of Ayotzinapa, whose struggles have reverberated globally. Of the historical relationship between Mexican and U.S. agrarianism during the first half of the twentieth century, historian Tore Olssen writes that the disappearance of the *minifundia* in the last century was far from the “inevitable” outcome of technological advances, rather, it was “the product of political choices” (199). The Zapatistas, themselves products of 500 years of *congregación* in Chiapas and the “political choices” of elites, reassert their own decision making by speaking of “caminar preguntando.” If one walks in zig zags, surely they will cover more ground, asking more people who will propel them as they walk further to establish another way of life, one which, over time, demands and values different forms of space and nature, “un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos.” These revolutions, both big and small, did not progress along neat historical stages, thus provoking a reflection on what it means to be efficient. Above all, they have made and been sustained by diverse political ecologies, not confined to straight lines, or perhaps any lines at all, especially those of bloodlines, fences, or borders.

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