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HIDDEN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN HISTORICAL NOVEL: THE CONQUEST SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF DOUBLE AGENT CHARACTERS

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HIDDEN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN
HISTORICAL NOVEL: THE CONQUEST SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF
DOUBLE AGENT CHARACTERS

By

James W. Gustafson Jr.

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Modern Languages and Literatures

Under the Supervision of Professor Catherine Nickel

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2007

DISSERTATION TITLE

Hidden Identity in the Contemporary Latin American Historical Novel: The Conquest Seen
through the Eyes of Double Agent Characters

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HIDDEN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN
HISTORICAL NOVEL: THE CONQUEST SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF
DOUBLE AGENT CHARACTERS

James W. Gustafson, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2007

Advisor: Catherine Nickel

Many contemporary Latin American authors explore identity and re-write the past through narrative fiction, often looking to the violent beginnings of the Conquest and Colonization as a logical point of departure. This dissertation examines identity formation through fictional characters living with two identities in the following historical novels: *El naranjo* by Carlos Fuentes, *Gonzalo Guerrero* by Eugenio Aguirre, *Duerme* by Carmen Boullosa, *Invasores del paraíso* by Herminio Martínez, *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* by Homero Aridjis, and *Los perros del paraíso* by Abel Posse.

Chapter One situates this study among the substantial critical corpus dedicated to Latin American novels of the Conquest and introduces a theoretical framework for analyzing double agent characters and identity formation in Latin American literature. Chapter Two contrasts the characterizations of Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de

Aguilar in novels by Carlos Fuentes and Eugenio Aguirre with previous representations and analyzes the significance of the more complex, dual identity view of these two historical personages. Chapter Three examines dual identity as it relates to gender and sexuality. In *Duerme* a French woman cross-dresses as a Spanish soldier while in *Invasores del paraíso*, a young man with repressed homoerotic desires negotiates an identity between the typical machismo found among most members of his expedition and a group of openly practicing homosexuals. Chapter Four explores the complex identity of the Crypto-Jews, or secret Jews, and their persecution by the Inquisition in fifteenth century Spain and in the New World. Two characterizations of Christopher Columbus as a converso and possible Crypto-Jew in *Los perros del paraíso* and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* inform the examination of this phenomenon. Chapter Five looks at the broader issues related to identity formation in contemporary Latin America such as globalization and the creation of new types of readers.

Essentialist views of identity are challenged through the double agent characters in these texts who are forced to alternate between a public persona and a socially marginalized identity.

For my father

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Hidden Identity in the Contemporary Latin American Historical Novel: The Conquest Seen through the Eyes of Double Agent Characters

Chapter One Introduction

Fictionalizing the Colonial Past in Latin America

Many Latin American writers have an obsession with rewriting the past as a means of defining their current identity. Even as early as the nineteenth century, when the Latin American countries had barely gained their independence, fictional texts such as Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas*, Eduardo Acevedo Díaz' *Ismael*, Manuel de Jesus Gálvan's *Enriquillo*, and Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda's *Guatimozín*, to name a few, both fictionalized and romanticized, the rewriting of the colonial past and the exploration of an identity that was uniquely American. Jean Franco writes of the historical novel that:

To Spanish-American intellectuals there seemed no better instrument for creating a sense of national

identity, since in this way the author could expose the evils of Spanish colonial rule and celebrate the deeds of national heroes. (62)

Contemporary Latin American historical fiction says as much about current views of identity as it does about notions of identity during the time period it represents. Fernando Aínsa claims that, "the genuine roots of identity are preserved in the hidden interior of America and in the archaic past that is remembered with nostalgia." He adds that:

Visions of the future in this centripetal movement are inevitably conditioned by values of the past, creating the impression that Latin America has difficulty with imagining a future that is not a re-actualization of the past that probably never existed as imagined. (9)

Currently in Mexico and other Spanish American countries we find many novels, short stories, and dramas that deal with the past, especially the Conquest and Colonization of the Americas. Fictionalized accounts of the Conquest increased substantially in the 1970s and 1980s as the five-hundred year anniversary of Columbus's first appearance in the Caribbean approached. Continued interest in the colonial period on the part of creative writers in Latin America has

manifold reasons. Seymour Menton asserts that the varied reactions, interpretations, and ramifications to the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, led to the explosion in fiction set in the colonial period. He states that: "Probably the single most important factor in stimulating the publication of so many historical novels in the past fifteen years or so has been the awareness of the approaching quincentennial of the discovery of America" (27). However, interest has not abated since 1992 as novelists and dramatists continue to examine, interpret, fictionalize, and parody the colonial period that was and, still is, so critical to Spanish American identity. Some authors examine the Conquest using a more conventional and traditional narration, resembling a memoir or historical chronicle, while others employ fantastical elements, anachronisms, and other postmodern techniques. Regardless of the narrative techniques, contemporary fictionalizations of the Conquest inform current political thought and issues relevant to the present and reflect the effects of globalization in Latin America. Menton points out that, "The official Cuban cultural journal *Casa de las Américas*, without taking a strong position on the merits of the Conquest, related it to current political conflicts" (29). Since historical

fiction reveals as much about the time it was written as it does about the time it portrays, any analysis of contemporary historical fiction in Latin America will illuminate key issues in the current dialogue between the present and the violent colonial past. Kathy Taylor writes that:

Modern writers continue to invent and discover new adventures through language. Included in these new ventures is an exploring of the past in search of revised interpretations of the surrounding reality. By discovering the secrets of the past we can understand better the mysteries of the present. (135)

The surge in interest in the period of the Conquest has also been attributed to the increased literary attention the chronicles, histories, relations, letters and other colonial writings have received in the past few decades. Such writing had not previously been considered 'literature' in the classic sense. Postmodern sensibilities such as the blurring of genres and the idea that fiction and history are not mutually exclusive categories, and that fictionalized accounts of the past can reshape a society's view of its history, clearly contribute to the increase in historical novels. Linda Hutcheon comments that:

We only have access to the past today through its traces—its documents, the testimony of witnesses, and other archival materials. In other words, we only have representations of the past from which to construct our narratives or explanations. (58 *Politics*)

Spurring interest in the colonial period among the population at large was the release of several full-length feature films dealing with prominent Latin American colonial figures and themes, such as *Cabeza de Vaca* and *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, which chronicles Christopher Columbus' trek to the New World. Popular interest in the myths and figures of Conquest and Colonization of Mexico continues up to the present time, evidenced by the Mexican novelist Laura Esquivel's latest work. The author of the popular novel *Como agua para chocolate* released the historical novel *Malinche* in 2006. Malinche was an indigenous woman who served as a companion and translator to Hernán Cortés. In *Malinche*, Esquivel tells the story of the Conquest of Mexico from Malinche's point of view rather than through the eyes of the Conquistador, the most frequently employed perspective in historical accounts. This type of re-viewing of the Conquest and Colonization of the Americas through fiction, often narrated by characters

from marginalized groups, is increasingly common in Latin America. Santiago Juan-Navarro and Theodore Robert Young observe that:

The past two decades have seen the rise of postcolonial criticism, cultural studies, and the New Historicism, allowing for a reconsideration of this subject matter from the point of view of the colonized subject, rather than from that of the colonizing metropolis. (11)

Similarly, Viviana Plotnick affirms that: "this type of novel signals a shift in perspective as well as a lack of belief in master narratives characteristic of the postmodern sensibility" (36). While all these positions are valid, it is clear that the Conquest and Colonization of Latin America, along with the predominant myths and figures of that time, are still very much present in the mindset of modern day Latin Americans in terms of identity.

Many notable writers, thinkers, and critics have commented on the changes that the genre of historical fiction in Spanish America has undergone in the last thirty years. According to Menton and others, the 'new' historical fiction has many traits associated with postmodernism and multiculturalism, and often subverts and rewrites traditionally accepted views of Latin American

history through parody, pastiche, anachronisms, and other postmodern modes. Even in literary works written in a more traditional narrative style, voices which were often marginalized, or altogether absent from canonical texts, have been resurrected. Examples of these voices include the indigenous population of the New World, lower-class Spaniards (such as crew members on ships), women, homosexuals, female-to-male transvestites, *conversos* (Christians of Jewish heritage), and Crypto-Jews (persons secretly practicing Judaism).

Kim López claims that the historical fiction set in the colonial period and published in the years leading up 1992 and beyond still focused on the so-called "great men of history" such as Columbus, Carlos V, Cortés and other conquerors. While this may be true in terms of the volume of works published, many successful contemporary authors have created marginalized voices within fictional texts that take place in the colonial period. Some examples include Mexican novels such as: Ignacio Solares' *Nen, la inútil*, Carmen Boullosa's *Llanto: Novelas imposibles*; and Herminio Martínez' *Diario maldito de Nuño de Guzmán*. Argentine works such as Marcos Aguinis' *El gesto del marrano*, and Alicia Dujovne Ortiz' *El árbol de la gitana* explore the colonial period from a subaltern perspective,

characterized by dual-identity, double agent personages of Jewish extraction. These texts work within the well-established and recognizable genre of historical fiction but offer a new point of view. Through the fictional representation of the subaltern experience in a historical context, the official histories begin to be debunked; missing voices are now included to some degree. Terry Cochran theorizes that:

if one wishes to put forth a history to 'unmask' the representational (or, if one prefers, the 'official') history that by definition is oppressive to those whose point of view is not represented, then one unfortunately must duplicate the representational mode of the history that is rejected (xi-xii).

Identity Formation

The question of identity has been of particular interest to Latin American intellectuals in the twentieth century. Starting with works like José Martí's *Nuestra América*, Vasconcelos' *La raza cósmica* and Rodo's *Ariel*, the identity conundrum was examined as well by internationally known creative writers like Carlos Fuentes in such well-

known novels as *Terra Nostra* and *Cristóbal Nonato*. Poetry, short stories, and in particular the essays of Octavio Paz, such as *El laberinto de la soledad* also address the topic of Mexican and Latin American identity. Intellectuals like Roberto Fernández Retamar and Angel Rama more recently have contributed to the debate over the definition or essence of their identities. Octavio Paz's notion of the "máscara" is particularly relevant to my study of dual identity or double agents. Paz states that: "A mí me intrigaba (me intriga) no tanto el 'carácter nacional' como lo que oculta ese carácter: aquello que está detrás de la máscara" (1970: 10). While Paz writes mostly about Mexican identity and "national character", he also claims that his thoughts can be applied to identity questions in all of Latin America. Paz writes: "La pregunta sobre México es inseparable de la pregunta sobre el porvenir de América Latina y a su vez se inserta en otra: la del futuro de las relaciones entre ella y los Estados Unidos" (1970: 14). Paz mentions the role of the United States in the formation of Latin American identity, the idea of defining oneself against the other, and this relates directly to globalization and the homogenization of culture. As the cultural and economic presence of the United States and other world powers continue to permeate Mexico and the rest of Latin America,

Latin Americans look to their problematic and violent origins in the colonial period to shape their identity.

Nestor García Canclini notes that:

Subject to fewer restrictions and greater speedup, the circulation of people, capital and messages brings us into daily contact with many cultures; consequently, our identity can no longer be defined by an exclusive belonging to a national community. (91)

Contemporary identity questions in Latin American nations have their origin in the colonial period. The Spanish conquistadors and colonists arrived in the New World in the fifteenth century with an array of identity issues of their own. Having finally defeated the Moors after seven hundred years and simultaneously attempting to rid the peninsula of the Jewish presence as well, the Spanish explorers came upon a whole new "race" to conquer and to assimilate in their nascent empire in the New World. In *Latin American Identity and Constructions of Difference*, Amaryll Chandy points this out referencing the Argentine novelist Ernesto Sábato's remarks on identity:

Not only does Sábato emphasize the cultural plurality and hybridity of the continent today, but he also problematizes the 'Spanish' identity

of the colonizers, reminding us of the importance of the Jewish element in Spain, as well as the Arabic presence. (xviii)

The subsequent miscegenation between Europeans and indigenous people created an even greater hybrid group whose complex cultural progenitors raised further questions as to what it means to be an American (a citizen of the Americas). After gaining independence from Spain, the question of national and regional identities also became the topic of debate among the new nations: What is a Mexican, a Peruvian, or an Argentine? And further, what is a Latin American?

Mestizaje and Dual Identities in Latin America

The colonial period also plays a crucial role in identity formation in Latin America due to the violent nature of the initial contact between the Spaniards and the indigenous populations and the mestizo race that was created by the miscegenation practiced between Spanish males and indigenous females at the outset of the colonization. The *mestizaje*, or indigenous character, present throughout most of Latin America today, especially in countries like Mexico, discourages any unitary sense of

identity. One only needs a cursory knowledge of the conquest of the Aztecs by the Spaniards, and the resultant mestizo nature of the vast majority of Mexico's population, to understand that the identity of most Mexicans today stems from this dual indigenous/European heritage. Octavio Paz claims that:

Confusamente el criollo se sentía heredero de dos Imperios: el español y el indio. Con el mismo fervor contradictorio con que exaltaba al Imperio hispánico y aborrecía a los españoles, glorificaba el pasado indio y despreciaba a los indios. (1982: 33)

Today, many Mexicans and other Latin Americans from countries with large indigenous populations, simultaneously reject and praise their native American lineage. For example, the word 'indio' is used simply as an insult in many Latin American countries. At the same time, Aztec, Mayan and Incan figures and images are regularly used in patriotic displays. Hernán Cortés is portrayed as a villain whereas Cuauhtemoc has become a national hero worthy of statues throughout Mexico City. There are no statues of Cortés in Mexico City. Malinche's assistance to the Spaniards earned her the eternal reputation as a traitor, whereas the Spaniard Gonzalo Guerrero, who rejected his

opportunity to rejoin his countrymen after living eight years among the Mayas, has had several statues erected in his honor since the 1970s.

Yet despite this supposed allegiance to their indigenous heritage, the white, foreign, and European is often times highly prized in Latin America. There is even a widely recognized term for this attitude called 'malinchismo', generally defined as one who prefers foreign, rather than indigenous, things. Sandra Cypress explains it as "the pattern of behavior whereby Mexicans prefer foreign elements to the detriment of their own nation" (168). Despite the widely recognized phenomenon of malinchismo, children of all social classes in Mexico are often named after indigenous (colonial) figures such as Cuauhtemoc or Tenoch. The internationally successful and critically acclaimed Mexican film *Y tu mamá también* (2002), featured an upper-class adolescent named Tenoch as one of the two main protagonists.

Double Agents in Contemporary Novels of the Conquest

Examining contemporary texts set in the colonial period which feature characters struggling (or simply choosing) to live with two or more identities—such as women who dressed

as men, men who engaged furtively in sex with other men, Spaniards who rejected their own culture in favor of living among the indigenous societies, and Jews (conversos or 'Crypto') who hid their true identities in the New World—will illuminate and reflect current identity issues and debates in contemporary Latin American society. Coping techniques like impersonation and imposture that such individuals in the colonial period were forced to use (either consciously or unconsciously) in negotiating a functional identity, reflect similar struggles that subaltern groups experience in Latin America today. Tina Chen asserts in her study of double agent characters in Asian American fiction that: "I see impersonation and its nature as a performance of dual allegiance as an extremely effective vehicle for articulating such double aims and thus an invaluable site for critical investigation" (13). Impersonation is a technique that many of the mentioned "double agents" were forced to engage in. In exposing and analyzing the textual development of these "double agent" characters in contemporary historical fiction texts I will show how these writers are questioning and subverting the traditionally accepted versions of history, which largely help to inform notions of identity. Such characters are inevitably marginalized in one way or another. Victoria E.

Campos comments that, "late twentieth-century writers animate figures both omitted from colonial writings and marginalized from the new Hispanic society" (51). Careful consideration of the subaltern voices in the Colonial period--voices of groups who clearly existed at that time but were given no representation in the textual record--brought to life by these contemporary writers reveal parallels between the experiences of these marginalized individuals in the Colonial period and similar individuals in the 21st century. Antonio Benitez Rojo recognizes the dual and problematic nature of identity in the Caribbean region and how it is reflected in literary texts. He states that:

Whatever the skin color might be, it is a color in conflict with itself and with others, irritated in its very instability and resented for its uprootedness. The literature of the Caribbean...refers itself generally, in one way or another, to this double conflict of the skin.

(201)

Other countries in Latin America, such as Mexico and Peru, experience similar internal struggles stemming from the dual identities present in these societies.

With the rise of multiculturalism, a tendency towards greater recognition of the subaltern, a rejection of master narratives and other postmodern ideas in the past thirty years, we notice much historical fiction that presents its stories through marginalized characters who often are characterized by a dual identity. Such characters often possess two conflicting identities at once and/or two different allegiances, and must negotiate their way through a world which does not recognize such blurring of categories. Distinct from a hybrid that combines characteristics from two groups to form one new identity, a double agent maintains two distinct identities and alternates between both as necessary. As Fernando Aínsa observes:

This contemporary identity, then, is divided (and in some cases torn) into multiple loyalties. Although some find it difficult to accept this notion, where living 'in between', in a 'space between two worlds', as Daniel Sibony calls this distance a play *entre-deux identites*, it is part of a new repertoire of referents where a part of the identity is permanently renegotiated and reconstructed from a multifocal perspective.

(69 in Volek)

Marjorie Garber's idea of a "category crisis", which allows a person to toggle between two different sets of identities, also informs my study. She explains:

By category crisis I mean a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another: black/white, Jew/Christian, noble/bourgeois, master/servant, master/slave. Category crises can and do mark displacements from the axis of *class* as well as from *race* onto the axis of *gender* (16-17).

Contemporary fictional characters which exhibit this type of 'double agent' identity are often based on real historical personages such as Cabeza de Vaca or Malinche, but the experiences and points of view of those I will consider in this study are filtered through the eyes of the subaltern groups. Analyses of these characters will prove valuable in understanding changing ideas of identity such as the blurring of boundaries and the recognition of the experiences of groups still currently marginalized, groups such as native Americans, women, gays, and Jews, that in the colonial period were either ignored or eliminated altogether. López affirms:

The extent to which historical novels set in the colonial period serve to make comparisons between the conquest and contemporary forms of oppression is an area that has been the object of some scholarly attention, and merits further exploration. (8)

Ethnic/Cultural Double Agent Identity

The colonial understanding and view of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, and other key categories related to identity was completely compartmentalized. In terms of identity, an individual was either indigenous or European, male or female, Christian or Jew, and always heterosexual: there were individuals who participated in homosexual relations, but this was not viewed as an identity, but rather a behaviour. Any deviation from these clear-cut categories was potentially dangerous. Gonzalo Guerrero, the Spaniard who had been living among the Mayans in the Yucatan peninsula for eight years when the Spaniards came for him, reportedly did not go with the Spaniards to help in the conquest of the Aztecs due to, among other things, his appearance. It is believed by many that his piercings, tattoos, and general non-

European appearance, prevented him from being accepted among the Spaniards. Although the veracity of the claim is disputed, Díaz del Castillo's seminal *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, and other similar chronicles, report on more than one occasion that Gonzalo Guerrero stated: "Yo soy casado y tengo tres hijos, y tiénenme por cacique y capitán cuando hay guerras; idos con Dios, que yo tengo labrada la cara y horadadas las orejas" (44). He not only had a Mayan appearance, but had also constructed a Mayan identity. For example, he mentions his wife and children, indicating his familial identification with the Mayan community.

Converso Jews were another group whose identity and allegiance were traditionally viewed as divided in the colonial period. Due to their supposed dual Christian and Jewish identity, and resultant dubious loyalty to the Spanish Crown, they were seen as incompatible with Spanish society and not officially permitted to go to the New World. In fact, it is widely known that at the start of the Spanish exploration of the Americas, the Catholic Monarchs expelled Jews from all Spanish territories both on the peninsula and across the seas. Seymour B. Liebman reminds us that:

Only those who could prove that they were descendants of *católicos viejos* (old Catholics) for at least four generations were entitled to certificates of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of the blood) and licenses to migrate to the New World.

(18)

Nevertheless, many *converso* Jews and Crypto-Jews (Marranos) did, of course, make their way to the New World, often for the express purpose of escaping persecution from the Inquisition. Jacob Beller notes: "many Marranos emigrated to the lands of the New World in the hope that it would be easier for them to practice Judaism there" (19).

Gender/Sexuality Double Agent Identity

Homosexuals (also called sodomites) often suffered similar fates as the Jews in the New World. In many cases they were put to death for their 'aberrant' behavior, whether by the Inquisition, or at the hands of the conquistadors themselves. The receptive partner in the same sex encounter was stigmatized much more than the active partner, as the penetrated male temporarily accepted a 'female' identity. This distinction is still prevalent today in Latin American societies. In fact, some research

suggests that penetrating another male not only is acceptable, but can also be seen as favorable. Roger N. Lancaster states that being the active sexual partner can increase machismo. He claims:

But like its equivalent forms of adultery and promiscuity, the sodomizing act is a relatively minor sin. And in male-male social relations, any number of peccadillos (heavy drinking, promiscuity, the active role in same-sex intercourse) become status markers of male honor.

(241)

Stephen Murray disagrees on that point but still admits that the active sexual partner in a homosexual encounter is much less stigmatized than the passive one in most Latin American cultures. He further acknowledges the feminine identity associated with or assigned to the penetrated sexual partner in homosexual contact. Murray claims that sources of this prevailing attitude in Latin America date back to the colonial period and in particular the Spanish presence:

The former Iberian colonies in the New World provide the prototype of the gender-defined organization of homosexuality. Across the whole culture area, ideal norms distinguish masculine

inserters (*activos*) not considered *homosexuales* from feminine insertees (*pasivos*) who are. (1) Nevertheless, both men involved in a homosexual encounter during colonial times were forced into roles of double agency, although in a different paradigm.

The tradition of female to male transvestism is another example of dual identity. Some women saw this as their only possible path in life, apart from becoming a prostitute or a nun. Clearly, alternating between two identities at once by means of cross dressing was not acceptable to the rigid world view of the colonial era. In Carmen Boullosa's novel *Duerme*, an Indian woman living as a servant among the Spaniards undresses the female to male cross-dressing protagonist Claire and remarks that this person is "a man with clothing and a woman with no clothing". This is a clear example of the constricting mentality of the colonial period which made a dual identity necessary for certain individuals to advance or, in some cases, to survive.

Connecting the Past to the Present

While the colonial essentialist mentality obviously contrasts with the attitudes of today's intellectuals in Latin America and elsewhere, it is still commonplace among

the population in contemporary Latin American society. Nowadays we live in a multicultural world in which having an ambiguous or dual identity is almost prized in some circumstances. Kim López claims that belonging to a marginalized group carries a certain 'cultural cachet' (20). Of course it is politically correct to value multiculturalism in today's world, but it goes beyond that. There are seemingly paradoxical groups such as "Jews for Jesus". Governments regularly place people into dual-identity groups such as African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and even European American. Men and women nowadays can change their gender, a fact which is acknowledged among the population at large. While transsexuals are still clearly on the margins of society, they are gaining acceptance as evidenced in the mainstream film from 2005, *Transamerica*, which comically explored the topic of sex reassignment surgery. Another commercially and critically successful film of 2005 that breaks with accepted notions of gender and sexuality was *Brokeback Mountain*. The film tells the story of two ultra-macho cowboys who are secretly in love with each other, while simultaneously managing a heterosexual identity with wives and children. The seemingly contradictory dual identities of the film's protagonists shatter the compartmentalization of

gay men into a category of effeminate and weak. Thus, fictional characters of a double agent nature set in the present day would in fact be commonplace in comparison with the colonial epoch. The juxtaposition of such double agent characters within the emerging and complex New World identities offers great opportunity to analyze the birth of the identity issues still present in contemporary Latin America.

Not surprisingly, novels and short stories set in the colonial period are rife with characters that fall into dual-allegiance/dual-identity categories. Latin America's unique identity questions and struggles lend themselves well to this type of analysis. Lois Parkinson Zamora comments that:

Although questions of national identity are now relatively rare in comparative studies of European literature, they are very current in areas where national identity is in more formative stages of development, as it is in Latin America, and where literary criticism is effectively redefining concepts of national literature. (11)

The problematic and violent encounter with the indigenous civilizations of the Americas that occurred during Spain's Conquest and Colonization, mirror conflicts in Spain at the

time. The expulsion of the Jews and the Moors from Spain in 1492 in the quest for 'purity', the Inquisition created to violently enforce the Catholic monarchs' goals, and the somewhat marginalized status of many of the conquistadors, as noted by López, combined to create an environment in the New World of clear-cut divisions in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Anyone not falling neatly into the categories established by the Catholic Church, the Spanish monarchy, the Inquisition, and those ruling on the behalf of these institutions—was punished, often by death. Awareness of this possible fate forced those with dual allegiances into a dual identity struggle, often for the sake of their survival, and on other occasions for the sake of pursuing happiness or fulfillment.

My study includes analyses of three types of double agent characters: 1) Spaniards who lived among Amerindian groups, (isolated from other Europeans) for a significant length of time to learn their language such as Cabeza de Vaca, Jerónimo de Aguilar, and Gonzalo Guerrero; 2) those who transgressed gender norms either through homosexuality or transvestism (also called cross-dressing); and 3) those hiding a Jewish heritage. These transcultured men, and other Europeans who lived among the indigenous, wrestled with dual identity and dual allegiances, essentially making

them double agents. All three types of double agent experiences (and certainly there are others) in the New World during the period of Conquest and Colonization have found their way into contemporary historical fiction by Latin American authors.

Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar as Double Agents

Chapter Two explores contemporary characterizations of Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar, two Spaniards who were shipwrecked in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico in the early sixteenth century and ultimately became active participants in the indigenous culture. *El naranjo*, a collection of novellas by Carlos Fuentes, fictionalizes the Conquest of Mexico and in particular the experiences of Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero. Aguilar and Guerrero lived for eight years among the Mayans before Hernan Cortes learned of their existence and sent for them to rejoin the Spaniards. The first novella in the collection, "Las dos orillas", provides a contemporary psychological view of the mind of Jerónimo de Aguilar, who narrates the story in first person, and of the problematic relationship both Guerrero and Aguilar had with the Spaniards when Cortés learned of their presence and highly

coveted abilities to communicate with the indigenous population. Fuentes's fictional Jerónimo de Aguilar gives us a glimpse of the current problematic relationship that Mexicans have with their Spanish legacy—they owe much to Spain in terms of language, religion, architecture, and customs among other things—and yet they still must negotiate their connection with both European and American cultures. The fictionalized Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero in *El naranjo* mirror this negotiation.

Several other novelists have fictionalized the life of Gonzalo Guerrero, such as Eugenio Aguirre, in his novel of the same name *Gonzalo Guerrero*. In this novel we see another contemporary take on dual identity negotiation as seen through the eyes of the Spaniard who completely transculturates to the Mayan way of life and afterwards, when given the chance to return, rejects his original European identity. Gonzalo Guerrero's legacy is also present in the minds of many Mexicans. Some claim this is a conscious effort on the part of the Mexican government to forge a positive indigenous identity, as evidenced in two statues that were erected in his honor in the Yucatan city of Merida and one in Mexico City. Rolando J. Romero claims that: "Gonzalo Guerrero, considered the first conquistador seduced by the culture of the people the Spaniards set out

to subdue, has become an almost mythical character in contemporary Latin American narrative" (345).

Double Agents via Gender Norm Transgression

Chapter Three deals with characters portrayed as double agents through their transgressions of established gender norms of the colonial period. Carmen Boullosa loosely bases her novel *Duerme* on the real life person Catalina de Erauso, also known as La Monja Alférez, a woman who dressed as a man in order to escape to the New World as a soldier. Boullosa's protagonist, Claire, possesses a dual gender identity which is revealed or hidden as necessary, according to the circumstance s/he is in. Claire is French, further complicating her identification with the Spaniards and Americans she encounters. Claire's various clothing changes throughout her adventures not only alter her gender identity, but also her social class. The first person narration from the point of view of Claire informs the reader that Claire clearly prefers to assume an upper-class, Spanish male identity, which completely contradicts reality on all levels. Claire's struggle with multiple identities and loyalties reflects the colonial mindset as well as present contemporary problems of gender inequality.

Mexican novelist Herminio Martínez presents a vast array of characters involved in the exploration of the New World in his novel *Invasores del Paraíso*. Among these are secondary male characters (unnamed crew members) who have sex with men, presumably, as the penetrated, passive, "female" identity. Also present are the protagonists who are the son and nephew of the head of the expedition. In this novel we see repressed homoerotic interest on the part of the nephew of the head of the expedition. All the while he clearly maintains sexual relations with women, informing the readers through a first person narration, as well as the other characters, of his "normal" sexual interest in them. At the same time, it is evident that he is clearly attracted to the idea of sex with men and the world of the secondary male characters who perform as female substitutes. The ambiguous sexual and gender identities of these characters parallel current issues in the machista society in Latin America, as briefly outlined earlier. We see them through the lens of the colonial world, which in addition to commenting on and reflecting current society, also subverts and challenges the history of the Conquest and Colonization, since homosexuals presented as real people with real struggles were clearly left out of the original documents produced in sixteenth century New Spain.

Conversos and Crypto-Jews as Double Agents

Chapter Four examines anti-Semitism in fifteenth-century Spain, the subsequent expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the New World, and the resultant Crypto-Jewish phenomenon. I explore characterizations of Christopher Columbus as a double agent due to his *converso* status in two contemporary historical novels and its relevance to the Crypto-Jewish phenomenon, whose descendants are still recognized in the present day in Latin America and the southwest United States. *Los perros del paraíso* by the Argentine Abel Posse and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* by the Mexican Homero Aridjis are two historical novels published in the 1980s that fictionalize the first voyages of Columbus to the New World. *Los perros del paraíso* focuses mostly on the events in Spain leading up to 1492, while *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* starts with the first voyage and mainly portrays events that occurred after Columbus landed in the Caribbean. Both novels treat the topic of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Columbus's alleged Jewish heritage.

Analyses of these and other contemporary works of Latin American historical fiction of the Conquest and Colonization featuring characters struggling with dual

identities and the strategies employed to survive living in two worlds at once, help to illustrate and understand contemporary notions of the problematic Latin American identity. While the hierarchies and strict categorizations in terms of gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity present in the colonial period have been relaxed in contemporary Latin American society, they are still present to a large extent. Their roots can be found in the clash that occurred between the already identity-burdened Spanish nation and the various indigenous groups present in the Americas. Finally, analysis of the various types of double agency present in these contemporary historical novels will show how they work to subvert accepted notions of history as well as the confining roles that marginalized groups are forced to adopt in today's Latin America. Kim López asserts that: "In the twentieth century, historical novels continue to serve the purpose of constructing national identities that underscore the difference between colonized and colonizer, although they generally do so by decentering traditional historical figures through the representation of marginality" (5). She continues: "a marginalized character within the conquest may be considered the most apt to represent the paradoxical perspective of Latin Americans on the historical events that led to their unique

identity as products of cultural miscegenation born of violent conflict" (17). History, the colonial period in particular, is of the utmost relevance in 21st century Latin American society. Thus, changing views of history—especially ambiguous identities—as demonstrated through texts such as novels, plays, and short stories, will prove relevant to understanding how Latin Americans view themselves today, as well as why and how this came to be.

CHAPTER TWO

GONZALO GUERRERO AND JERÓNIMO DE AGUILAR

AS CULTURAL DOUBLE AGENTS

La historia de Gonzalo Guerrero y Jerónimo de Aguilar presenta dos reacciones al cautiverio y a la seductora posibilidad de cruzar las fronteras de una cultura. (Braham 13)

La suerte está en el tapete de la historia, son dos hombres diferentes: Gonzalo Guerrero y Jerónimo de Aguilar, uno vive en país extraño con su pensamiento puesto en su lugar de origen. El otro vive en un país que hace suyo y deja aquí su pensamiento y la vida misma. (Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. In Villa Roiz 8)

...Jerónimo de Aguilar, natural de Ecija, muerto de bubas al caer la Gran Tenochtitlán y que ahora acompaño como una estrella lejana a mi amigo y compañero Gonzalo Guerrero, natural de Palos, en la conquista de España... (*El naranjo* 64)

This chapter examines the changing contemporary interpretations of the process of transculturation undergone by the Spaniards Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar, and their resultant dual identities, while they lived among the indigenous people of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula in the early sixteenth century. I will show how recent fictional depictions of Aguilar and Guerrero paint both men as double agents rather than placing the two men into distinct groups, each with a unitary identity. Historical accounts published in the colonial period by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, López de Gómara, Fernández de Oviedo, Antonio de Solís y Rivadeneira, and 20th century historians such as Juan Francisco Molina Solís and Robert Chamberlain, tended to place these two figures into separate and opposing categories: Jerónimo de Aguilar as the hero who helped the Spanish conquer the Aztecs and Gonzalo Guerrero as the traitor who abandoned his own people, and even assisted the Mayans in their resistance to the Spanish conquest of Mexico.

I focus more on Gonzalo Guerrero because in the past thirty years intense interest in his life has resulted in the appearance of murals, statues, and novels devoted to him, whereas Jerónimo de Aguilar has not gained the cult status of Guerrero. There was even a comic book about

Gonzalo Guerrero titled *Conquistadores en Yucatán: La desaparición de Gonzalo Guerrero*, published in 1992.

Memoirs purported to have been written by Guerrero himself have surfaced and been published in the past thirty years, although most critics believe they are apocryphal. Mario Aguirre Rosas published Guerrero's story in the Mexican newspaper *El universal* in 1975, alleging that it was based on a transcript of a manuscript written by Gonzalo Guerrero. Roseanna Mueller claims that it is probably not authentic and describes it as: "...full of complications and ironies. It is an alternative view of history, with a suspiciously modern political message" (146 in Juan-Navarro and Young). "Relato de Gonzalo Guerrero", published in 1994 as part of *Historia de la conquista del Mayab*, is another text claiming to be a memoir of Gonzalo Guerrero. It was allegedly written on deerskin by Guerrero, recovered and transcribed in 1724 by Fray Joseph de San Buenaventura, and then "discovered" in the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México in 1993. Similarly, the reaction to this manuscript by critics has been skeptical. Persephone Braham affirms that this text, like the one offered by Mario Aguirre Rosas, seems inauthentic: "...el texto de Fray Ventura presenta varios datos y usos anacrónicos, los cuales apuntan hacia un enfoque moderno (verbigracia, topónimos

que no se difundían generalmente hasta el siglo XX)" (3).

Rolena Adorno also believes that it is unlikely that Guerrero penned these alleged memoirs. She states:

Aunque ha habido una argumentación intensa por ambas partes, tiendo a inclinarme por la duda a causa de la existencia de otras supuestas memorias de Gonzalo publicadas por Aguirre Rosas. El hecho de que ambas ediciones se contradigan indica los problemas que presentan estos textos. (911)

The appearance of such publications is only one aspect of the cultural phenomenon that Guerrero has become. It is not particularly important to my study whether these alleged memoirs of Gonzalo Guerrero are authentic or not, but the fact that they have surfaced indicates a need to recover an appreciation of the indigenous heritage and the search for an acceptable identity. Mueller agrees and she states that: "Authenticity aside, the 'finding' of this document in the last few years once again points to a need to 'find' the real Guerrero and the desire to esconce him as a national hero" (2000:198). She further explains Gonzalo Guerrero's newfound popularity:

While primary and secondary sources sketched Guerrero's history during the colonial period, today he has become a political and literary icon

and has been transformed into a national myth.

There are images and interpretations of this emblematic figure not only in Yucatan, but in greater Mexico. (147 in Juan-Navarro and Young)

She also mentions that he is increasingly relevant in discussions of identity in Mexico because: "Contemporary works interpret Guerrero as a cultural symbol of the fairly recent notion of mestizaje" (138).

This notion of mestizaje has its origin in the clash of cultures that occurred when Columbus "discovered" or "encountered" the Americas, and the subsequent arrival of other Europeans and their interaction with the indigenous population gave rise to a new race and culture. In the post conquest period, many new alliances and allegiances, often tenuous, were created between the European and American peoples. The experiences of those individuals who came to live among the "other" group, such as Cabeza de Vaca, Gonzalo Guerrero, and Jerónimo de Aguilar, and La Malinche, were intriguing enough to capture the attention of the public five hundred years after the fact. Their appeal reaches beyond Latin America and the Spanish speaking world. For example, Cabeza de Vaca's many years among the indigenous population of North America has been the topic of numerous new studies, many of which are in English, such

as Enrique Pupo-Walker's *Castaways: The Narrative of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca*; and *The Account: Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Relaciones*, both published in 1993. Rolena Adorno contributed her bilingual edition of Cabeza de Vaca's life with *Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: his account, his life and the expedition of Pánfilo Narváez*, in 1999. Cabeza de Vaca's story even inspired a feature film in 1991, entitled *Cabeza de Vaca*, directed by Nicolás Echeverría. The film garnered much international interest, including a positive review in *The New York Times* on March 23, 1991.

In the past two decades other popular films have dealt with the transculturations experienced as a result of the clash between the cultures of Europe and the Americas. The commercially successful film *Dances with Wolves* in 1990 tells the story of a 19th century American soldier who rejects his Western heritage, abandons the Americans and prefers to live among the Sioux. The story of the native American woman Pocohontas was told in the 2005 film *The New World*. That film focuses on the interactions between the indigenous Americans and the English colonists, and Pocohontas' subsequent abandonment of her indigenous heritage for a life in England. Doña Marina or "La Malinche", the indigenous woman from Central Mexico who assisted the Spanish in their conquest of Mexico, is an

equally famous figure whose problematic identity is well known outside of Latin America. Tina Chen's study of double agents in Asian American literature, for example, references Werner Kummer's article about La Malinche entitled, "Malinche, Patron Saint of Informants?". Rolena Adorno comments on the phenomenon of contemporary interest in colonial figures who lived among the "other":

al aproximarnos al fin de la década (y del siglo) es evidente que no nos podemos deshacer de las múltiples imágenes de Colón, Las Casas, Cabeza de Vaca y Lope de Aguirre que circulan el día de hoy entre un público internacional. (905)

As Cabeza de Vaca lived for many years among the indigenous people of what is now North America Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar were two other Spaniards who completely integrated into life among the indigenous residents of the Yucatan peninsula. From approximately 1511-1519 these two Spanish sailors had no known contact with other Europeans, and likely not even with each other for most of that period. In contrast to the other Spaniards who either died during the shipwreck or were killed afterwards by the indigenous people of the Yucatan peninsula, Guerrero and Aguilar survived, living as slaves to the Mayans for a number of years. Eventually Aguilar was

"rescued" by Cortés' expedition. Aguilar (and La Malinche) eventually assisted Cortés in the conquest of the Aztecs of central Mexico. Guerrero, however, did not join the Spanish military expedition, but chose to remain with the Mayans. It has been reported in many written accounts that Guerrero had already attained a fairly high status among the Mayans and had even married and had children with a Mayan princess. The original source of this information comes from Díaz del Castillo's account. The following passage from Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España*, which allegedly reports Gonzalo Guerrero's own words, now appears in virtually every article written on Gonzalo Guerrero: "Yo soy casado y tengo tres hijos, y tiénenme por cacique y capitán cuando hay guerras; idos con Dios, que yo tengo labrada la cara y horadadas las orejas" (44). Francisco López de Gómara also recorded that: "Gonzalo Guerrero, marinero...se casó con una rica señora de aquella tierra, en quien tiene hijos, y es capitán..." (1979:26). Guerrero's marriage to a Mayan woman and the children produced from that union have been so accepted as fact that the statues of Guerrero that were erected in the Yucatán in the 1970s include not only Guerrero, but also his Mayan wife and children.

This chapter will examine new interpretations of Aguilar and Guerrero in two twentieth-century Mexican narratives: Carlos Fuentes' 1994 novella "Las dos orillas" in *El naranjo* and Eugenio Aguirre's 1980 novel *Gonzalo Guerrero*. The depiction of Guerrero and Aguilar as double agents in both texts is infused with a sense of dual identification and questionable allegiances formed as a result of the transculturation they experienced living among the Mayas. I consider them double agents because they publicly demonstrate loyalty to and identify with one culture while their sense of belonging may lie elsewhere, or be ambiguous. Like a double agent, who blends in with the group he plans to betray, we can assume that these two Spaniards had to adapt to and adopt the language and physical appearance of the indigenous group with whom they lived, yet both men's loyalties were divided or unstable. The analysis of these two literary works also illustrates the changing vision of these two men and what they represent in Mexican society. Aguilar and Guerrero are two figures who offer an intriguing contrast: the beginning and the middle of their stories are parallel but the ends are entirely different. Both men started out serving the Spanish in their New World conquest, lost contact with their countrymen, and were then forced to adopt an entirely

new identity among the Mayans. However, when they were discovered by Cortés' expedition, Aguilar gave up his indigenous lifestyle to rejoin the Spaniards while Guerrero remained with the Mayans. Despite choosing different paths, both can be considered double agents since each was imbued with mixed loyalties that raised questions about affiliation and identities.

Quite a few fictional works that revisit the lives of Aguilar and Guerrero have appeared in recent years, such as *Gonzalo Guerrero: memoria olvidada: trauma de México* by Carlos Villa Roiz, *Gonzalo Guerrero: símbolo del origen del mestizaje mexicano: novela histórica* by Otilia Meza, *Ocho años entre salvajes* by José Beltrán Pérez, and *Rutas extraviadas; cuento macabro de ensayo mayista* by Benjamín López, among others. I have chosen two works that present contrasting views and interpretations of the experience of these two unique members of the Spanish conquest. Fuentes' "Las dos orillas" is narrated by Aguilar, while Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero* is narrated by Guerrero. Further, Fuentes' novella presents events after Aguilar's reunion with the Spaniards (post-transculturation) while Aguirre's novel starts with the two men in Spain and focuses on the journey to the Americas (pre-transculturation). Finally, "Las dos orillas" employs postmodern techniques, such as recounting

the events in reverse order, starting with Chapter 10 and ending with Chapter 0. This contrasts with Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero*, which takes a much more traditional approach to the narration.

Guerrero and Aguilar: Few facts

Most historians believe that the Spaniards Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero were part of a failed Spanish expedition that set out from Darien, Panama, in 1511 to explore and conquer the coast of what is now Central America. They were shipwrecked in the Yucatan probably due to weather and were ultimately enslaved by the Mayans. The rest of the crew died or were killed, possibly sacrificed, by the Mayans. Aguilar returned to the Spaniards in 1519, assisted in the conquest of Mexico, and died in 1531. Guerrero did not return to the Spaniards. He is said to have died in battle against the Spaniards in 1536. Robert Chamberlain writes: "The Spaniard died thus in combat, who was nude, with tattoos on his body, who was dressed in scant clothing the Indians wear, was probably Gonzalo de Guerrero" (178). Some scholars consider this report to be sketchy at best. Even the "facts" are not without debate.

Rico Ferrer illustrates the varying details of the chronicles when he states:

Guerrero era, según estas fuentes, un integrante del navío que en 1511 encalló en los bajos de las Víboras, según Gómara o Los Alacranes, según Bernal Díaz y fue uno de los pocos o, según Bernal Díaz y Gómara de los dos que consiguieron escapar con vida al naufragio para caer en las manos de los indios. (170)

Rolando J. Romero also casts doubt on the fact that Aguilar and Guerrero were the only surviving members of the expedition. He observes that: "Fernández de Oviedo very categorically indicates that when Cortés arrived in 1519, five or more Spaniards, aside from Aguilar and Guerrero were living in the area" (360). Even the name "Guerrero" may or may not have been the now legendary Gonzalo's actual surname. Romero comments that: "It is entirely possible that Gonzalo's real last name was not Guerrero...marinero and guerrero would in fact describe all the Spaniards of the time since they were soldiers who came by sea" (360-361).

After Aguilar returned to the Spaniards, Cortés sent letters requesting that Guerrero return to assist the Spaniards in their conquest of Mexico. Several years later,

Francisco de Montejo, who is also fictionalized in *Invasores de paraíso*, examined in Chapter Three, also sent letters requesting his return. They obviously believed he would be a great asset to the Spaniards, as Aguilar had been, due to his knowledge of the language and customs of the indigenous people. Romero plainly states: "The names of Guerrero and Aguilar appear in the texts because both Cortés and Montejo needed Spaniards who spoke the native languages" (348). Motivated to stay among the indigenous because of his reportedly high status in Mayan society, it has also been recorded that Guerrero felt he could not return to the Spaniards due to his Indian-like appearance, complete with a pierced nose, pierced ears, and tattoos. As cited earlier, Díaz del Castillo reported that Guerrero told Aguilar that he would not return with the Spaniards. However there is much debate as to whether Guerrero actually said this. Romero goes so far as to say:

Aguilar's beliefs regarding Guerrero's failure to join the expedition are structured in narrative form by Díaz del Castillo into a conversation between Aguilar and Guerrero that truly never took place. Díaz del Castillo invents the conversation.

(352)

Rico Ferrer concurs that it is not clear how or why Guerrero did not return to the Spaniards. He states:

Las narrativas sobre Guerrero confluyen en su rechazo a los españoles, en un rango que varía desde la aceptación pasiva de la imposibilidad de retorno, hasta la aseveración de una resistencia activa por su parte. (171)

Braham also touches on the questionable veracity of the historical reports and observes that:

La historia de Gonzalo Guerrero es un conjunto de crónicas leyendas y rumores no necesariamente fidedignos, y hay por lo menos un historiador que duda incluso si el hombre existió o si es tal vez una fábula o un romance colectivo. (2)

In spite of some discrepancies in the written record of the lives of Guerrero and Aguilar, my focus is on the myth that has been created, as revealed in literature and popular culture, and what it means to contemporary Mexican (and Latin American) identity.

Despite their different paths and subsequent dichotomous characterization in the historical accounts, what both men have in common is that they clearly had experienced a transculturation and a dual identity was produced as a result. It is important to have an idea of

the kinds of changes experienced by Aguilar, Guerrero, Cabeza de Vaca, and others who lived for years among indigenous people without any European contact. Romero describes Aguilar's transformation during his eight years among the Mayans in the following way:

Jerónimo de Aguilar also was so immersed in the local Mayan culture that he did not speak Spanish well, was not able to take Spanish food, and dressed and acted like a Mayan to such a point that he was not recognized by Cortés's people. When Cortés addressed him, Aguilar squatted, like the Indians do. Aguilar had lived with the Mayans for so long that he had lost track of time. Cortés lent Aguilar clothes according to some accounts directly from his own back; 'Aguilar did not consider this a great favor, for he had so long been accustomed to go naked that he could not bear the clothing Cortés had put on him' (Cervantes 115; Tozzer's translation 236). (355)

Rico Ferrer mentions also that: "Aguilar era indistinguible de los indios: llevaba vestidos indios, tenía las orejas horadadas y acarreaba un remo" (179). From these passages it is obvious that both men underwent a tremendous transformation that left them looking and sounding like

Mayan men. After complete immersion in Mayan society for eight years, a unitary identity would have been impossible.

Guerrero and Aguilar: Colonial characterizations

Not surprisingly, many scholars point out that Aguilar and Guerrero were depicted in historical accounts in ways that placed the Spanish in the best possible light in their New World endeavors. Mueller comments that:

Although the outline of Guerrero's life is well-established historically, the conjectural details of his biography and the limited historical facts have tempted revisionists from the beginning. (137

In Juan-Navarro and Young)

In essence, in early accounts of their lives, Aguilar's help in defeating the Aztecs tended to be recorded as heroic while Guerrero was labeled as a traitor. In earlier texts Aguilar is portrayed as a good Christian while Guerrero is presented as someone who rejected his Christian heritage in favor of the cannibalistic Mayans. Braham writes that: "Para todos los cronistas de la época (colonial) Guerrero efectúa una deserción cultural igual que militar" (5). Mueller describes Aguilar's depiction in the chronicles in the following way:

As Cortés's indispensable aide, Aguilar came to symbolize the reintegrated captive, loyal to his culture, his church, and the Spanish crown. Some morality tales about Aguilar's captivity illustrate that loyalty in the face of hard tests. (139 in Juan-Navarro and Young)

Aguilar claimed, and it is recorded in the chronicles, to have been celibate during eight years of living among the Mayans. It was also usually mentioned that Aguilar is said to have asked upon coming into contact with Cortes's men for the first time if they were Christians and "if it was Wednesday". Romero claims that repeating the question regarding the day of the week indicates Aguilar's devotion to the Catholic Church and highlights his original Spanish identity in general. He says Aguilar was: "emphasizing his keeping track of time in order to observe the religious holidays" (355). Rico Ferrer has noted that: "Aguilar había conservado un libro de devociones, unas 'Horas', en lo que coinciden Bernal Díaz y Gómara, las cuales mostró como prueba de que era buen cristiano" (105). López de Gómara adds to the patriotic characterization of Aguilar when he comments on Aguilar's usefulness in the conquest of Mexico: "Que sin duda él fue el lengua y medio para hablar,

entender y tener noticia cierta de la tierra por donde entró y fue Hernán Cortés" (60).

It is also claimed in Díaz del Castillo's account, among others, that Jerónimo de Aguilar tried personally to convince Gonzalo Guerrero to return to the Spanish but that Guerrero refused. It is significant that this supposed conversation has become so famous in the historical record in the colonial period since it was later determined that such a conversation could never have taken place due to times, distances, terrain, and other factors. It is in the record because it highlights Aguilar's supposed allegiance to Spain and contrasts it with the "traitor" Gonzalo Guerrero's allegiance to the Mayans, his rejection of his Spanish heritage. Some scholars even assert that Aguilar simply invented this conversation to ingratiate himself with the Spaniards, that it served to illustrate what a good Christian and Spaniard Aguilar was. Rico Ferrer notes that: "Como el texto de Bernal Díaz muestra, Aguilar afirma su cristianismo frente a la idolatría de Guerrero" (182). He continues his observations on Aguilar's attempts to distance himself from the Mayans with whom he lived for eight years:

Representando ahora en su cuerpo y su indumentaria al Otro, Aguilar tenía que hacer olvidar este

hecho a los miembros de la expedición de Cortés. De ser tomado como el Otro, se habría situado en una posición incómoda que le llevaría a un rechazo seguro. Para evitar esta eventualidad, Aguilar se identifica como español tan pronto llega a la presencia de los expedicionarios. (183)

Aguilar's conscious depiction of Guerrero as the "Other" in order to ensure his own acceptance among his countrymen is also supported, according to Rico Ferrer, by Aguilar's claim that Guerrero allowed his wife to interrupt his speech and to influence his decision to remain among the Mayans. He explains: "Al arrojar dudas sobre la masculinidad de Guerrero, Aguilar lo convierte en un extraño, en un marginado para los hombres de la expedición de Cortés" (184). Finally, he asserts that: "Guerrero se convierte en un alter ego de éste—en la parte de si que Aguilar intentó ocultar por medio de su discurso explícito" (185). In other words, Aguilar attempts to present a unitary identity by casting off his "undesirable" characteristics to the Gonzalo Guerrero persona. Spaniards like López de Gómara, Díaz del Castillo and others assisted in this division by including such details in the written record.

Independent of Aguilar's supposed comments or intentions, the written record of the colonial period portrays Jerónimo de Aguilar as a good Christian and at the same time labels Guerrero a traitor to the Spanish. Romero points out that in Oviedo's chronicle Guerrero was described as an 'evil person', brought up by 'low and vile people' and that he was suspected of being 'of low race' (354). He also claims that: "Oviedo, without stating it directly, explains away Guerrero's espousal of the Mayan culture by labeling him as a converted Jew" (354). The Spanish also blame Guerrero for some of their failed military campaigns against the Mayans. Grant D. Jones reports that: "Cuando los españoles confronten resistencia inesperada en Yucatán, echarán la culpa a Guerrero, no a la habilidad militar maya" (28). Rico Ferrer states that: "Guerrero se convierte en parte del imaginario español de la conquista[...]el espacio de lo monstruoso o lo no asimilable es también el emplazamiento de lo reprimido" (190).

Despite his negative characterization in the colonial period, in the past thirty years Gonzalo Guerrero has become a hero in Mexico, especially in the Yucatán peninsula, as well as a positive symbol of mestizaje. Braham comments: "Repudiado durante siglos por traición a

su raza, Gonzalo Guerrero se ha convertido en un ícono del mestizaje y de la resistencia contra la conquista del Yucatán" (18). Romero even claims that Guerrero has become a "counter Malinche". He explains:

Gonzalo Guerrero as a counter Malinche serves, in my opinion, as a new model of cultural syncretism. This model is based not on the violation and destruction suggested by Paz's Malinche, but on the respect and the willing acceptance of the culture of the Other. (363)

Jerónimo de Aguilar, on the other hand, has not gained nearly as much attention as Gonzalo Guerrero. Mueller observes that "While Aguilar may have been the darling of colonial discourses, with repeated references to his breviary given to him by his sainted mother, there is no statue of him in Mexico" (2000:202). If not for the increased interest in Guerrero, it is likely Aguilar would have been forgotten by most scholars.

Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero lived extraordinary lives in the colonial period. Clearly, the late twentieth-century construction of these two historical figures continues to be radically different from the colonial one. History continues to be reinterpreted to suit the needs of society. As Mexicans search for their identity

in the dual nature of *mestizaje*, they seek to redefine and celebrate the dual nature of its founders. It is the dual nature, or double agency, seen in the contemporary portrayals of Aguilar and Guerrero that I will now explore in *Gonzalo Guerrero* and *El naranjo*.

Eugenio Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero*

Of all the contemporary novels that deal with the life and myth of Gonzalo Guerrero, Eugenio Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero*, published in 1980, is the one that has gained the most critical attention. The novel recounts what may have happened to Gonzalo Guerrero (and Jerónimo de Aguilar), starting with their journey from Panama, the storm and subsequent shipwreck which lead them accidentally to the Yucatan, and their acculturations living among the indigenous populations. Mark A. Hernández describes the novel in the following way: "*Gonzalo Guerrero* re-creates, primarily in the form of a memoir, the story of Gonzalo Guerrero's transformation from a Spanish sailor into an acculturated Mayan of substantial social standing" (85). With the exception of chapters one and six, which are narrated by an omniscient narrator in third person, the novel's ten chapters are narrated by Guerrero in first

person. While Guerrero's first person narration does lend the novel a memoir-like quality, Aguirre based the novel on the chronicles of well-known historians like Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Diego de Landa among others, and the author includes a bibliography of historical references at the end of the novel that he used in researching Guerrero's life. This is a common technique used apparently to give more credibility to the veracity of the text. Homero Aridjis also includes a bibliography at the end of his novel *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*, which will be seen in Chapter Four. Hernández suggests that Aguirre included the bibliography to give the novel more historical authority and calls it a: "bibliography of historical documents that ostensibly inform the narrative" (89). Monique Sarfati-Arnaud believes that: "la bibliografía puesta al final (más propia de un trabajo académico que de una obra de ficción) orienta de entrada la lectura de la novela" (98). Most critics agree that while *Gonzalo Guerrero* is informed by historical sources, it attempts to challenge official versions of the Conquest by telling the story from a marginalized point of view. Manuel F. Medina states that:

Por presentar a Gonzalo Guerrero como protagonista principal la novela subvierte el modelo tradicional de obras que tratan la Conquista

española de México, que data de principios de siglos dieciséis a comienzo del dieciocho. En estos textos generalmente se alaba a los que participan en la Conquista y contribuyen con los conquistadores y se los recompensa al incluírselos enaltecidos en los diversos textos. (148)

At the same time, Medina claims that the author strategically mimics the style of the chronicles:

El narrador emplea técnicas similares a las utilizadas por los escritores de crónicas, diarios y cartas, algunos de los anales oficiales de la Conquista, a fin de otorgar a la novela la autoridad investida sobre los libros producidos durante el inicio de la ocupación española. (150)

Similarly, Alice Ruth Reckley claims that Aguirre attempts to revise Latin American history saying that Aguirre: "improvises on historical tradition by fabricating and amending information from the Conquest chronicles and subsequent historical investigations, to change the way we remember history" (133).

Sarfati-Arnaud observes that:

Gonzalo Guerrero se inscribe dentro del impresionante y significativo caudal de obras

hispanoamericanos que combinan, en grados más o menos logrado, ficción e historia y cuyo proyecto se propone cuestionar la historiografía ofreciendo una variante, una nueva interpretación libre a toda sujeción de la ideología oficial. (97)

Aside from viewing it as revisionist history, other approaches to *Gonzalo Guerrero* include the notion of *mestizaje* as it relates to Mexican identity. Hernández affirms that Aguirre's novel: "manifests in the early 1980s strains on the ideology of *mestizaje*, which has undergirded the concept of Mexican identity since the Mexican Revolution of 1910" (91). Hernández and other critics claim that the novel promotes the idea that Guerrero and his wife Ix Chel Can were the first mestizo couple, countering the familiar paradigm of Cortés and La Malinche as the first mestizo couple. He states: "The novel proposes the tale of Guerrero as a new mythical point of origin and shifts attention away from Cortés and La Malinche during the foundational moment of the Mexican nation" (88). The image of Guerrero and Ix Chel Can as the first mestizo couple is peaceful as opposed to the violence associated with the pairing of Cortés and La Malinche.

The multi-faceted narration in *Gonzalo Guerrero* has also generated interest. In addition to alternating between different narrators throughout the novel, the principal narrator, Gonzalo Guerrero, operates almost as an omniscient source of information. For example, he cites chronicles that were published after his own death. Marrero Henríquez notes that:

La actitud correctora de la crónica que tiene este narrador personaje subvierte la lógica de la homodiégesis, para la que es imposible admitir el manejo que Gonzalo Guerrero hace de unos textos históricos posteriores a su existencia. (26)

He points out that it is also highly unlikely he would have had access to those documents and letters published in his own lifetime, or that he could have had contact with anyone who did. Reckley observes that: "As far as we know from chronicled records, no Spaniard ever talked directly with Gonzalo after Jerónimo left the Mayans" (133). Reckley claims that the narrator Guerrero:

functions not only as a sixteenth century first-person narrator and reader of sixteenth century chronicles, but also as a twentieth century

narrator/text-act reader who is contemporary to the publication of the novel. (134)

Reckley believes that: "the illogical and abrupt changes in narrative time...cause frequent readjustments in the reader's understanding of narrative temporal perspective" (136). Reckley argues that such narration is effective in revisionist history because it ironically makes Guerrero a more credible source of information and more believable than he was portrayed in the chronicles. Medina notes that it is not only Guerrero the narrator who offers "corrected information" about the chronicle but also the omniscient narrator of the first and sixth chapters. Interestingly, Medina believes the use of the omniscient narrator is what adds credibility to the veracity of the information. He argues that: "Estrategicamente, el uso de este narrador sirve para proveer credibilidad a lo que se relata porque este narrador posee más autoridad debido a que desconocemos su identidad y asumimos imparcialidad" (157). While such twentieth century sensibilities detract from the experience of being transported to the past, they serve to revise history and suggest new ideas.

Contemporary scholars generally agree that Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar experienced a

transculturation while living among the Mayans. Despite being characterized as a traitor and hero to the Spanish respectively in the colonial chronicles, I believe that both men reveal themselves as double agents when given their own voice as narrators in the contemporary novels *Gonzalo Guerrero* and *El naranjo*. Both flesh and blood men would have had mixed loyalties and allied themselves with both cultures in different ways as necessary for their own survival and success, as well as in defense of their convictions. Some champion Gonzalo Guerrero as the father of Mexican mestizaje, a new hybrid, two halves that became one. While his children and their ancestors might have become hybrids, I believe it is much more likely that he was in fact a divided self, a double agent. The same can be said for Jerónimo de Aguilar.

Throughout Aguirre's novel Gonzalo Guerrero's divided self manifests itself in numerous ways. Guerrero learns to behave in appropriate ways within Mayan society while still affirming his Spanish identity. In the novel he clings to Christian beliefs and teaches them to his children, yet does so in discreet and often secretive ways. He praises the indigenous cultures but expresses nostalgia for Spain and the Old World. He teaches the Mayans how to fight the Spaniards but still identifies with Spain to the point that

he gives his children Spanish names. He gradually acculturates to the local culture as manifested in his physical appearance, clothing, and language, but at the same time he expresses guilt and remorse for having done so. In *Gonzalo Guerrero*, the protagonist displays too many interior conflicts to be seen as having a unitary, or even hybrid, identity. He possesses qualities of both cultures and has an identity as problematic as the contemporary Mexican identity. RoseAnne Mueller describes this new vision of the Gonzalo Guerrero myth, that is also manifested in Aguirre's novel:

In the early chronicles, and even as late as Chamberlain's history (1948), Guerrero is described as a renegade, a turncoat, a traitor to his own kind: a bitter, dangerous enemy, and an idolater. Since the 1970s, however, Guerrero has been reconsidered, reevaluated, reenvisioned, and acclaimed the father of Mexican *mestizaje*, that is, the patriarch of those with mixed Indian and European blood (138).

In the first chapter that Guerrero narrates, chapter two, he immediately informs the reader of his steadfast devotion to the Christian church, one of the most prominent symbols of Spanish identity in the colonial period:

Soy muy escrupuloso en cuestiones religiosas y me lastima en el alma escuchar opiniones de la gente vulgar e ignorante. Sobre todo me molesta enterarme de cosas que ofenden a la voluntad de Cristo, el buen Dios. (33)

A short time later he questions how it is possible that some people of faith stray from Christianity. He comments that: "me parecía imposible que un hombre de fe pudiese alejarse de Dios y perderse de su sino" (46). It is also relevant to note his use of the word "sino" (destiny) since it reflects his belief that man has a proscribed role to fulfill and Guerrero's is that of a Christian Spaniard.

Slavery is a theme which recurs several times in the novel. The ship that Aguilar and Guerrero are on is carrying slaves and subsequently Aguilar and Guerrero are enslaved by the Mayans. When Guerrero has a crisis of conscience with respect to the Spanish treatment of the slaves on their ship he has the following reaction, appealing to God to help him: "me hallé repudiando a mi raza y a...sí, a mi religión...Caí arrodillado y pedí perdón a Dios" (52). There are many other examples of Guerrero's Christian devotion throughout the novel, many of which occur well into his Mayan acculturation. For example, he refers to the church as "nuestra amada Iglesia"

(132). He proselytizes to the Mayans and comments that: "Mucho le intrigó que nuestro Dios verdadero fuese un dios de amor y entrega y que no nos exigiese sacrificios ni tributos" (150). Guerrero continually comments that he greatly admires Jerónimo de Aguilar, who in the novel is portrayed as an extremely devout Christian, a priest who hears confessions and counsels the other members of the expedition. At one point in their early captivity, Guerrero tells Aguilar: "llevadme en vuestra sabia lengua y encomendadme a Dios, Nuestro Señor, y a su santísima madre la Virgen María" (175).

Even after Guerrero loses contact with Aguilar and has begun his move up in Mayan society, he continues to appeal to the Christian god. He tells a Mayan (presumably in Mayan): "Así sea, que Dios, que mi Dios, te bendiga y nos una en la eternidad" (198). Five years into his life among the Mayans, the fictional Guerrero still prays to the Christian god:

Hace casi cinco años naufragamos en los bajos de los Alacranes y dos que no sé nada del padre Jerónimo. Después de la peste mi vida se volvió triste y deprimente. Acudí a la oración de mis padres y me perdí en un inmenso vacío. Rogué al

Dios de Israel por la fuerza y templanza para soportar. (201)

While he continues to rely on the Christian faith, it is also at this moment that he reveals and justifies his eventual participation in the Mayan religion as well. He states that:

Un hombre no puede vivir sin fe, y menos de una fe lejana, enmohecida por el tiempo; esto me resolvió a aceptar ciertos trabajos que, posteriormente, me llevaron a integrarme en el misterio de los ritos. (201)

Thus, in order to survive in society he feels the need to accept and participate in certain aspects of the Mayan religion. However, his participation is not motivated out of true faith, but merely to satisfy his own needs.

Like a true double agent, his secretive behavior with respect to his religious identity continues. He decides to secretly "realizar un pacto íntimo entre mi Dios y mis circunstancias" (205). He describes this furtive act in the following passage:

Esa noche, cuando ya todos dormían y el silencio se había posesionado de todos los rincones del Orbe, me deslicé de mi camastro y me fui a mirar la bóveda celeste. Desde el punto fijo de la

Tierra en el que estaba plantado, le hablé a Cristo y le dije: 'Señor, mi único y verdadero dios, yo Gonzalo Guerrero, el más pequeño abandonado de tus hijos, el más ignorante y sufrido, te pido perdón y clemencia por servir a otro dios, que es ajeno a mi naturaleza, a mis conocimientos, y a mi fe'. (205-206)

He also reports that at that moment God spoke to him and gave him permission to participate in Mayan spiritual rituals.

The devotion and connection to his original religious and cultural identity are exemplified by his vow to teach his children about the Christian religion. He states: "yo me encargaría de hacerles llegar el verbo de mi religión y de mi raza" (226). He attempts to share the Christian religion with his daughter in the following passage: "Recémosle a Jesús...¿Quién es Jesús, padre?...Dios, hija..." (264). In the final conversation between Aguilar and Guerrero, after Aguilar has returned on Cortés's orders to bring Guerrero back to the Spanish, Guerrero tells Aguilar: "Adiós, Jerónimo de Aguilar. Reza por mi alma y olvídate de mi cuerpo" (252). In this passage, Guerrero describes himself as a double agent, dividing himself in

two (body and soul) as if they were two distinct parts which cannot be integrated.

Gonzalo Guerrero's acculturation to Mayan society is completely evident in Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero*. Seemingly superficial changes can be seen in the physical transformation that Guerrero experiences. For example, he reveals that both he and Aguilar began to dress like the Mayans early in their residence in the Yucatan peninsula:

Fue por aquel entonces que comenzamos a abandonar la costumbre cristiana de cubrirnos el cuerpo con telas pesadas y bochornosas, a imitación de las de nuestra patria, y empezamos a mudar de vestimentas y a utilizar el ex de los indios para taparnos las partes de la vergüenza. (146)

In this passage he does not simply state that this change in dress is due to the excessive heat of the region or because their original clothing had worn out, or even that they were obligated as Mayan slaves to dress like the Indians. Rather, he uses words such as "cristiana" and "patria" indicating that for Guerrero the change in clothing is more than just physical; it also carries an emotional component. Similarly, the decision to shave his beard is not entirely superficial (he comments that it makes him look younger) but he is also aware that it helps

him fit into his new surroundings. "A pesar de los enojos y las riñas del padre Aguilar, me despojé de la barba, me arranqué aquel estigma rojo para la mirada de la gente y me rejuvenecí diez años" (153). It is worth mentioning that he shaves his beard despite the protest of Aguilar, who obviously sees it as a symbol that serves to distinguish Spaniards from Indians, and also to connect the Spaniards to their own culture. This is just one example of the different mindset of the two Spaniards in Aguirre's novel.

Much later in the novel when Aguilar returns for Guerrero, the physical changes that Guerrero has experienced are much greater, especially in contrast to Aguilar's appearance: "Nos mirábamos las caras, deformadas por los afeites, y en mi caso por los adornos que colgaban de mis apéndices y de la nariz, y nos asombrábamos de lo cambiados que nos encontrábamos el uno al otro" (247). Finally, he comments that his skin color has changed to the point that he is almost indistinguishable from the Indians. He writes:

Mi piel ha adoptado un color moreno, cobrizo, que haría difícil a cualquier blanco el distinguirme de mis cofrades. Es curioso, pero creo que la convivencia de tantos años con los Cheles ha

transformado mis facciones y las ha modelado a su imagen y semejanza. (271)

Despite affirming that his skin color and facial features have been changed by his surroundings, he admits to making a conscious decision to transform his physical appearance, to adapt to and even embrace his new environment and double identity for the purpose of social advancement: "He advertido que, si deseo verme integrado a la comunidad como si fuese un natural, debo acogerme a sus costumbres y respetarlas absolutamente" (202). The description resembles a person putting on a disguise. He indicates that he makes these changes not out of true respect. The physical changes he elects to make resemble a disguise that a double agent might don when trying to go unnoticed:

Por eso me he compuesto unas bragas decorosas, con gran adorno de pedrería y pluma; he puesto sobre mis hombros un manto de algodón blanco...me he calzado con unas sandalias de cuero de ciervo y zarcillos de oro...que dejan un rastro luminoso cuando camino en la noche. (201)

Language is a significant part of Gonzalo Guerrero's transculturation. From the outset, Aguilar and Guerrero start to learn Mayan words. In the novel, Guerrero tells the readers that "ppencattoob" is the Mayan word for

"slave" for example. Both Spaniards quickly come to understand and use this and other simple words. Guerrero's extended stay and integration with the Mayans has other noticeable effects on his language and he elaborates his thoughts on these changes. He comments that he can hardly recall many familiar Spanish words:

Es curioso, pero después de tanto tiempo de estar alejado de la patria, la lengua se me ha transformado, al grado que ya no acierto bien a recordar algunas de las palabras que, en castellano, solía pronunciar con absoluta familiaridad. (202)

The use of the word "patria" in the citation indicates a nostalgia and connection with his original identity. Later, towards the end of the novel, when he encounters Spaniards in battle, he describes how difficult it has become to speak in Spanish: "le espeté con sonidos que ya no eran míos, con palabras que no me pertenecían, ecos que eran extrañas voces para mi boca y que mi lengua apenas lograba modular" (288). Such linguistic challenges are not surprising given that Guerrero at this point had had no contact with any Spaniard for five years or more. What is more revealing of Guerrero's double agency is the passage

in the novel where Guerrero tries to explain snow to the Mayans:

Un día se me ocurrió hablarles de la nieve y lamento haberlo hecho. Es fácil pintar a una yegua, imitar sus relinchos, sus corcovos y reparos, pero describir la escarcha a gente que no conoce lo que es el frío y que en toda su vida no ha experimentado el hielo, es meterse en enredo de muchos hilos. Puse toda mi elocuencia en la faena, la mímica que aprendí de pequeño en las ferias, pero todo fue inútil, por más que forcejeé no pude dar con una palabra maya que fuese lo suficientemente explícita para aclarar el concepto. Se quedó en ascuas y no me invitó al paseo durante dos días.

This passage reveals Guerrero's realization of significant linguistic and cultural barriers between himself and the Mayans. It also shows that Guerrero feels he must suppress those parts of himself and his experience which are Spanish and which will limit his upward movement in Mayan society. He regrets having mentioned the subject of snow because they rejected him for two days. He knows that repeated cultural barriers of this nature will limit his success and

therefore suppresses the Spanish part of himself, further constructing his double agent identity.

Carlos Fuentes' "Las dos orillas" in *El naranjo*

"Las dos orillas" is a novella that tells the story of Cortés' conquest of Mexico from the point of view of Jerónimo de Aguilar. The events are narrated in reverse order, starting with Chapter 10 and counting backwards to Chapter 0. Another postmodern twist in this story is that Aguilar is narrating from his grave. He announces at the outset that: "Yo acabo de morir de bubas. Una muerte atroz, dolorosa, sin remedio" (13). Throughout the story Aguilar includes many familiar facts found in the written record and at the same time re-writes the history of the Conquest in other ways. He even mentions one of the most famous accounts of the conquest of Mexico and his own place in it:

Cincuenta y ocho veces soy mencionado por el cronista Bernal Díaz del Castillo en su *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*. Lo último que se sabe de mí es que ya estaba muerto cuando Hernán Cortés, nuestro capitán, salió en su desventurada expedición a Honduras en octubre de 1524. (14)

Carrie Chorba claims that: "His narration of the conquest is loosely based on the writings of Bernal Díaz whom Fuentes considers to be the first novelist of the Americas" (484). The most glaring historical revision added by Fuentes' fictional Aguilar comes at the end of "Las dos orillas" as Aguilar describes a Mayan invasion of Spain led by Gonzalo Guerrero and orchestrated by Guerrero and Aguilar. Aguilar starts the final chapter, Chapter 0, with "Yo vi todo esto. La caída de la gran ciudad andaluza" (62). The novella starts with Chapter 10, in like form: "Yo vi todo esto. La caída de la gran ciudad azteca" (13 my emphasis). In spite of the fantastical ending to Fuentes' story, any historical fiction narrated by Aguilar could be considered revisionist since Aguilar left no known writings of his own and was given no voice otherwise in the official chronicles of the colonial period.

"Las dos orillas" has received a fair amount of critical interest and the story has been approached from a number of different perspectives. Many critics have compared "Las dos orillas" to other re-tellings of the Conquest which appeared in and around 1992, coinciding with the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Other studies have dealt with translation theory and the power of language (Paul Jay). The circularity of

time and the postmodern vision presented in the story also figure prominently in some analyses (Carrie C. Chorba, Carmen Rivera). Several critics have looked at the story in relation to Fuentes's other writings, particularly Fuentes's views on Mexican and Latin American identity (Chorba, Francisco Javier Ordiz Vázquez). Another approach has been to analyze the interplay between La Malinche--who is generally considered a traitor by history and popular culture--Jerónimo de Aguilar, and Cortés (Thomas P. Waldemar). Waldemar states that in "Las dos orillas":

"Aguilar and La Malinche become double agents of historical and cultural change, participating in the never-ending series of dialogues between two unfinished nations and cultures" (145).

While my analysis will overlap with some of these themes, I focus on the portrayal of Jerónimo de Aguilar as a double agent. I will demonstrate how throughout "Las dos orillas" the fictional Aguilar displays characteristics associated with double agents. In Fuentes's text, Aguilar's two-faced nature, uncertain loyalties, and betrayal of the Spaniards, re-write history independent of the actual events which he narrates since the Aguilar of the written record was shown to be an exemplary Christian, loyal to the Spaniards, and possessing a unitary Western European

identity. I will show how the ambiguous nature of Fuentes's Jerónimo de Aguilar brings Mexican history, and with it Mexican identity, more in line with reality. Aguilar, Guerrero, Cabeza de Vaca and others who spent years among the indigenous groups in the Americas, were isolated from Europeans, and are unlikely to have possessed the unfailing loyalty to their original heritage that has often been claimed in official records.

The Spaniard Jerónimo de Aguilar's uncertain loyalty can be seen in many different ways throughout "Las dos orillas". One way is the continual praise he offers for his adopted indigenous culture of eight years in the Yucatán, and also for the Aztec culture of central Mexico, which he experienced once he joined the Cortés expedition. It starts in the first paragraph of Chapter 10 (the first chapter) where Aguilar points out the impressive size of the Aztec capital in comparison to Spanish cities: "Vi el agua quemada de la laguna sobre la cual se asentó Gran Tenochtitlan, dos veces más grande que Córdoba" (13). He continues praising the New World and its original inhabitants while at the same time lamenting the devastation brought on by the presence of the Europeans:

Me maravilla ver, de la noche a la mañana, esta Ciudad de México poblada de rostros marcados por

la viruela...los rostros han perdido para siempre su belleza oscura, su perfil perfecto: Europa le ha arañado para siempre el rostro a este Nuevo Mundo que, bien visto, es más viejo que el europeo. (14)

Aguilar continues his praise of Tenochtitlan, and at the same time calls into question the European and Christian authority: "Nadie, entre nosotros, ni en el Viejo ni en el Nuevo Mundo, había visto ciudad más espléndida que la capital de Moctezuma...las novedades que mostraban, jamás vistas por nosotros ni mencionadas en la Biblia" (26). His comment that not even the Bible mentions a city as impressive as Tenochtitlán implies that the justification for the Spanish campaign in the New World is questionable.

The Spaniard's deep admiration for the indigenous people and their culture becomes more explicit as the narration continues. "Moctezuma me acarició la mano y me ofreció un anillo verde como un loro. Yo se lo regresé y le dije que mi amor por este pueblo era premio suficiente" (32). He elaborates this idyllic vision of the New World cultures in the following passage:

Me enamoré de mi nuevo pueblo, de su sencillez para tratar los asuntos de la vida. Sobre todo ciudaban su tierra, su aire, su agua preciosa y

escasa...Cuidar la tierra; era su misión fundamental, eran servidores de la tierra, para eso habían nacido. Sus cuentos mágicos, sus ceremonias, sus oraciones, no tenían, me di cuenta, más propósito que mantener viva y fecunda la tierra, honrar a los antepasados...(58)

In spite of the love he expresses for his adopted culture, he remains Spanish and points out his Spanish identity on numerous occasions. He regularly uses the *nosotros* form of the verb when talking about the Spaniards, thus including himself among the Spaniards. This is seen in the following passage where he also recognizes the impressive achievement of the superior Spanish military. He narrates: "en la que menos de seiscientos esforzados españoles sometimos a un imperio nueve veces mayor que España en territorio y tres veces mayor en población" (17). He includes himself among the Spaniards on other occasions: "Los españoles matamos algo más que el poder indio..." (20). His struggling dual identity reveals itself when he deceives Cortés: he comments that he did it "odiándome a mí mismo por mi traición" (31). Towards the end of the novella he highlights his Spanish heritage when he refers to himself in the following way: "Mas me preguntaréis a mí, Jerónimo de Aguilar, natural de Ecija..." (61). The

fictional Aguilar also reveals his dual and ambiguous allegiance when he concedes that perhaps it was justified that the Spaniards stole the Aztec gold and sent it back to Spain: "¿No hicimos más que darle mejor destino al oro de los Aztecas, arrancarlo de su estéril oficio para ...difundirlo?" (20). Chorba asserts that: "He is essentially Spanish, but was immersed for eight years in Mesoamerican culture. Where his loyalties lie is anyone's guess and Fuentes taps this uncertainty fully" (1998:120).

Fuentes's Aguilar reveals that he himself is not fully aware of his own identity and loyalties. His struggle with a dual Spanish-Mayan identity is what transforms him into a double agent. He ponders his linguistic identity:

Digo que hablo el español. Es hora de confesar que yo también debí aprenderlo de vuelta, pues en ocho años de vida entre los indios por poco lo pierdo. Ahora con la tropa de Cortés, redescubrí mi propia lengua, la que fluyó hacia mis labios desde los pechos de mi madre castellana. (51)

He then extends his dubious linguistic identity to a broader sense of personal identity when he asks himself the following question: "¿Me redescubrí a mí mismo al regresar a la compañía y la lengua de los españoles?" (51). He essentially answers his own question, affirming his dual

identity, when he states the following: "Yo, que también poseía dos voces, las de Europa y América, había sido derrotado. Pues tenía dos patrias; y ésta, quizás, fue mi debilidad más que mi fuerza" (36). It is not only his own identity which is ambiguous, but also his feelings regarding the Conquest that are mixed and contradictory. He states that: "La gloria y la abyección, debo añadir, son igualmente notorias en estas andanzas de la Conquista" (15).

Further distancing himself from the usual colonial characterizations, Fuentes' Jerónimo de Aguilar repeatedly describes himself as a traitor to the Spanish in "Las dos orillas". Through his position as translator, he functions as a double agent, attempting to orchestrate a Spanish defeat in the New World. For example, he states:

Traduje a mi antojo. No le comuniqué al príncipe vencido lo que Cortés realmente le dijo, sino que puse en boca de nuestro jefe una amenaza...Añadí, inventando por mi cuenta y burlándome de Cortés...Traduje, traicioné, inventé. (21)

He confesses that later, from the grave, he feels remorse and describes his betrayal of the Spanish through his role as translator in the following way: "me descubro ante la posteridad y la muerte como un falsario, un traidor a mi

capitán Cortés" (22). Several scholarly studies focus on translation in "Las dos orillas" but it is not only through erroneous translation that the fictional Aguilar acts as a double agent. He also directly communicates relevant strategic information about the Spanish military campaign to the Aztecs. He reveals that: "le hablé en mexicano al Rey y le dije en secreto los peligros que acechaban a los españoles" (31). And the fictional Aguilar states that: "Le di al Rey el secreto de la debilidad de Cortés" (32). He also lies to Cortés in an effort to sabotage the Spanish: "No hay peligro, le dije a Cortés, sabiendo que lo había" (44). If the reader has any doubts about the fictional narrator Jerónimo de Aguilar's loyalty or agenda in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, they are quelled by the following declaration:

Me asocié de este modo a la esperanza de una victoria indígena. Todos mis actos, ya lo habéis adivinado y yo os lo puedo decir desde mi sudario intangible, iban dirigidos a esta meta: el triunfo de los indios contra los españoles. (32)

Paul Jay describes the fictional Jerónimo de Aguilar of "Las dos orillas" in the following way:

He is the man caught in between, the mediate figure, born Spanish, allied with the Mayans,

writing from the world of the dead, usurping the power of both Díaz and Cortés, in every sense of the word a hybrid...(421).

In Fuentes's novella he is a Spaniard who became Mayan for eight years, returned to the Spanish, and then secretly assisted his adopted Mayan culture.

Fuentes rewrites the Conquest and as a result calls into question assumptions about individuals such as Jerónimo de Aguilar. He accomplishes this not only by portraying the Spanish Aguilar as a double agent for the Aztecs and Mayans in contrast to his portrayal in the colonial record as a hero, but also by having Aguilar mention, question, and even ridicule the historical records and the men who wrote them. As mentioned earlier, the fictional Aguilar recognizes Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera* and Aguilar's own place in it. As Carmen Rivera explains:

Carlos Fuentes no falsifica los hechos históricos del conocimiento general, como las fechas de los acontecimientos o los nombres de los personajes, sino que ofrece su propia versión sobre los acontecimientos que no explica Díaz del Castillo en su texto. (54)

However, Díaz del Castillo is not the only historian whose texts are mentioned and questioned. He also offers the following sarcastic observation about Díaz del Castillo's historical record: "Esto lo sé yo porque ya me morí; no lo sabía muy bien el cronista de Medina del Campo al escribir su fabulosa historia" (15). The historian Antonio de Solís y Ribadeynera's authority to write an adequate chronicle of the events is called into question, also in derisive fashion, by the fictional Aguilar, in the following passage:

Yo creo que el más sabio de todos nosotros fue el llamado Solís, 'Tras-de-la-Puerta', quien se la pasaba en su casa detrás de la puerta viendo a los demás pasar por la calle, sin entrometerse y sin ser entrometido. (16-17)

Fuentes leaves no doubt about his scepticism of the written record and his belief that history is a construct when the narrator Aguilar says: "Siempre pudo ocurrir exactamente lo contrario de lo que la crónica consigna. Siempre" (16). Fuentes has continually re-written the past in his other novels and has commented that: "el pasado no ha concluido; el pasado tiene que ser re-inventado a cada momento para que no se nos fosilice entre las manos" (*Valiente* 23).

Conclusions

Aguirre's *Gonzalo Guerrero*, published in 1980 and Fuentes's "Las dos orillas", published in 1994, reflect the changing interpretations of Mexican history, in particular the Conquest of Mexico. Both works depict the fictionalized historical figures of Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar in a much more complex way than has been seen in the historical texts from the colonial period and even those written earlier in the twentieth century. Instead of traitor and hero, Guerrero and Aguilar are seen as double agents, allied with two sides, as individuals who are duplicitous regarding their identity. Ironically, I believe that these fictional representations more accurately represent the identities of Guerrero and Aguilar than the purportedly non-fiction historical chronicles.

Being the only two survivors of their now famous shipwreck, Guerrero and Aguilar will forever be mentioned and studied together. *Gonzalo Guerrero* and "Las dos orillas" can be read as companion stories in many ways. Both men characterize themselves as double agents through their own narration. Both Aguilar and Guerrero have the authority to re-tell their story, along with any "corrections" to the chronicles. *Gonzalo Guerrero* starts at

the beginning with Guerrero narrating their story as they sail from Darien, Panama and ends with Guerrero's death, while "Las dos orillas" features a dead Aguilar narrating the story in reverse after the fall of Tenochtitlan. Further, the two narratives each contain exactly ten chapters, but start chronologically at opposite ends of the Guerrero-Aguilar story and work towards a common point in time. In addition to being double agents, the fictional representations of these two men can be seen as alter egos given the two different paths in life they ultimately choose for themselves.

The year 1992 was pivotal in Latin American history. In the years leading up to 1992 many works of historical fiction that revisited the Conquest were published. *Gonzalo Guerrero* was published in 1980, during a time when the Mexican government was attempting to create a sense of national identity and pride based on Mexico's mestizaje. The statues of Gonzalo Guerrero erected in the 1970s are an example of that strategy. Although "Las dos orillas" was published just fourteen years later it is markedly different in form and reflects the increasing postmodernity of the 1980s and 1990s exemplified by a dead narrator and chapters numbered in reverse from ten to zero. Another aspect of "Las dos orillas" that distinguishes it from

previously published Guerrero-Aguilar narratives is that Jerónimo de Aguilar, not Gonzalo Guerrero, is the narrative voice. In the development of contemporary Latin American historical fiction, Fuentes's "Las dos orillas" continues the current trend of giving a voice to someone previously unheard. Finally, the two works reflect changing attitudes and views of the intertwined topics of history and identity in Mexico. Carlos Fuentes and Eugenio Aguirre produce in these works a more postmodern, complex vision of identity and mestizaje through historical figures converted into double agents in order to reflect the dual identity that was the reality for transculturated Europeans like Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar in the New World.

CHAPTER THREE

Gender Bending Double Agents

As general interest in the colonization and Conquest of Latin America has increased significantly in the past two decades, contemporary historical fiction dealing with that period has also boomed. The narratives that have gained the most critical attention are those that attempt to rewrite, challenge, or subvert conventional historical accounts or, at a minimum, present historical events from a new angle. At the same time, these new versions of history usually focus on what Kim López calls the "great men" of history. Even those narratives which are told from the point of view of a subaltern voice still include prominent individuals like Columbus and Cortés at the center of the story. In her recently published study of contemporary Latin American novels of the conquest, López states: "The majority of the novels in this corpus have European male protagonists representing historically documented explorers and conquistadors" (9). It will be worthwhile to analyze works of Latin American historical fiction to explore works that

tell history from a subaltern point of view, giving voice to marginalized individuals.

This chapter will focus on two historical novels published in the 1990's that veer away from the trend of relating the lives of the "great men" of history. *Duerme*, by Carmen Boullosa and *Invasores del paraíso* by Herminio Martínez, represent the Conquest and colonization of Mexico from the point of view of a female dressed as a soldier, and from the perspective of a crew member of a Spanish ship, respectively. These two Mexican novels differ from most mainstream contemporary historical novels due principally to the ambiguous and duplicitous gender identity exhibited by each protagonist. My analysis will show how the fluid gender identities exhibited by the narrator and protagonist Claire in Boullosa's *Duerme*, and by Paco (also the narrator and protagonist) in Martínez's *Invasores del paraíso*, allow these two characters to assume the characteristics of double agents. I will also demonstrate how these protagonists represent extremely marginalized voices of the colonial period and why those voices are relevant today.

The dearth of contemporary Latin American historical novels told from a female point of view is not very surprising, given that few women participated in the

Conquest and colonization and even fewer had their experiences included in texts. However, some women did witness and participate in significant events of the Latin American colonial period. Of course one of the most famous figures in the Spanish Conquest of Mexico is a woman: La Malinche, Cortés' indigenous translator, assistant and companion. She has been a constant presence in Mexican literature and popular culture since the Conquest. She is also the quintessential "double agent" in every sense. Laura Esquivel, the best selling Mexican author, in 2005 published a historical novel titled *La Malinche*, in which she offers yet another view of the much maligned Malinche. Another woman from the Colonial era who has gained recent attention in contemporary literature is doña Inés Suárez. She challenged and subverted societal norms of femininity of the time and also actively participated in the Conquest of Chile. She is the protagonist and narrator of the Isabel Allende historical novel *Inés del alma mía*, published in 2006. Susan Socolow documents that in Inés Suárez's grant of an encomienda her "masculine" participation in the Conquest of Chile is described in the following way:

And after the death of the chiefs, with masculine verve you went out to enhearten the Christians who were still fighting, curing the wounded and

inspiring the healthy, giving them all encouraging words, which was one of the reasons that, with your words in their ears, they went to where a large number of Indians were usually encamped and defeated them... (183)

European women were not the only ones participating in military affairs as Blanca López de Mariscal reminds us of the indigenous female presence in battle with the following:

La lámina veintidós del Lienzo del Tlaxcala nos presenta la batalla que se llevó a cabo en Tepotztlan, en ella aparece una escena de combate, en la que las mujeres tienen que tomar las armas y participar en batalla. En el Códice Florentino...podemos también encontrar grabados en los que se representa a las mujeres en combate. (73)

There were also women who participated in the Latin American Conquest and colonization dressing as men. One whose life has been fictionalized in contemporary literature is Manuela Sainz, a mistress of Simón Bolívar. She dressed as a man and went into battle with Bolívar in the late colonial period. She is the topic of the Colombian novelist Jaime Manrique's English-language novel *Our Lives*

Are the Rivers, published in 2006. She also appears in the Gabriel García Márquez historical novel *El general en su laberinto*. Cathleen Medwick describes her in the following way:

Manuela Sainz, mistress of Simón Bolívar, was a dark-eyed, smoldering beauty who packed a pistol and smoked cigars. Wearing her colonel's uniform and patent leather boots with gold spurs she followed her lover into battle. (40)

Catalina de Erauso, "La Monja Alférez", a Spanish woman who grew up in a convent in San Sebastian until the age of fifteen, has become one of the most well known women who dressed as a man to serve in the military in the New World. Truly a unique case, her story has gained a lot of attention among critics and authors. Kathleen Ann Myers writes of the notoriety gained by Catalina de Erauso during her own life time, and significantly mentions the Papal approval of her transvestism:

The admiration and astonishment expressed by the crowds that had gathered to witness Catalina's entrance into Lima and the religious authorities who heard her confession were mere preludes to the sensation her story became in Europe. Although both canon and civil law prohibited cross-

dressing, the highest ranking officials of the Catholic Church and Spanish Empire granted Catalina's permission to remain dressed as a man.
(in Arias 182)

The Wo/man in Carmen Boullosa's *Duerme*

Catalina de Erauso (La Monja Alférez) is undoubtedly the inspiration, at least in part, for Carmen Boullosa's novel *Duerme*, as the two stories share many similarities. Boullosa's historical novel tells the story of a French woman named Claire who, dressed as a soldier, sails to the New World. Upon arrival in the Spanish colonies, s/he is captured and injected with magical indigenous waters which give her eternal life as long as s/he stays within the Valley of Mexico. Straying just a few miles from the Valley of Mexico sends Claire into a deep sleep, hence the title of the novel. Like Boullosa's Claire, Catalina de Erauso settled in and lived out her life in Mexico as a man, taking the name Antonio de Erauso. Marjorie Garber states: "Then in 1630, she returned to the Americas, this time to Mexico, to live out the rest of her years there as Antonio de Erauso, mule-driver and small merchant" (xlii, in Erauso). Sherry Velasco's description of Catalina de Erauso

mirrors Boullosa's Claire: "...Catalina de Erauso ultimately embodies the potential to escape essentializing notions of identity since her long-term passing is a reminder of the unstable and performative nature of gender" (11).

Boullosa's *Duerme* makes a significant and highly original contribution to the Latin American corpus of historical novels dealing with the Conquest and colonization, placing the phenomenon of female-to-male cross dressing within the context of the many existent stories of "macho" conquistadors coming to the New World. Female-to-male cross dressing has been well documented in many cultures throughout the world but has been largely ignored in most mainstream history books, and even in contemporary literature and pop culture, with a few exceptions such as movies like *Yentl*. Jacobo Schifter gives a brief historical overview of women dressing as men in order to work in male dominated professions such as the military:

In medieval Holland for example, many women dressed as men fought in the armed forces. Others lived religious lives as men and were later canonized as female saints. Interestingly, a similar phenomenon is reported to have taken place

in the Old West of the United States. Women who wished to break free of restrictive gender roles used male dress to live as "passing women" in remote farms or ranches. (6)

Garber points out that: "Queen Elizabeth herself was said to have cross-dressed upon occasion...to inspire her troops against the Spanish Armada" (28).

Though women have dressed as men for many different reasons, they generally have done so to gain the myriad privileges that men enjoyed in patriarchal societies. Dekker and Pol comment that, "In the early modern era passing oneself off as a man was a real and viable option for women who had fallen into bad times and were struggling to overcome their difficult circumstances" (1-2). Boullosa's protagonist exemplifies this phenomenon. She initially is dressed as a boy by her mother in order to keep her from a life of prostitution, a world to which her mother belonged. However, she quickly learns all the benefits that dressing (passing) as a man can bring her. In order to maintain these privileges she embarks on a series of masquerades and identity changes, alternating between male and female, Spanish and indigenous, upper and lower class, and heterosexual and lesbian, all for the purpose of ultimately maintaining a male identity and its privileges.

She is physically a woman, and clearly she is intellectually aware of that fact, but she engages in many duplicitous actions to help maintain an outwardly masculine identity. Toggling between the masculine identity she yearns to keep and the female identity she cannot escape converts her into a double agent.

The concept of members of minority or oppressed groups being converted into double agents, as a strategy for successful identity formation, is developed by Tina Chen as it relates to Asian American literature, and the experience of Asian Americans in general. According to Chen, double agency is characterized by the use of impersonation, imposture, and performance (among other things) as coping skills used by marginalized individuals in a given society. There is some overlap in the definition of these three strategies, but all of them are based on established stereotypes of the subaltern groups primarily set by the majority group. Marginalized individuals, attempting to fit in with, or gain ground in, the society around them while maintaining their own identity, employ these strategies.

I believe Boullosa's Claire possesses dual or multiple allegiances based principally on her ambiguous gender identity, as well as the fact that many of her actions and thoughts can be characterized by the strategies of

impersonation, imposture, and performance. Jill Kuhnheim affirms that "Claire both reproduces and undermines stereotypical gender roles, at times in control of her representation and at other moments, controlled by the codes she manipulates" (13). Chen cites an example of the phenomenon of imposture employed by an Asian-American character in the novel *Native Speaker* that parallels Claire's experience in *Duerme*. Chen makes the following observation about Henry, the protagonist in the novel *Native Speaker*: "Henry discovers that impostures can take on a life of their own and the impostor can become a victim of his own double agency" (176). This applies equally to Claire since by the end of *Duerme*, Claire is "asleep" and impotent, even though she has successfully masqueraded in the New World as a man, as a member of the upper class, as a Spaniard, and even as an Indian.

The dual nature of Claire's identity is evident from the first page of the novel. There we learn that Claire is a woman and further that there is no doubt in her mind of her own biological identity and physiological reality. After the Indian woman removes Claire's clothes (a French soldier's uniform), Claire says to the Indian woman, "Si, soy mujer, ya lo viste" (19). This is contrasted sharply with the Indian woman's understanding of Claire's gender

and identity. The Indian woman exclaims, referring to Claire, "Pues acá todo está muy extraño. Este hombre es sin ropas mujer" (20). Later the Indian woman says to Claire, "Eres hombre, eres mujer y eres tonto también" (39). While the Indian woman may have a more fluid idea of gender identity, Claire has a clear-cut, almost modern, understanding of what she is and what she wants. While she knows she is a woman, Claire states her clear preference for dressing and behaving like a man throughout the novel. She also laments the periods where she is forced to 'masquerade' as a woman. When the Indian woman uses the masculine adjective 'quieto' Claire tells us that "Ese 'quieto' en masculino me tranquiliza" (38). Claire indicates her sought after identity clearly in the following passage: "Reviso el salón que es momentáneamente mío: por fin soy rico, un Caballero, un Noble, de Buena Cuna" (44). Clearly, social class and ethnic origin are important to Claire. However, the use of the masculine adjective "rico", and of course, the desire to be a "Caballero", indicate that her dual identity is manifested mostly in terms of gender.

Claire's ease at pretending to be a man when she is in reality a woman, and fully conscious of that fact, complement and facilitate her role as double agent in other

realms such as class, nationality, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, as required by the circumstances she finds herself in throughout her narrative. For example, she must pretend to be the dead Conde Urquiza at one point in the story and is able to convince others that she is indeed the count with no problem. Later, she even relates to the Indian woman the duplicitous strategies she used to impersonate the dead man. While Claire is being carried on a stretcher, playing dead, a passerby shrieks that the dead "man's" eyes are open, and that s/he is looking at the passerby. Later, Claire reveals her strategy of that moment to the Indian woman. She calmly and clearly explains why she did not close her eyes: "la culpa fue del lienzo, él se resbaló, yo tenía los ojos abiertos, era peor que me viera la morena cerrándolos..." (38). The quick reaction and subsequent deceptive performance show that she is extremely talented at impersonation; it is in fact already second nature to her given the French woman's continual impersonation of a Spanish soldier. She must impersonate a man while being a woman biologically; a nobleman while coming from the lower classes; a Spaniard while she is in reality French; and ultimately she impersonates a dead person while she is alive. Further evidence of her ability to 'impersonate' is found in her ability to speak perfect

Spanish with no accent, despite being French. Discussing whether or not she can pass for the Conde Urquiza, the Indian woman comments, "Ya lo oí hablar, tiene un castellano bueno, sin acento extranjero" (17). There are numerous incidents in which her identity alternates between male and female, Spanish and Indian, rich and poor, heterosexual and homosexual. Claire never narrates any problems with these identities with the exception of her complaint that she does not like doing women's work or wearing women's clothing, especially the work or clothing of an Indian woman. Clearly for Claire, one type of deception is great practice for performing others. Chen explains why this type of impersonation seems so natural to those in minority groups:

Impersonation operates critically in contemporary Asian American literature in large part because it has been so formative as a practice by which Asian immigrants transformed themselves into Asian Americans and dominant notions of how Asian Americans should perform within the cultural, social and political landscapes of the United States (20).

Not surprisingly, then, Boullosa does not restrict Claire's coping skills of impersonation, imposture, and

performance to her attempts to persuade others that she is a man. Claire uses these same strategies to navigate problematic notions of class and ethnicity both of which figure into her complex, changing sense of self. As mentioned, Claire becomes a "Caballero" when in reality is a soldier; she is "transformed" via clothing into an Indian woman while in reality being French; she has a pleasurable sexual encounter with an Italian woman while clearly expressing romantic love for Pedro the poet. Like many double agents, Claire's ability to transform herself reminds the reader of a chameleon: Claire changes her identity the way the chameleon changes its appearance, constantly changing to suit its circumstances and to protect itself. She does not fit into any of the rigid, essentialist categories into which people in the Colonial period were placed, much in the same way that Gonzalo Guerrero and Jerónimo de Aguilar did not fit into set categories either. Her identity is based on impersonating and performing these opposing roles. Chen claims that:

impersonation offers us more than a way of thinking about the performance of identity as that which is either essentialized or constructed: it affords us a paradigm for considering the mutually constitutive dimensions of identity and

performance—the im-personation that is not about performing someone else's identity but about performing into being a sense of one's own personhood (8).

In other words, impersonation and double agency are the only reality and identity that Claire has ever known. Her earliest memory from childhood that she chooses to narrate is of her mother dressing her in male clothing and training with the soldiers as a male. "Me veo de otra manera. Recuerdo a mamá. La veo haciéndome usar ropa de varón desde muy niña...veo a los soldados entrenándome en el uso de las armas" (34). She learned to 'pass' for something she was not from the outset. Even in the last two pages of the novel Claire is seen impersonating another: "Ante los españoles Claire se hace pasar por el enviado del sobrino del Conde" (144).

Boullosa juxtaposes Claire's complex character, her lack of any unitary sense of identity, to the Spanish colonial mindset that placed all individuals into their appropriate category. Most Europeans easily recognized their place within the hierarchy of sixteenth century Spain and New Spain. Claire experiences a "category crisis", as theorized by Marjorie Garber and discussed in the introduction. Claire's identity regularly alternates

between opposite ends of several several binary categories: man/woman, rich/poor, and indigenous/European. Boullosa also reminds the reader of the Jew/Christian binary present in Spanish ideology of the period with its focus on having the correct religious identity: "Es mucho riesgo estar aquí...Luterano, francés, pirata, contrabandista. Muchos motivos para alcanzar la horca. Quien sabe, tal vez hasta es judío" (16).

The hierarchy in the New World at the time of the Conquest was well established: being Catholic and Spanish was superior to being Lutheran and French. The citation also indicates that for the sixteenth century Spanish crown, the worst identity of all is Jewish, a topic explored in the following chapter. The further down in the hierarchy you were, the more risk you faced. The reader is reminded of how simply one's identity can supposedly be established according to the Spaniards of the colonial period. One only had to lower the man's pants to see if he was Jewish. The passage previously cited, when read completely, exemplifies these attitudes, "Quien sabe, tal vez hasta es judío. Es fácil verlo, ahora que le cambien la ropa" (16). The Indian woman, on the other hand, expresses a more nuanced and complex concept of identity. She says to Claire: "Usted que no eres hombre ni mujer, que no eres

nahua ni español, ni mestizo, ni Conde ni Encomendado, no mereces la muerte" (28). The Indian woman recognizes that Claire does not fit into the preordained categories in terms of gender, race, and class. For the indigenous woman, such divisions are not essential to define identity. When the Indian woman starts out using the formal 'usted' and then switches to the informal 'tu', we have another example of her recognition of the categories important to the Europeans, mitigated by her lack of interest in conforming to such segregation.

(Author)ity and Identity

Catalina de Erauso eventually wrote her autobiography, published as *Vida y sucesos de la monja alférez*. In like fashion, part of the 'performance' which Claire commits throughout most of the novel is evident in the narration itself. Since she is the narrator, she has the authority to tell her own story for the vast majority of the novel. Only briefly does she cede the power of the word to others. She even self-consciously comments on her narration on more than one occasion. She asks herself (or the readers) why she is narrating this story. "¿Para qué lo hago? ¿Para qué narrarme a mí lo que me va sucediendo?" (21). Despite her

position as the principle voice in the text, the first words of the novel are "Ya oigo", (15). That is to say, she hears but has no voice, as can be seen later in the same opening paragraph when she comments on: "Mis palabras (mudas, no puedo abrir la boca)" (15). She has no voice which can be heard by others in the Colonial world, only by the (contemporary) readers. As the narration continues she is able to speak, but despite her influence over the readers' perception of her new life she never controls her ultimate destiny. After the Indian woman puts the magical waters into her chest cavity, Claire's control is limited by the geographical restrictions inherent in the magical waters. Although she constantly assumes new identities her ultimate fate is determined by the Mexican (indigenous) waters placed into her European body by the Indian woman, and the decisions of Pedro, a European man. She speculates on this lack of control when she poses the question "¿En qué me han convertido las aguas que viajan por mis venas?" (72). Because of the "aguas" she cannot bleed and therefore cannot die. She is, in effect, both invincible and powerless at the same time and eventually becomes completely aware of the contradictory nature of an identity that refuses to conform to the established conventions of behavior.

Towards the end of the novel, as she begins to 'sleep', she cedes her narrative power over to Pedro de Ocejo (the poet). The concept of narratives or 'historias' as instruments of power and authority is a principle theme in *Duerme*. Pedro de Ocejo, the poet, states that: "Escribir historias sí sirve, no digo que no, pero sirve demasiado, es una manera de conquistar y vencer, y yo no tengo por qué conquistar mundo" (77). Later the new narrative voice asserts that it has been decided that Claire will not appear in any document: "no ha permitido que escribano alguno hiciera registro de la confesión. Ha decidido que Claire no aparezca en ningún documento" (127). This decision further reduces Claire's possibility of regaining power in the future since power and agency are connected with story and narration. Claire assumes power when she is narrating her own story. Otherwise she has none. When Claire asks herself early in the novel why she narrates her story to herself (previously cited), it is clearly because her narrative activities provide a chance to have agency in a situation in which she would otherwise be viewed primarily as an object.

Claire's Transculturation

Transculturation has many definitions and is closely related to the process of acculturation. Some define transculturation as a process experienced by one individual while acculturation is experienced by an entire culture or society, as in a colonial society. While the term "transculturation" was coined by the Cuban Fernando Ortiz in his 1947 work *Contrapunteo del tabaco y el azúcar*, other writers such as the Peruvian José María Arguedas have offered their own definitions of both acculturation and transculturation. Of course, Ortiz's and Arguedas' view of transculturation reflect the different histories and ethnic make up of each country. As Silvia Spitta asserts: "even though the term 'transculturation' can be useful in describing the dynamics of cultural contact very generally, it must continually be redefined for specific contexts" (6). More recently, Angel Rama and Néstor García Canclini have contributed significantly to the topic with *Transculturación en América Latina* and *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad*, respectively. In essence, transculturation refers to

becoming part of another culture to the point that one loses almost all of her/his original culture or creates an entirely new culture. Spitta argues that:

In the novels of transculturation, one can see the coexistence of at least two different cosmologies and systems of logic operating in parallel within the very narration and—as I will argue—within the narrators themselves (11).

Claire expresses two cultural allegiances during her life in the New World: the European and the indigenous American caused by the placement of the waters into her chest by the Indian woman. The famous story of Cabeza de Vaca's experience living among the North American indigenous for a number of years, which is described in *Naufragios*, represents a kind of transculturation. Likewise Claire's narration in *Duerme* indicates an example of transculturation in that the French woman living among the American indigenous becomes uniquely Mexican. Such a process lends itself to double agency since an individual will likely always feel an allegiance to their home country and the values they learned as a child. At the same time they can develop attachments to the world view and values of their new environment. Like many Europeans who went to the New World, Claire experienced transculturation. There

she tried new foods, spoke different languages, and confronted or adopted new ideas, customs, and clothing as any immigrant would. She comments frequently on the indigenous customs that are new to her. For example, she refers to the constant cleaning of the indigenous people as 'esa manía india'. There are also several references to the indigenous languages that she is not able to understand. On several occasions Claire is forced to wear 'ropa de india' or indigenous clothing. She considers this clothing beneath her, as she desires a much higher socio-economic status, that associated with a Spanish nobleman. She makes numerous remarks that would be considered racist and insensitive by contemporary audiences. She posits, for example, the inferiority of the indigenous peoples, both their culture and their clothing. In addition to the common experiences one has when living in another culture, Claire has the ultimate transculturation—a physical one--when the Indian woman pours into her the magical Mexican waters which give her eternal life. This change makes her transculturation physical, not only mental or emotional. Claire comes to realize how profound this change is approximately halfway through the novel. Claire is an historical character in a novel who is literally as dependent on the indigenous elements which now flow in her veins as she is on the

European genes she carries; she has a dual allegiance, a dual identity, as a double agent would. Salles-Reese explains:

El pasado colonial ya no es conocimiento
adquirible o adquirido, sino una experiencia que
se convierte en parte orgánica del cuerpo
cultural, viva y capaz de crecer, como Claire que,
a lo largo de su vida, acumula experiencias
obtenidas en ambos lados del Océano. De igual
importancia es lo europeo y lo indígena... (147)

With Claire's final transculturation by means of the indigenous waters she clearly becomes a representative of the mestizo in contemporary Mexico or other parts of Latin America, comprised of a problematic mix of European and American elements. Salvador Oropesa goes so far as to say that, "With the creation of Claire, the travesty, Boullosa problematizes the identity of the New Mexican/New Spaniard" (105). He adds:

The key moment in *Duerme* is nearly at the end of the novel, when, in a moment of anagnorisis Claire asks: 'And me, am I not also a daughter of the race? The only French woman with water in her veins, the woman of artificial life, the one who

can only live on Mexican land'. At this moment in the adventure Claire has become Mexican. (108)

Claire's problematic identity, multiple allegiances and status as double agent are exemplified in this passage. She has become Mexican not by virtue of no longer being French but by incorporating the essence of the New World into the physical and psychological entity who came from Europe.

Boullosa roots the problematic identity of contemporary Mexico in the formative colonial years. Through Claire's double agencies (male/female, European/American) Boullosa draws attention to the dual or multiple nature of current Mexican identities. She also challenges and subverts history by giving voice to a marginalized character like Claire. Such individuals clearly existed and helped to forge the new nations in Latin America, but had virtually no voice in the literature created in Latin America. They remain marginalized today, in part because of their absence from the written record. Linda Hutcheon argues that such works:

juxtapose what we think we know of the past (from official archival sources and personal memory) with an alternate representation that foregrounds the postmodern epistemological questioning of the

nature of historical knowledge. Which facts make it into history? And *whose* facts? (71)

Boullosa further relates historical fiction to the present through her narrative techniques. For example, the novel is largely narrated in the present tense and first person, which lends it a sense of immediacy. She makes use of anachronisms. Characters alternate between contemporary rhythms of speech and vocabulary juxtaposed with speech and vocabulary associated with the sixteenth century. The same can be said of the events and scenes the author chooses to include in the narration. In certain instances Claire speaks of simple, everyday matters relevant to the time period in which the action takes place and narrates ideas representative of the time period. The reader easily believes her to be a character living in 1571. The following passage illustrates a sixteenth century mindset:

El agua y la tierra. El bien y el mal. Los hombres y las mujeres. Los europeos y los de otras razas. Reto a cualquiera que vista como yo ropa de india y luego me dirá en cuánto se dividen los seres. 'En dos', me contestará, 'los blancos y los indios'. (57)

At other times, her thoughts and concerns are anachronistic. For example, Claire ponders her existence:

No sé para qué nací, no lo deseó nadie, no lo pedí yo, jamás he sentido apego por algún acto, sea de índole que fuere, si es para quedarme en el mismo sitio o ser sujeto de repetición. Lo cual no quiere decir que me guste pasarla mal, todo lo contrario. Disfruto disfrutar, y no me atrae tampoco la idea de morirme. (75)

Though the philosophical musings are almost ageless, they are expressed in a way that does not sound typical of a person of the sixteenth century, despite the use of the now dead future subjunctive tense 'fuere'.

Throughout *Duerme*, we can see the use of postmodern narrative techniques such as the change of narrators. Boullosa does not even offer the reader a pseudo-explanation for the change in narrators, found in some novels like *Don Quixote*, in which the new narrative voice indicates why the narration has shifted to a new voice (i.e. "This text came my way via...and now..."). Rather, the last chapter is simply the 'desenlace' and Claire is no longer narrating. Boullosa is playing with the genre of historical fiction at the same time that she is working within in.

Hutcheons has commented on the frequent anachronisms in historiographic metafiction and even states that anachronisms create a "doubleness" in the text (71). The narrative techniques and anachronisms in *Duerme* toggle the reader between the past and present much the way Claire goes back and forth between gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. Boullosa does this to openly relate past events to the present time. The violent nature of the colonial past and all the conflicts caused by strict, rigid categories imposed by the Spaniards in New Spain set the stage for the current identity crises which are reflected in contemporary literature. As Spitta suggests, "if the characters depicted in novels and if the subjectivities of writers are assumed to be split and in flux, then one also must call for the creation of new types of readers" (8). Boullosa attempts to deconstruct for the contemporary reader commonly accepted notions about Latin American history and the resultant multiple identities through the fragmented and problematic identity of Claire in *Duerme*.

Repressed/Suppressed Homoeroticism in

Invasores del paraíso

The 1998 Herminio Martínez novel *Invasores del paraíso*, set in the period of the Conquest and colonization of Mexico, introduces the male crew member Paco, the narrator and protagonist of the novel, who displays a fluid gender identity and can be characterized as a double agent because he masks, suppresses, and denies his homoerotic desires and feminine appearance. As in *Duerme*, the protagonist's undefined gender identity mirrors the myriad conflictive new identities precipitated by the arrival of the Spaniards in the Americas. To date the problematic identities of the descendants of the Spanish conquest of the New World have not been resolved. Many volumes have been written on the question of racial and ethnic identities of the peoples of the Americas, given their mixture of indigenous, European, and African ancestors. The topic of the just treatment of the indigenous populations and the fight for their equal status in society has a long history in Latin America. In 1511, Fray Antonio de Montesinos' proclaimed that the indigenous people were human beings and must be treated as such. Later, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas continued the

defense of the indigenous population with his *Historia de las Indias* in 1527 and *Apologética historia* in 1559. Even though Catalina de Erauso, "la Monja Alférez", received Papal permission to dress and live as a man, documentation of individuals who challenged established gender categories are rare. Nevertheless, historians have documented communities of homosexuals (sodomites) in New Spain by the seventeenth century. Luiz Mott claims: "at least three hundred years before the medicalization of the homosexual persona we can notice the emergence of a gay subculture in the New World" (in Sigal, 168). However, their stories have been underrepresented in the written record of that period and in most subsequent histories. As Serge Gruzinski notes:

While many voices denounced the living conditions of indigenous people, black slaves, Jews, and, more recently, women, few people wondered then or wonder now about the lives of those men who wanted and loved those of their own sex (in Sigal 197).

As in Boullosa's *Duerme*, the conflicted identities, ambiguous loyalties, and subtle challenges to colonial society's structures and assumptions found in *Invasores del paraíso*, relate in large part, although not exclusively, to gender and sexuality. An analysis of Martinez' novel from

this point of view complements that of *Duerme* for many reasons. The two works share many similarities: the action takes place in Mexico in the colonial period; they are narrated in the first-person by a protagonist who is a new arrival to the Americas; and, both protagonists form part of a military expedition to the New World. Further, Paco and Claire are wrestling with problematic identities which do not conform to the standard acceptable behavior for their assigned gender.

Claire of *Duerme* and Paco of *Invasores del paraíso*, subvert accepted societal norms through their ambiguous sexual identities and their failure to conform to standard acceptable behavior for sixteenth century residents of New Spain. For example, Paco continually demonstrates homoerotic desire and behavior, thereby crossing the line of a standard heterosexual male identity through, among other things, his willing participation in sexual acts with unknown persons of ambiguous gender. Consequently, both Claire and Paco assume dual or multiple identities. While they share many similarities, the two novels analyzed offer the obvious contrast in that *Invasores del paraíso* presents the Colonial world from a male point of view whereas *Duerme* is told from the female perspective.

Given that *Invasores del paraíso* is a recent novel and therefore not well known, a brief summary will help understand my analysis of the protagonist's double agency. Martinez' novel fictionalizes the events of the real life Spanish explorer, or "adelantado", Francisco de Montejo. Francisco de Montejo lead an expedition to the Yucatan peninsula in the early sixteenth century, accompanied by his son and nephew, both named Francisco. Both the son and nephew of Francisco de Montejo are characters in the novel and are referred to as "Paco". The novel is narrated by the nephew while the son of the "adelantado" is the narrator's constant companion and sounding board. The novel starts in Seville, Spain, just before the three Montejos sail for the New World. Both young Pacos imagine the adventures they will have. Once in the New World there are flashbacks to Spain, mostly narrating sexual adventures with figures of ambiguous gender in a completely darkened convent in Seville. The New World portion of the narration relates typical adventures and encounters, focusing mostly on interaction with, and treatment of, the indigenous population. Female love interests for both the narrator Paco and his cousin Paco are recounted continuously in the novel. Also present throughout the novel is a group of homosexual men who are part of the Spanish expedition. It

can be assumed that their behavior and existence are "tolerated" because they are open about their identity and can therefore be categorized. It was only those of unclassifiable, or dual, sexual identity, with one face to the world and one hidden, who were problematic to the essentialist mindset of the colonial period. Roger Bartra describes this rigid gender categorization in the following way: "there is no place in Mexican myth for a man who is neither a macho or a maricón" (89). *Invasores del paraíso* concludes by flashing forward several decades as Paco the narrator opines on his own life and contrasts it with his cousin Paco's fate. The narrator relates the fact that he never married or had kids, whereas his cousin has married and produced four children. There are also musings on other topics, mostly associated with the unfortunate consequences of the Spanish presence in the New World.

The novel, like Boullosa's *Duerme*, connects the Conquest and colonization of Mexico to many contemporary issues such as nation, race and culture. Like *Duerme*, *Invasores del paraíso* also pushes beyond most accounts of the colonization, bringing to the fore the usually invisible and unmentioned issues of gender identity and sexuality. Gender and sexuality in both novels become as problematic as the issues of national, social and cultural

identity are in contemporary Mexico, and in Latin America in general.

The two main characters of *Invasores del paraíso*, cousins who share the name Francisco de Montejo (Paco), but little else. In the course of the novel it becomes clear that they stand for two distinct ideologies. The narrator Paco possesses a more complex identity and world view than does his cousin. The narrator's behavior reflects his dual identity. Like the narrator Claire in *Duerme*, the narrator Paco in *Invasores del paraíso* often expresses anachronistic views. However, the two narrators differ in that Paco's views of the world and certain issues such as treatment of the Indians take on a modern "politically correct" slant. He questions Spanish authority and the supposed superiority of Europeans in the colonies. This is evidenced by the narrator's admiration for Gonzalo Guerrero and Guerrero's famous rejection of his Spanish heritage in favor of a life with the Mayans. Gonzalo Guerrero's ambiguous identity, his rejection of his prescribed role in the Conquest, and his duplicitous behavior in front of Cortés and his other Spanish countrymen mirror Paco's situation. Paco, the son of the "adelantado" of the expedition to the New World, will inherit any land and money that his father might acquire while serving the Spanish crown, and has a much

more rigid view of the world, perhaps because he benefits greatly from his place in it. He treats the Indians cruelly and justifies his behavior by saying that indigenous people must learn not to challenge his authority over them. When the two Pacos discuss their role in the expedition and what the Spanish role in the Americas should be, they come to widely different conclusions. The following opinion of Paco the narrator illustrates their vastly opposing views:

No se ha pronunciado la palabra esclavitud, pero a mi ver, no es otra cosa que eso...Mi primo dice que eso está bien, al fin que son seres irracionales, lo cual yo niego, porque si nosotros seríamos capaces de edificar uno solo de los palacios que ahí enfrente relumbran bajo los rayos de este sol otoñal, ni poseeríamos la imaginación para adornarlo con la industria y buen juicio con que esta gente lo hace. (65)

They also differ with respect to their views on acceptable sexual behavior. While both openly express heterosexual desires and engage in heterosexual sex, Paco narrator expresses his openness to sexual encounters with other men (or those whose gender is not known) and recognizes his homoerotic desire for his cousin. Evidence of his homoerotic interest is found throughout the novel.

Paco narrator lets himself be fondled sexually by the "mano velluda" (hairy hand) in the dark, whereas his cousin Paco tries to break the hand of this supposed 'invasor', rightly suspecting that it is male. Paco narrator insists:

pues aunque manos finas eran tales, no eran de mujer, según lo pude constatar en los vellos de sus muñecas, pero no me pude defender...Dejé, pues, que transcurriera su tiempo, reprochándome en el interior...Paco piensa que no, pues él afirma que los amujerados no tienen tantos pelos en las muñecas, lo cual me pone lívido. (59)

In contrast to Paco's "inability to defend himself" against the male hand pleasuring him, his cousin Paco affirms the following: "una silueta anduvo merodeándonos en pos del prohibido estipendio, sin lograr sus fines, gracias al par de mandarriazos que le acomodé entre los dedos" (62).

There are also scenes in which the narrator is clearly sexually aroused by seeing his cousin's naked body.

Although these two Pacos come from the same family, they represent two vastly different and dichotomous identities. The cousins' two distinct identities also reflect the narrator's two struggling identities: the one he suppresses and denies, and the one he shows to the world.

Whereas Paco, the son of the conquistador, represents all that is masculine as that term was defined in Spain, in the novel we find individuals at the other extreme: the group of men who flamboyantly pursue and engage in sex with other men. These individuals, referred to as "amanerados", "amujerados", and "de tendencias torcidas" sexually proposition the two Pacos in one scene. As open homosexuals, these men occupy the opposite end of the masculine spectrum of sexual identity that cousin Paco represents. Paco the narrator finds his identity alternately occupying these two extremes. Clearly living a masculine, heterosexual life for all the world to see, the narrator masks his homoerotic desires and activities thus creating a dual identity. Paco the narrator is obviously aware that he could live a more open homosexual life as do the "amanerados". He repeatedly mentions them in his narration and even chats with them about their pursuits in a light hearted way. Other characters claim that the "amanerados" are: "las personas más respetuosas y educadas que conozco" (67). However, despite experiencing same-sex desire, Paco rejects the lifestyle of the "amanerados" as a basis for an identity and opts to masquerade as a classic machista. Pete Sigal explains how these two extremes co-existed in Colonial Latin America:

The successful man had honor, engaged in sexual activities with at least one woman, and had children. His masculinity was proven through valor in warfare, business, or some similar activity, and through social status. The implied opposite of this position was the man who allowed other men to penetrate him. He was defeated, effeminate, and dishonorable. (3)

Influenced by such a mindset, Paco the narrator lives as any other "normal" man in the expedition. However, the protagonist's narration reveals an ambiguous sexual orientation and identity from the first chapter. In some passages, his homoerotic tendencies are revealed while simultaneously speaking of heterosexual lust and a future which includes marriage and children, as seen in the following passage. The narrator is awake and sexually aroused, attempting to hide his cousin's erection from the maid. He immediately feels the need to justify his own erection saying it must have been caused by a dream filled with images of naked women, a clear case of "he doth protest too much":

Me iba a poner de pie para ocultarte con algo, cuando sentí que también yo, bajo estos edredones de tu "mamá", estaba como la mía me echó al mundo,

con el pollo un tanto enhiesto, *quizá por haber soñado lo que contaba tu papá acerca de las indias en Cozumel que vagan sin ningún obstáculo en la natura ni en las tetas.* (my emphasis 12)

Further evidence of his sexual arousal upon seeing his cousin's naked body (and erection) is presented at the conclusion of that chapter, "¡Se acercan unos pasos! ¡Tocan! ¡Es la doncella! ¡Cúbrete! ¡Caramba, ya no tuviste tiempo!" (14). Thus, he had been observing his cousin Paco's naked body throughout their conversation. Also, concluding the first chapter in this way, with male sexual imagery, draws attention to the protagonist's interest in his cousin's nakedness, thus highlighting its importance to the protagonist, and the novel in general. These episodes continue throughout the novel. The following description of his cousin Paco's naked body is clearly indicative of the narrator's masked homosexual desire:

Y se vistió delante de nosotros, sin ninguna vergüenza de mostrar ante la autoridad de su progenitor un trasero rubicundo y enorme, y unas ingles como la miel y la luz que a raudales invadía aquella habitación, donde lo único que semejante espécimen hacía perfectamente era dormir y fornicar (80).

Early in the novel, in Chapter Two, Paco reveals to us the presence (and his clear awareness) of the "amanerados", the group of men on the ship who openly have sex with each other: "en nuestras travesuras hemos dado con la novedad de que a bordo viajan cinco marineros de tendencias torcidas, hombres jóvenes todos ellos" (16). His first interaction with them is telling since he recognizes their existence, but at the same time indicates (to the reader and to himself) that he does not consider himself one of them:

--"Muchachos", dijo el que parecía ser el más maricón, "los invitamos a una fiesta".

--"¿Tanto gusto, yo soy Paco y él mi primo. ¡De manera que va a haber orgía!, ¿no?" (17).

Paco differentiates his identity from that of the "maricones" while possessing an identity very different from that of his cousin, who represents all that is macho, Spanish, and imperialist. In this first encounter with the "maricones" it is relevant that Paco admits a certain understanding (and thus, partial identification with them) by inferring what they must be thinking: "*Han de haber dicho, allá en su pervertida intimidad: 'Mejor nos retiramos, compañeros, imagínense, si así huelen vestidos, ¿cómo olerán desnudos los galanes?'*" (18 my emphasis). Not only is Paco imagining what the "maricones" might be

thinking, and revealing as much to the readers, but his thoughts relate to sexual acts between men.

In the narrator's sexual encounter with the hairy hand, which he believes to be male, he finds himself between two distinct roles: he is passive, but ironically, not penetrated. Thus he is neither the passive "amujerado" nor is he the aggressive macho, but rather somewhere in between, undefined. This sexualized state accurately reflects his own mindset regarding his sexuality: undefined.

The ambiguous sexual identity and feminine nature of the narrator and protagonist Paco is not only in his own mind. It is also noticed and commented on by others in the novel. His uncle, the *adelantado*, or leader of the expedition, and father of the other Paco, comments on the narrator's feminine appearance in the following passage: "Con la cara mojada te pareces mucho a tu madre. Eres idéntico a ella. Sólo con bigotes. No respondí." (80). His unresponsiveness indicates a desire to suppress or at least not recognize his "feminine" appearance.

In another instance, the *adelantado* jokes that the two Pacos do not like women. The narrator writes of his fear that his sexual experience with men will be revealed and his dual identity unmasked:

--¿Qué, no les gustan las mujeres?

--Te hablan, primo, que si nos gustan...me dijo y yo tuve miedo de que fuera a contarle la verdad en torno a nuestras experiencias con las apariciones (118).

The "apariciones" in this case refer to encounters in a convent in Seville in which both cousins were sexually fondled by "formas vagas". More of the same type of vague fondling occurred once in the New World. Finally, towards the end of the novel a woman reveals to him that she had taken him for a "marica" due to his feminine appearance.

--¿De quién te acuerdas rey?

--De una mujer, respondí.

--Menos mal; ayer pensé que eras marica.

--¿Y por qué se te ocurrió semejante pendejada si se puede saber?

--Por tu cintura. Generalmente los muy machos la tienen ancha. (192)

When asked what he is remembering he replies that it was a woman, a response which pleases his interlocutor, who had thought he was a 'marica'. The passage also makes it clear that Paco the narrator appears "feminine" to several people in the novel.

Two-faced Spaniards: Paco meets Gonzalo Guerrero

After some time in the New World, Paco the narrator decides that he wants to accompany Alonso de Avila (also a documented historical figure) on an expedition. This requires him to leave his cousin Paco and his uncle the *adelantado*. He indicates that he makes this decision largely in hopes of finding and meeting the already legendary Gonzalo Guerrero, a man who defines dual identity:

yo aún no me dormía, discurriendo en mi mente acerca de la posibilidad de encontrarme cara a cara con Gonzalo Guerrero, allá en los reinos de Chetumal, y de hablarle, y de decirle cuánto lo admiraba... (77)

It is relevant to note that his description of Gonzalo Guerrero when he sees him for the first time is beyond mere admiration; it focuses completely on the pleasing physical appearance of Gonzalo Guerrero, and is in fact, homoerotic: "Era fornido. Esbelto. Realmente hermoso" (97). Regardless of his physical impression of Guerrero, Paco the narrator continually expresses great admiration for him, despite recognizing that he is considered a traitor to the Spanish crown. Paco narrates:

Paco y yo estábamos arrobados, oyendo hablar a Avila y a Julián Pérez de la Mata, con unos colores, cual si ya hubieran estado allá, donde son los dominios de Gonzalo Guerrero, a quien allí se le mentaba como al judas de los españoles.

(75)

This view of Gonzalo Guerrero contrasts sharply with the opinion of the adelantado: "¿Escucharon? ¡Alonso de Avila traerá cautivo a Gonzalo Guerrero para que pague cara su traición a la patria!...¡Traición a Dios y traición al rey!" (75). Paco the narrator identifies with and admires Gonzalo Guerrero because, like Paco, Guerrero questioned, (and ultimately rejected) the Spanish, along with their rigid categorization of people based on race, religion, culture, and proscribed gender roles. They both object to the treatment of the indigenous population by the Spanish, and the overall objectives of the Spanish in their colonization of the New World.

Gonzalo Guerrero, as he is presented in *Invasores del Paraíso*, refuses categorization and believes he possesses a true dual cultural identity. He does not completely reject his Spanish identity, yet he lives among his newly adopted Mayan culture and refuses to return to live among the

Spanish. In the novel Guerrero states: "Ahora yo también soy como ellos, aunque no comulgo con su manera de venerar a Dios, representado en la figura de la sierpe" (98).

Continuing with the topic of religion, he affirms a certain amount of loyalty to Spain, and in particular the Christian religion. "Yo nunca olvido a España ni a su bandera ni a su Dios, que es muy otro de los que acá fabrican" (101). More evidence of Guerrero's double allegiance to both the Spaniards and the Mayans can be found in the following passage that shows he fought to save the Spaniards who were in Mayan captivity:

Nos contó que en cuanto supo de nuestro cautiverio, corrió a conferenciar con los señores de la selva quienes aceptaron su proposición de permitirnos vivir a cambio de irnos lo más pronto posible de su país. (99)

Later Guerrero explains to Paco and the other Spaniards: "Ahora me convenzo de que el español, sea cual fuere su suerte jamás reniega su estirpe" (99). Despite this sentiment, when he is invited to abandon his newly adopted culture and return with the Spaniards, even with an offer to bring his wife and kids, his response is negative and vehement:

--En caso de que llegases a cambiar de parecer, respecto a seguir viviendo aquí con esta raza indigna, ya sabes, te esperamos en el buque, a ti, a tus hijos y hasta a tu señora, si lo desea.

--¿Y abandonarlos a ellos? ¡No! ¡Eso nunca!

...Váyanse ya, antes de que me arrepienta de haber ido personalmente a tratar el asunto de su salvación con los religiosos de la sierpe (107).

The Fictional Gonzalo Guerrero's Children

Guerrero's children with his Mayan wife Itpilotzama are among the first members of the new race created by the Spaniards' Conquest and colonization of the Americas. Their presence in *Invasores del paraíso*, and the narrator's reaction to them, represent in part what Latin American civilization already was becoming at the time of the Conquest and what it continues to be: a mix of multiple races, religions, traditions, and ideologies. They are also a primary cause for Gonzalo Guerrero's mixed loyalty and dual allegiance. In this novel Guerrero states: "Verán qué bellos son mis hijos. Los primeros nacidos de español y de india en esta tierra. Son los que me tienen atado a los mayas. No me dejaron ir. Ahora menos" (97). Paco the narrator, however, is quick to point out that "También

Jerónimo de Aguilar dejó dos hijos" (97). This passage is relevant because it highlights the fact that Guerrero's offspring and Aguilar's offspring, while being racially the same--half European and half Mayan--will likely have very different views of their own identity. This reflects the current reality in many Latin American societies with respect to identity. Gonzalo Guerrero's children will see themselves as a mix of two traditions, but with an awareness of their origins: a European father and a Mayan mother. Since Jerónimo de Aguilar has abandoned the Mayans, Aguilar's children will likely only see themselves as physically different from their indigenous peers, as well as physically different from the Spaniards; they will be a hybrid with a problematic identity, not belonging completely to either "*estirpe*".

Paco comments on the physical appearance of Gonzalo Guerrero's children: "Los niños no son feos. Tienden a su blancura más que al color castaño de su madre..." (99). Jerónimo de Aguilar is of course just one of many Spaniards fathering children in the New World; Paco, his cousin, the adelantado and most other male characters in *Invasores del paraíso* make continual reference to sexual contact with the indigenous female population. Their seed will fertilize the

problematic and complex identity of future generations of Mexicans. The final chapter reveals that Paco the cousin officially fathered four children who will undoubtedly consider themselves European. Such differences are the root cause of the complex issues of race, culture, class and identity in Latin America today.

I conclude the Gonzalo Guerrero episode of Paco's New World adventure with the following dialogue between Guerrero and one of the Spaniards he rescues:

--¿Reniegas de tu ser hispano?

--Yo no reniego nada ni de nadie, simplemente lamento que la humanidad se divida en grupos de vencedores y vencidos, de aventureros e inocentes, de generosos y de pérfidos (107).

In this passage and in others in *Invasores del paraíso*, Martínez uses the historical and heroic figure of Gonzalo Guerrero as a mouthpiece for the narrator Paco. Paco must suppress his homosexual desires, his atypical view of the Spaniard's mission in the New World, and part of his true identity to fit into the categories prescribed by the prevailing mores of the colonial period in the New World. Paco's homoerotic desires are particularly dangerous in the

extremely macho world of conquistadors where "traitors" are regularly killed for straying from the fold.

The final chapter begins with the protagonist revealing his failure to marry, while his cousin Paco has not only married, but has produced four children. The concluding chapter brings the story of the two Pacos and their expedition to the New World full circle, highlighting the narrator's refusal or inability to conform to patriarchal values and societal expectations, contrasted with his cousin's inability to question his role. Paco narrates:

Han pasado los años y yo sigo aquí, en esta vera del mundo, a solas con mis añoranzas, sin haberme casado aún, a diferencia de mi primo que contrajo nupcias con doña Andrea del Castillo, mujer doncella venida a Mexico en busca de fortuna, con quien ha engendrado cuatro hijos. (204)

This passage completes the distinction between the two Pacos and their destiny in the New World. Paco the narrator, like Boullosa's Claire and Gonzalo Guerrero, has remained in Mexico. He has not married, but his cousin has. His status as bachelor further distances him from contemporary social norms and further complicates his identity.

Conclusions

Duerme and *Invasores del paraíso* have many superficial commonalities. For example, both are contemporary revisions of the Conquest and colonization of Mexico narrated in first person by someone other than the "great men of history". Instead of focusing on the goals and desires of conquerors and monarchs, the reader experiences the arrival, adaptation, and transculturation to the New World through the eyes of a female soldier and an adolescent male soldier in an expedition. Rather than focusing on battles and politics, the two novels develop and highlight the great changes that both protagonists experience in the New World. Claire and Paco each undergo a type of transculturation and neither returns to Europe. Claire of course becomes physically linked to the valley of Mexico through the magical waters. Paco, on the other hand, begins to speak Mayan, identifies with Gonzalo Guerrero and idealizes Guerrero's abandonment of his Spanish heritage. Ultimately, Paco decides to remain in the New World.

However, the writing style of these two novels is very different. Boullosa uses fantastical devices such as magical waters and completely fictional characters. Martínez' narration, on the other hand, is grounded in

reality and offers a fictional account of real people which have been documented in the history of the New World, such as the three Francisco Montejo characters, Gonzalo Guerrero, Jerónimo de Aguilar, and Alonso de Ávila, among others. Although these two Mexican novels published in the 1990s employ widely different techniques, they both arrive at similar conclusions. *Duerme* and *Invasores del paraíso* critique the essentialist view of the world associated with Spain and its policies at the time of the Conquest and colonization of the New World. A fluid or ambiguous identity, whether in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, culture, or religion was not understood or accepted by those who held power at the time: the Catholic Church and the Spanish monarchy. It was dangerous to openly support the notion of a dual identity, as such transgressions could be punished by the Inquisition or any other leader representative of the colonial Spanish essentialist ideology. Claire and Paco subvert the insistent categorization of (and privilege assigned to) certain groups, such as Christian over Jewish, male over female, European over indigenous, and heterosexual over homosexual.

Claire and Paco accomplish this transgression in different ways. Claire in some ways exemplifies the typical colonial mindset, seen by her disdain for the Indians and

their customs, and also by her desire to be a wealthy, white caballero. She subverts the essentialist viewpoint principally by dressing as a man, passing herself off as a nobleman, and also through sexual encounters with both men and women. Paco, on the other hand, transgresses more openly through his criticism of the Spanish treatment of the Indians and questioning the Spanish role in the New World. However, he continually masks and suppresses his homoerotic desires and disdains his oft-mentioned feminine appearance throughout the novel. He, like Claire, also acknowledges to the reader his sexual contact with both men and women.

In both novels, then, we find a suppression of the feminine. Karen Viera Powers observes:

According to Spanish law, five levels of authority existed, all of them restricted to men. They were authority of the king, of the provincial lords, of the estates, of fathers over wives and children, and masters over slaves. As trustees, men had the right to physically punish their female relatives; conversely, women were obligated to subordinate themselves to men and to obey them. At the level of the State, Spanish women, regardless of social or economic status were thought to lack the innate

ability to reason and hence were considered to be minors in the eyes of the law, just as children were. (40-41)

Neither Claire nor Paco can be placed into a fixed gender category or a definable sexual orientation. To the world, Claire is a woman and Paco is a man. However, in their own minds, and the minds of the readers of their accounts, their gender and sexuality is much more fluid. Placed in an environment of the Conquest and colonization of the New World, and its overwhelming Spanish machismo and privilege for the male, Claire and Paco attempt to manage (and succeed in) the New World by using the same tactic: masking and suppressing various feminine aspects of their identity. Given the patriarchal nature of Spanish society as it is described above, and the ultra machista environment of New World conquest, it is not surprising that the two characters wrestle with dual gender identities, suppressing the feminine in favor of the masculine. Nevertheless, like a double agent, their identities are always in flux.

Chapter Four

Christopher Columbus as Crypto-Jew and Double Agent

In the two previous chapters I explored the concept of double agency, or a dual/masked identity, as exemplified through gender identity, sexual orientation, and ethnic/cultural heritage. In this chapter I analyze a similar phenomenon of double agency but from a religious/cultural perspective, that of the Crypto-Jews. Crypto-Jews in the colonial period in Latin America were individuals of Jewish heritage, at times referred to as "Marranos", who practiced Judaism secretly. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabel, and their subsequent expulsion from Portugal in 1496, many Jews and persons of Jewish heritage (usually called New Christians or *conversos*), fled to the Americas, which had been recently claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus. Although Jews, *conversos*, and anyone else who was not considered an Old Christian with *limpieza de sangre* (pure blood) were banned from Spain's New World colonies, many Jews and crypto-Jews did travel to the New World hoping to be able to practice Judaism safely and lead

successful lives in the newly discovered lands. Trudy Alexy comments on this exodus:

Thus thousands of "converted" Jews soon fled to foreign lands, hoping to live openly as Jews wherever they felt safe enough to risk it. But memories of past persecutions and fear of their recurrence convinced many of these people to continue hiding their true identities. This is particularly true for those who followed Christopher Columbus west across the Atlantic to the New World as newly baptized Catholics. Hoping to leave their tormented lives behind, they were determined to conceal their ancestral Jewish practices and thus became Crypto-Jews. (4)

In the same way that gender, sexual, and cultural identities are still complex and relevant issues in contemporary Latin American society, so are the Jewish and Crypto-Jewish identities. Jews in Latin America today are marginalized and experience discrimination in similar ways as those individuals with ambiguous sexual identities and those in marginalized indigenous groups. Judith Elkin points out the pervasive negative attitudes toward Jews that persist in the Spanish speaking world with the following example:

The *Diccionario de la Academia Española*, for example, includes the following: Judío (fig.) ávaro, usurero [miser, usurer]; Judiada (fig. y fam.) Acción humana. Lucro excesivo y escandaloso. [Inhuman action. Excessive and scandalous profit].

(21)

The *Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado*, an illustrated dictionary published in Latin America, also lists similar definitions of *judío* (583).

Not surprisingly, scholars claim that Crypto-Jewish activities and identities persist in many parts of Latin America, as well as in parts of the southwestern United States (formerly Mexican territory). Stanley Hordes notes:

Beginning in the 1980s, scholars from the fields of sociology, anthropology, material culture, and folklore began to collect and analyze data, and to develop conclusions about the nature and extent of converso culture in contemporary society. A consensus has developed among the majority of those who have conducted fieldwork in New Mexico that confirms the persistence of a crypto-Jewish legacy in the region. (243)

Alexy's research also indicates the continued presence of the crypto-Jews in Latin America. Her book *The Marrano*

Legacy relates the stories of two contemporary crypto-Jewish priests, one in the United States and one in Latin America. She observes that:

Despite the many difficulties of maintaining their secret lifestyle and constantly coping with perceived dangers, most Crypto-Jews take great pride in their ability to survive, keeping hidden what they value most, fooling the hostile world all around them just as their ancestors did so long ago. (20)

Jacob Beller concurs that throughout Latin America Jewish customs, prayers, and festivals have been passed down from one generation to the next, usually orally, given the secret nature of crypto-Jewish practices and identities. He notes that, "To this day, it is possible to find in the distant corners of Latin America, groups, which have their own houses of prayer, and proclaim that they are the descendants of the Marranos of old" (3).

From the early days of independence from Spain, Spanish American writers tackled the topic of Jewish lineage and anti-Semitism as they began to form national identities. As early as 1849, the Mexican novelist and historian Justo Sierra O'Reilly's historical novel *La hija del judío* treated the topic of Jewish identity. In O'Reilly's novel,

"the daughter of the Jew" lives a double life as a crypto-Jew to escape the Inquisition. It is finally revealed, however, that she actually has no Jewish blood. It is not surprising that contemporary Latin American writers continue exploring the theme of crypto-Judaism through historical fiction. Pedro Orgambide's 1967 novel *Los inquisidores*, relates the persecution of Jews and crypto-Jews by the colonial Inquisition. The 1977 historical novel *Tierra adentro* by the Mexican author Angelina Muñiz relates the story of conversos in sixteenth century Spain as they attempt to flee the Inquisition. *La gesta del marrano*, a novel published in 1990 by the Argentine writer Marcos Aguinis, fictionalizes the life of Francisco Maldonado de Silva, a seventeenth century crypto-Jew who was executed in Chile in 1639 by the Inquisition for secretly practicing Judaism. Maldonado de Silva's story also inspired other novels such as Orgambide's *Las aventuras de Edmundo Ziller*, published in 1984.

In this chapter, I will analyze the representation of Christopher Columbus as a crypto-Jew in two recent historical novels: *Memorias del nuevo mundo* by the Mexican poet and novelist Homero Aridjis and *Los perros del paraíso* by the Argentine novelist Abel Posse.

Beginnings of Iberian Crypto-Judaism

Crypto-Judaism's origins on the Iberian peninsula go back approximately one-hundred years before the Catholic Monarchs Fernando and Isabel officially required all Jews to convert to Christianity or be expelled from Spain, in August 1492. Janet Liebman Jacobs explains:

Fueled both by economic conditions and ecclesiastical anti-Semitism, violence against the Jews began in 1391 in Seville...Within the year, Jewish communities in Toledo, Barcelona, Gerona, and Aragon bore the effects of mob incited violence as homes were burned, businesses looted, synagogues destroyed and Jews murdered. (4)

Religious persecution of the Jews in Spain continued sporadically throughout the fifteenth century, causing many Jews to convert to Christianity. These conversions were at times voluntary and at other times forced. Some *conversos* gave up their Jewish practices and even their Jewish names and identities. Stanley Hordes observes that: "When Jews converted to Christianity in the fifteenth century they tended to abandon their Hebrew names in favor of more common Spanish names" (4). Those who converted to Christianity in name only and continued to practice Judaism

secretly became known as *marranos* or Crypto-Jews. A number of Jews refused to convert and continued to live openly in Spain until August, 1492.

The Jews who converted to Christianity, also known as New Christians, were allowed greater upward mobility in society than those who did not convert. As the *conversos* or New Christians prospered in fifteenth century Spain there was an inevitable backlash against them by the old Christians. Hugh Thomas explains:

The *conversos* prospered...they attracted attention, envy, and hostility—at least after 1449 when there were riots against the “New Christians” in Toledo. A special case was that in Córdoba where there had been a massacre of *conversos* in 1473. Still, *conversos* continued to be bishops, royal secretaries, bankers...and they married into the nobility. (38)

Most historians believe that the majority of New Christians (*conversos*) were Christian in name only. Hordes states that: “Generally, the transition from Judaism to Christianity was made without a great deal of inner spiritual conflict. The bulk of the *conversos* and their offspring did not take their new faith seriously” (18). Yitzhak Baer comments that “The *conversos* secretly visited

their Jewish brethren in order to join them in celebrating Jewish festivals, attended the synagogues, listened to sermons, and discussed points of religion" (272). Jane S. Gerber observes the dual nature of the *converso* psyche. She states that:

At any one point, he might well find himself playing more than one role—as a practicing Christian trying to integrate himself into the majority culture socially and economically, as a loving relative still in intimate contact with his Jewish family members. (123)

The Inquisition was established in 1478 by the Catholic monarchs Fernando and Isabel. While historians continue to debate the motives for the creation of the Spanish Inquisition, it originally began with the primary purpose of finding and punishing those *conversos* who were secretly adhering to and identifying with the Jewish heritage, that is to say, crypto-Jews. Jacobs observes:

The Holy Office thus took as its mission the discovery and punishment of those converts who continued to engage in the practices of Judaism and who were therefore guilty of the crime of 'Judaizing'. Between 1481 and 1488, 750 men and women in Seville were burned at the stake for

Judaizing, and at least five thousand others were punished for acts of Jewish heresy. (5)

Hugh Thomas states that: "Many old Christians thought that most, or even all *conversos* and their descendants were secret Jews, or at least, were falling back into Jewish ways because of the excessive tolerance of the church" (39). Ironically, Jews who had not converted to Christianity, and continued to openly adhere to Jewish customs, were not persecuted by the Inquisition prior to 1492.

Crypto-Jews in the New World

The crypto-Jewish practices that began in Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth century were carried to the New World like most other aspects of Iberian culture. After Fernando and Isabel formally expelled the Jews from Spain in August, 1492, the Inquisition openly persecuted the crypto-Jews (*marranos*) so it is not surprising that many Jews and crypto-Jews left Spain for the New World which was discovered just two months later in October, 1492. Although Jews and New Christians were officially banned from Spain's colonies as early as 1493, and by Queen Isabel's decree in 1501, many did migrate to the New World. Elkin states that:

The intense pressures exerted in Spain and Portugal against persons of Jewish descent resulted in the flight of numerous *conversos* and crypto-Jews to the New World, where the opportunity for anonymity was considerably greater than at home. (9)

The Spanish Crown, despite their decrees barring anyone who was not a "cristiano viejo" from immigrating to the New World, negotiated deals that allowed many New Christians to legally enter the Spanish New World colonies. Beller explains one such deal that took place in 1509: "in payment of the sum of 20,000 ducats, New Christians were free to travel to the newly discovered colonies and to carry on trade for two years. There were many such contracts entered into" (2). There were also times during the colonial period when the ban on Jews and *conversos* traveling from Spain to the New World was temporarily lifted. Furthermore, soldiers and sailors were not required to produce certificates of *limpieza de sangre* and therefore, many Jews and crypto-Jews came to the New World in that capacity. Seymour Liebman reports, not surprisingly, that: "As early as 1508, bishops in Havana and Puerto Rico were informing Madrid that the New World was being filled with hebreo

cristianos, nuevo cristianos, conversos...and other heretics" (22).

The documented crypto-Jewish presence in Latin America dates back to the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Hernando Alonso, one of Hernán Cortés's soldiers, was burned at the stake in 1528. According to Beller, Alonso was probably the first crypto-Jew in the New World to be executed. Beller states that: "He was put on trial for adhering to Judaism in secret and burned alive at an *auto da fe*" (20). Diego de Ocaña was another New Christian who traveled to the New World in 1525 and encountered problems with officials when they discovered his Jewish heritage. Hordes states that:

Recognized by the government officials as a New Christian, and expelled from the colony, Ocaña was able to avoid deportation by paying a fee. Three years later, in 1528, Inquisition officials arrested him, accusing him of observing Jewish slaughtering practices and dietary laws. In contrast to the death sentence imposed on Hernando Alonso, Ocaña suffered only confiscation of his goods and exile to Spain. (32)

Elkin affirms that: "despite the hazards, numerous persons of Jewish descent did in fact settle in Mexico by the mid-

sixteenth century, but they lacked the assurance that they could live out their lives there" (10).

Despite the Alonso and Ocaña cases, and the presence of the Inquisition in New Spain and Peru, there was scant persecution of crypto-Jews in the New World throughout most of the sixteenth century. Hordes comments that:

The paucity of judaizante cases tried by the Mexican Inquisition during the first half century of Spanish colonization in New Spain suggests that crypto-Jews were able to practice their faith in an atmosphere of relative toleration. (32-33)

However, he adds that: "This situation began to change in the 1580s, when crypto-Jewish immigration to New Spain increased dramatically" (33). Starting approximately in 1589, Crypto-Jews in the New World continued to be actively pursued and punished by the Inquisition well into the mid-seventeenth century. One of the more notorious cases is that of Luis de Carvajal. Luis de Carvajal was the son of the governor of Nuevo León. Once in the New World he was informed of his *converso* heritage and decided to live openly as a Jew. He was arrested and burned at the stake along with several members of his family in 1596. Hordes has documented that: "Between 1589-1596 almost two hundred persons were arrested for the crime of judaizante, focusing

on the Carvajal family and extending to crypto-Jews all over the viceroyalty" (79).

It is likely that the persecution of crypto-Jews by the Inquisition, as well as anti-Semitism in Latin American in general, has kept the tradition of the crypto-Jews, and their dual identity, alive to the present day. Therefore it is not surprising to find crypto-Jews the topic of contemporary historical novels. The problematic Jewish identity found today in Latin America is rooted in the history of Spain at the time of the Conquest much in the same way that problematic ethnic, gender, and sexual identities are. For this reason, authors and their readers use fiction as a way to revisit, rewrite and understand the past as well as a means of confronting the present. Christopher Columbus had Jewish roots according to some historians. It is not surprising that the most famous explorer of the colonial period has been the focus of historical novels dealing with the crypto-Jewish identity.

Christopher Columbus's Jewish Heritage

Many historians have commented on Columbus's possible Jewish heritage. However, as with many aspects of Columbus's origins and life, there is no overall consensus.

James R. McGovern comments that "Sources on his life are basically unreliable, incomplete, and even contradictory, making the job difficult for the historian biographer" (2). Although many historians recognize that it is likely that Columbus's family had some Jewish background, some biographies do not address Columbus's alleged Jewish background at all. He was, in fact, an openly practicing, even devout, Catholic. Richard L. Kagan states that: "It is now known that Columbus was a profoundly religious individual much influenced by the Spiritual Franciscans" (36 in McGovern). Hugh Thomas calls the idea that Columbus's Jewish family emigrated from Galicia to Genoa in 1391 a "tall tale", given that Genoa was not a welcoming place for Jews. Thomas continues: "Columbus often appeared hostile to both Jews and conversos, but that proves nothing, for some of the most virulent anti-Semites were conversos. He was certainly a serious Christian who preferred not to work on Sundays" (51). Kirkpatrick Sale is thoroughly unconvinced by the idea that Columbus was a converso or Crypto-Jew. He elaborates his stance in the following:

One historiographical molehill threatens to become truly mountainous: the question whether Colón was a Jew. There is, as I have indicated, no substance

for such a notion...The argument has so little foundation that it properly belongs in the same corner of Columbiana where Colón is held to be Polish, resting as it does on the entirely unprovable supposition that Colón was a *converso* to Christianity, and I am sure it would not survive but for the concurrence of the expulsion of the Jews and the start of the First Voyage.

(358)

Other historians like Cecil Roth, Salvador de Madariaga, M. Kayserling, Jane Frances Amler, and Simon Wisenthal, point to a mountain of evidence that they say indicates that Columbus did have a Jewish background. Columbus's family was in the weaving business, something typical to *conversos* of the time. Amler claims that: "Weaving was one of the few occupations open to the Jews" (15). Many scholars point out that Colón (and Colóm) was a typical Spanish-Jewish surname. In fact, Amler claims that: "Starting with the Spanish-Jewish name of Colón, the arguments supporting the belief that Columbus was of Jewish extraction began to grow" (14). Other circumstantial evidence mentioned frequently is that the date of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain is within a day of Columbus's first voyage to the New World. Consequently,

there were many *conversos* among Columbus's crew, including Rodrigo de Triana, the sailor who supposedly was the first to sight land. Keyserling notes:

Among the explorer's companions whose names have come down to us there were several men of Jewish stock; for example, Luis de Torres, a Jew who...was baptized shortly before Columbus sailed. Alonso de la Calle was also of Jewish lineage.

(90)

Cecil Roth believes that not only was Columbus of Jewish origin, but he was also a *marrano*, secretly practicing Judaism. He states that:

Modern Spanish scholars have evolved the theory that he was in fact a *Marrano*, and for that reason somewhat secretive as to his origin: and they point to the significant fact that in his will he left money to a Jewish beggar in Lisbon. (208)

Salvador de Madariaga also claims unequivocally that Columbus was of Jewish origin. Madariaga's research into names, families, languages, signatures and other circumstantial evidence are too numerous to cite. He summarizes his conclusion in the following way: "if the Jewish hypothesis had not forced itself upon us on grounds of language, Colón's ways, character and writings would

have brought home to any impartial observer the fact that he was a Jew" (54). Proponents of the theory that Columbus was of Jewish origin, and according to some, even a secretly practicing marrano, point out that the lack of conclusive historical evidence is due to the fact that it was necessary to hide a Jewish, converso, or Crypto-Jewish identity at that time in Spain and in the New World.

Other historians and scholars go even further than asserting Columbus's Jewish and/or marrano heritage, and claim that he was searching for a home for the newly expelled Spanish Jews. In her comments on the complexity of the surviving documentation of Columbus's life and travels, Molly Mertherd points out that Columbus himself revised his own texts and she gives the example of the March 4 letter from Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabel as well as a subsequent letter that includes most of the same information but omits a previous statement that linked the discovery of the New World to Spain's intent to conquer Jerusalem (228 in Juan-Navarro and Young). Ilan Stavans notes that some scholars describe Columbus in the following way:

a man deeply in touch with the Jewish community in Spain and perhaps a converso, was looking for the land inhabited by the lost tribes of Israel.

Instead he came up with the ultimate escape for the crypto-Jews escaping the Spanish Inquisition" (25).

Kayserling notes that one school of thought claims that the indigenous inhabitants of the New World were in fact descendants of Jews, the lost tribes of Israel. He states: "Several writers have asserted, and have displayed much learning in attempting to prove, that the aborigines were descendants of the Jews" (95). He mentions that the Indians practiced circumcision and other rites and ceremonies linked to Jews, and continues:

All writers and travellers agree, moreover, that there were many Jewish types of face among the Indians, the aborigines of America. The question whether the American Indians are descendants of the Jews, whether they are the offspring of the 'lost Ten Tribes,' has often been answered in both the affirmative and the negative, but it has not yet been definitely settled. (99)

Clearly, the idea of a Jewish presence in the New World prior to Columbus's arrival is not accepted by the vast majority of historians. The assertion that Columbus was searching for the "lost tribes of Israel", or was secretly looking for a new home for the Spanish Jews and conversos

does not convince many either. Nevertheless, these are ideas that have circulated in one form or another.

Columbus has been the topic of much writing over the years—including fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama. Columbus's son Fernando wrote the first biography, but after that, there was a long period when little attention was given to him. Lope de Vega, Sor Juana, John Milton, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, Washington Irving, and Walt Whitman all treated Columbus in their writings. Starting in the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, many biographies of Columbus were published, such as those by Kirkpatrick Sale, Salvador de Madariaga, Consuela Varela, and others cited above. As the year 1992 approached, Columbus inevitably became the topic of Latin American historical novels like Fuentes's *Cristóbal Nonato* and Carpentier's *El arpa y la sombra*. Also, two mainstream English-language films about Columbus were made and released around 1992: *1492 Conquest of Paradise* and *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery*.

Los perros del paraíso: Columbus as converso

Viviana Plotnick observed that contemporary Spanish American historical novels privilege marginality or

eccentricity with regard to class, race, religion, gender or ethnicity. She notes that: "The protagonist is frequently a member of a Spanish travel expedition who occupies a low position in the social hierarchy. Sometimes he/she is of Jewish origin which means he/she belongs to one of the most persecuted minorities of the times. When Christopher Columbus is the protagonist, we do not have the heroic subject trumpeted by nineteenth-century biographies, but a demythified, lying, and duplicitous admiral..." (37). Abel Posse's 1985 historical novel *Los perros del paraíso* distorts, twists, and ultimately, questions commonly accepted notions of history through a fictionalized Christopher Columbus as the protagonist who hides his Jewish heritage (among other things) and masquerades with at least two identities. By playfully filtering the image of the most famous figure of the Spanish conquest of the Americas through alternate versions of history, Posse forces the reader to consider all history and the resulting present. At the same time, Posse draws attention to the marginalized Jewish community and forces readers to consider the roots of that marginalization.

Previous Critical Approaches to *Los perros del paraíso*

Los perros del paraíso has received much critical attention. Critics have commented on and interpreted the effect of the constant anachronisms in the novel. Elzbieta Sklodowska, for example, states that: "El anacronismo es uno de los agentes catalizadores más eficaces para señalar al lector la necesidad de distanciamiento y disipar la ilusión mimética" (349). And she adds, "La autoconciencia del texto está cifrada en sus abundantes anacronismos" (350). Thomas Waldemar talks about the role of humor in the novel. He states that: "Behind the humor of *Los perros del paraíso* lurks the historical record of the catastrophic loss of life and the destruction of cultures that followed in the wake of the Columbian enterprise" (720). He adds: "The humor of *Los perros del paraíso* reminds us that it is foolish to attempt to escape the world as it is. We are condemned to accept history's maddeningly inconclusive verdicts" (720). Jason Roderick takes Linda Hutcheon's notion of historiographic metafiction and applies it to Posse's novel. He states: "I would argue that Posse is not only treating the entire history of the Spanish Empire and the voyages of Columbus, but all history and how we come to

know it" (6). Corina Mathieu also looks at the notion of history and Columbus's place in it. She asserts that:

En la novela, Colón lejos de encarnar una síntesis de las ambiciones europeas, representa al nuevo hombre y, de ahí que se lo identifique como el primer sudamericano integral. Este Colón se diferencia de todos los europeos que lo acompañan... (152)

Finally, Seymour Menton views the novel as a "denunciation of power" connected to timeless problems of oppression rather than the colonial past and its consequences. He asserts that:

Aside from the thinly veiled Argentine connection, *Los perros del paraíso* places greater emphasis on equating the Spanish Conquest with twentieth-century American imperialism, Nazism, and other forms of tyranny or exploitation. (66)

It is not my intention in this chapter to offer a definitive analysis of the novel. Instead, I examine one salient aspect of the novel, the fictional Columbus's dual Jewish-Christian identity, and how it relates to contemporary identity issues in Latin America, as well as its relationship to my overall study of double agency and

hidden identities in contemporary Spanish American historical fiction of the conquest.

Columbus as Double Agent

Posse's Christopher Columbus acts as a double agent in *Los perros del paraíso* through his dual Jewish/Christian identity. In the novel he continually denies and hides his family's Jewish origins, and is an openly practicing Catholic who claims that he intends to spread the Christian religion in any new territories he finds and claims for Spain. His duplicity, secretive nature, and hidden agendas extend to many aspects of his life. For example, he keeps two sets of logs on his voyages to the Americas and hides his true intention from his crew and from the Spanish Crown: to find the "earthly Paradise", possibly as a new home for the expelled Jews. Towards the end of the novel the narrator calls the fictional Columbus an 'anfíbio'. Amphibians are animals that have the capacity to live on land and water. "Amphibian" is also defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as simply anything "combining two characteristics" (80). The constant Jewish references throughout the novel, such as the expulsion of the Jews

from Spain, the Inquisition's persecution of the conversos (including Columbus and his wife Beatriz), indigenous figures in the New World who supposedly speak Hebrew, and the frequent anachronistic references to the Nazis, all invite an analysis of this aspect of the novel. By portraying a figure of the Conquest as notorious as Christopher Columbus as a converso, forced to hide his Jewish identity, Posse calls into question contemporary notions of Jewish identity and accepted historical "facts" which resonate today in Latin America and have their origins in the early Colonial period.

Physical duality: Christopher Columbus as "Anfibio" and his "Ambiguous Circumcision"

The dual identity and secretive nature of Posse's Columbus is evident immediately. The first passage of the novel introduces Columbus as a young man literally being called to the shore by the sea: "La voz del mar susurraba en verso. Lo llamaba. Clarísimamente escandía 'Coo-lón Cooo-lon'" (20). Although his amphibian nature is not revealed until later, the reader becomes aware that Columbus is masking a secret: "Va casi desnudo, los pies cubiertos—como siempre, para proteger su secreto—con las

medias tejidas por la mamma" (20). It is not only the readers who are aware that something mysterious is afoot, but also Columbus's co-workers and acquaintances, as described in the same passage: "aquella envidiosa manada de queseros y sastres que ya sospechaban en él la subversiva presencia del mutante" (20). One of the fictional Columbus's secret identities, his "amphibian" nature, is revisited often throughout the novel. For example, upon arrival in Portugal after being shipwrecked we learn that Columbus: "se impuso...en la intuición de su naturaleza preferentemente anfibia (se quitó las medias a pesar de la marejada llegado a la costa tuvo la suerte de encontrar en seguida con qué cubrirse los pies, su secreto)" (75). Later, after having arrived in the New World, we see Columbus' secret amphibian nature referenced in the following way: "procede a desvestirse hasta quedar completamente desnudo. ¡Esta vez hasta se quitó los calcetines!" (192). The secret that Columbus had hidden all his life is finally revealed: he has webbed feet. The following passage describes Las Casas (and the reader's) discovery of Columbus literal amphibian identity:

Fue entonces cuando pudo enterarse del secreto que hasta entonces sólo conocía Susana Fontanorrosa y que Colón había ocultado siempre tras la densa

malla de sus calcetines...El Almirante era
 palmípedo y-ya no cabían dudas: preferentemente
 anfibio-. (207)

As mentioned before, amphibian is defined as "having two characteristics", but I believe this particular physical characteristic of webbed feet, only visible when clothing is removed, is also symbolic of another typical Jewish trait only revealed when a man removes his clothes: the circumcision.

Columbus's family is described by the narrator as Catholic in behavior but of Jewish heritage, that is to say, they were New Christians or *conversos*: "Los Colombo eran discretamente católicos. Iban a misa los domingos...También gozaban de hebrea fama. En la rama de los sastres, se podían jactar de alguna nariz ganchuda, de alguna oreja en punta" (28). Although at that time it was important for safety, and useful for upward mobility, to have "pureza de sangre", Columbus's family insures that Columbus's identity remains vague, between Jewish and Christian. His family's desire to maintain his dual identity motivates the "ambiguous" circumcision that is performed on Columbus: "Un corte rabón, una circunsición ambigua, eso fue lo que a Domenico le pareció indispensable para Cristoforo" (39). The rabbi's comment indicates this

was a common practice of the time among conversos: "¡Otro muchacho preparándose para la verdadera fe!" (40). The sarcasm also indicates a certain disdain for the Catholic church and a loyalty to the Jewish heritage that characterized Columbus and his family's identity, as well as the identity of many other conversos of fifteenth-century Spain. The rabbi's final comment highlights the symbolic nature of the ambiguous circumcision: "¡Hemos modificado el diseño de Jehová, muchacho! Ahora eres un *demi*, como dicen los francos" (41). The physical transformation performed on the fictional Columbus by the rabbi divides Columbus's identity and loyalty even further than it already was between the Christian and Jewish traditions.

Columbus's Ancestors: Jewish Prophets

The presence and importance of a Jewish identity and heritage to Posse's Columbus is exemplified in the constant references in the novel to Columbus's "ancestors": the Jewish prophets Isaiah, Abraham, Isaac and others. For example, Columbus ponders: "¿Qué había hecho en su vida? Casi nada que pudiera responder a la ambición de quien—modestamente—se sabe descendiente del Profeta Isaías" (71).

Also, "sólo el elegido—el de la estirpe de Isaías—podría recibir la síntesis final..." (185). Much later in the novel we learn that Columbus: "Sintió que había llegado al final de la tribulación. En sus rodillas, el calor acogedor de esas arenas del Paraíso de Abraham, de Isaac, de Jacob, y sin falsas modestias, de Colón" (205). It is particularly relevant to illustrate Columbus's split identity that these prophets were Jewish, but are now also recognized as prophets among Christians as well. Just as these prophets are claimed by both the Jewish and Christian traditions, Posse's Columbus claims dual heritage as well.

Columbus's Persecution by the Inquisition

There are constant references in *Los perros del paraíso*, far too numerous to cite, to the Inquisition, the persecution and expulsion of the Jews, and the rampant anti-Semitism of the time. Posse frequently invokes the atmosphere of intolerance towards the Jews and *conversos*, characteristic of the years leading up to 1492, which increased further with the establishment of the Inquisition. One salient example in the novel of the intolerance and anti-Semitism of the age is in the description by Isabel and Ferdinand of Rodrigo Borja as an

ideal candidate for Pope due to his "extensa matanza de judíos y conversos ocurrida en Córdoba" (87). The relentless nature and ruthlessness of the Inquisition under Torquemada's leadership is pointed out on numerous occasions, such as in the following passage: "Más de una cura sincera y vulgarmente pietista fue a la hoguera acusado de judaizante" (66). Once Columbus is in Spain he is forced to hide his Jewish heritage from the Inquisition in order to survive. He attempts to "pasar desapercibido" (104). We learn that Columbus is being chased by the Inquisitors: "¡Antes eran los sastres quienes lo perseguían, ahora los de la Hermandad" (73). Columbus's reaction when the Inquisition comes to demand proof of Christianity is telling: "Colón sintió la cercanía del fin" (100). Later, they come to Columbus's house looking for: "un rubio, de ojos azules, que podría ser marrano. ¡Orden del Rey!" (100). Columbus reacts in the following way: "Se le alfojaron las rodillas" (101). Naturally, Columbus begins to hide his heritage, except in the company of friends or other conversos. We see evidence in the following passage: "para que Christovao progresase y olvidase al descendiente de Isaías, alcurnia que él mismo reconocía con humildad cuando estaba entre amigos" (78). At times Columbus feels pressure to make anti-Semitic remarks

in an effort to distance himself from the *conversos*, a behaviour indicative of a double agent. For example:

Colón pasó aquellos años de terror en Córdoba, disimulándose en un humanismo nacionalista. Se hizo asiduo de la farmacia de los Arana en la calle de Bartolome, donde todas las tardes se reunía una peña de conversos para elogiar el antisemitismo...A veces denunciaban a algún conocido, para estar seguros uno o dos meses.

(105)

Another example of Columbus's public denial of his Jewish identity is seen in the following passage: "Colón se explayaba sobre la indispensable necesidad de eliminar a los judíos" (108). Despite the atmosphere of terror and fear in which *conversos*, and anyone rightly or wrongly suspected of *judaizante* lived, Columbus begins a relationship and procreates with a Jewish woman, Beatriz Arana. This act further reinforces his private, Jewish identity while he continues to display his public, Christian persona. Columbus's relationship with Beatriz is characterized in the following way: "ninguna mujer retendría a Colón como aquélla. La no-relación, basada en el desprecio de un cristiano exaltado por una judía condenada, duraría veinte años (hasta la muerte)" (108).

Columbus's Secret Mission in *Los perros del paraíso*

As double agents usually do, the fictional Columbus in *Los perros del paraíso* has a secret mission. Posse is toying with a few historical hypotheses, not generally accepted among mainstream historians, that Columbus was secretly looking for a refuge for the newly expelled Jews, and/or that he was looking for the Jewish homeland, the place where the Ten Tribes of Judea had been expelled. These theories have been considered, researched and proffered by numerous biographers of Columbus such as Simon Wiesenthal and Salvador Madariaga, among others. In fact, Wiesenthal's study is entitled *Sails of Hope: The Secret Mission of Christopher Columbus*. Historians who claim Columbus had a secret agenda related to the Jewish experience present much circumstantial evidence, but they eventually concede that there is no definitive proof. Clearly a figure as well-known as Columbus is ripe for conspiracy theories, especially in the age of historical revisionism. Nevertheless, theories that Christopher Columbus had a secret Jewish agenda in his voyages have circulated for years and Posse takes advantage of that to

playfully re-envision the figure of Columbus in *Los perros del paraíso*.

The plan of looking for a new home for the expelled Jews, and of finding someone to lead such an expedition, is announced in the following passage:

El pogrom avanzaba hacia dimensiones insólitas. La diáspora buscaba una tierra para preservarse...el Marqués de Moya y otros poderosos conversos sabían que debían conseguir al aventurero capaz de llevar la judería a la Nueva Israel. (109)

Shortly after this we learn that Columbus does not share the Spanish Crown's interests. In fact, he considers them "frívolas, menores, previsible avidez humana" (109).

Columbus's secret betrayal of the mission of his financial supporters, Isabel and Ferdinand, is confirmed in the following passage: "Pero, claro, su secreto no se podía comentarlo así, con cualquiera. Comportaría un gran riesgo" (110).

Eventually, the Inquisition comes and takes Columbus away. However, it is revealed that Queen Isabel has intervened on his behalf (or perhaps had planned it all along). Instead of persecuting him, they jokingly call him "hebreón" and inform him he will receive his pay and he

should report to Granada (120). This episode concludes in the following way:

Lo narrado, tan importante para el Destino del Occidente (como se dice) ocurrió el 9 de abril de 1486. Colón había comprendido que aquel rito sellaba un gran acuerdo. ¡La Reina era su cómplice secreta en la secretísima aventura al Paraíso!

(120)

Columbus believes that the Queen has acknowledged his Jewish heritage, as well as his "secret mission", and has allowed him to continue unfettered.

At this point in the novel, it has not yet been revealed what Columbus believes his mission, as a descendant of Isaiah, to be. In the following conversation which takes place at the beginning of the third section of the novel, "El agua", Columbus declares his intentions in more detail to Luis de Santángel, who is also a *converso*, and is employed as a financial advisor to the Spanish Monarchs:

--¿Y vos, en que creéis?

Y Colón respondió con la poca modestia que podía juntar:

--Yo creo que soy el único que busca el Paraíso y tierras para los injustamente perseguidos. (127)

Columbus confides to another converso that he believes it is his duty to find a home for the "injustamente perseguidos" which are obviously the Jews, Crypto-Jews, and all New Christians, including Columbus himself. Shortly after this conversation another passage adds evidence to the connection Posse makes between Columbus's voyage and the forced Jewish exodus: "del lado de la arboleda se alza un coro de madres judías. Voces profundas, sin resignación ni furia (ese 3 de agosto es el último plazo para que los hebreos abandonen España). Ofrecen, inútilmente sus hijos a la flota" (128). Columbus also hires Luis de Torres as a translator to accompany him on the voyage. Even though the goal of the Crown is to find a route to the Indies, it is revealed that Torres is hired because: "Sabe árabe y hebreo. Podrá comunicar con la gente de Indias y con los pioneros de las lejanas tribus de Judea" (129). Once in the New World, Columbus does encounter individuals who understand Hebrew: "¡Derecho, siempre derecho! ¿Ve, Las Casas?: ¡hablan hebreo! Hice bien en traer el rabino Torres!" (212). Also Lansquenete Swedenborg interrogates some of the indigenous population in Hebrew (224).

Throughout the description of the preparations for Columbus's initial voyage to the New World in August 1492, there are constant references to Jewish culture and

heritage, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the persecution of all those without "pureza de sangre" by the Inquisition, Columbus's Jewish ancestry, Columbus's duty to find the "Paraíso" and, most importantly to my study, the extremely secretive manner in which the fictional Columbus carries out his plan. The following are a few passages that illustrate the belief of Posse's Columbus that he was destined to (secretly) search for a new home for the persecuted Iberian Jews, Crypto-Jews, and *conversos*:

Estamos en 1492: es el año señalado por la Kabbala, es el de la redención después de las persecuciones. ¡Tú eres el enviado! Los hebreos de Asia te esperan para reconstruir, para todos nosotros, la tierra prometida. Cumple tu tarea... no te preocupes de la misión que puedan tener algunos de los que embarcamos. ¡Apúrate, parte antes que expire el plazo y puedan acabar impunemente con los judíos! ¡Piensa que si fallas será el triunfo de los monarcas de la noche que ejecutarán la solución final!...Colón no tuvo tiempo de desilusionarlo con sus dudas...Su soledad era grande. A nadie podía comunicar su secretísimo—inefable—misión...(130-31)

In this section of the novel Columbus experiences doubts and considers abandoning his secret mission altogether. It is significant that in this moment of doubt he still imagines a life with Beatriz, the Jewish woman, and their child. Columbus ponders the alternative to fulfilling his mission: "¡Abandonar todo! Huir con Beatriz y el niño y empezar en el mayor anonimato la delicia de una vida sin grandeza. Poner una farmacia en Flandes or una charcutería en Porto. ¡Huir de la Historia!" (132). This reveals that not only does he feel loyalty to his Jewish family, but the passage also recognizes that he must leave Spain one way or another. The options he considers in this scenario are Flanders or Portugal, which at that point in history was still safe for Jews, since they were not expelled from Portugal until 1496. Posse's Columbus is finally dissuaded from abandoning his mission when he witnesses a group of Central European Jewish women who are: "huyendo de los pogroms zaristas habían caído en la persecución ibérica, cantando a coro, con sus pañuelos amarillos en la cabeza, desesperadamente" (133).

Posse creates a Christopher Columbus that in many ways reflects the one found in most historical accounts. The fictional Columbus's family shares the same name, occupation, and origin as the historical one. Many

documented events such as Columbus's shipwreck in Portugal and the August, 1492, departure from Spain in search of the Indies also make their way into Posse's narrative. Relationships with various historical personages such as Queen Isabel, Luis de Santángel, the mothers of his children, and well-known crew members like Pinzón also mirror the fictional Columbus's experiences. Simultaneously Posse imbues his Columbus with many traits characteristic of a double agent: a deceptive nature, a hidden and suppressed identity revealed only to certain individuals, a secret mission, as well as physical characteristics of a dual nature, such as his "amphibian" nature and the circumcision which made him into a "demi". This distorted version of Columbus reflects the entire mood of the novel. While it is clearly an historical novel, it is peppered with so many anachronisms and absurdities that the reader never takes it completely seriously. It is obvious that Posse is attempting to amuse the reader while inserting just enough accepted historical data to make one question that history. This type of questioning also occurs with Posse's Columbus. By casting him as a duplicitous individual, with absurd physical dualities and an unlikely secret agenda, Posse puts the whole historical construction of Christopher Columbus into doubt.

Memorias del Nuevo Mundo: Columbus as converso

Attention to Columbus in literature, film and popular culture increased significantly in the 1980s and 1990s. Shortly after the appearance of *Los perros del paraíso* in 1984, the Mexican novelist Homero Aridjis offered a fictionalized Columbus, along with the Crypto-Jewish experience, in late fifteenth-century Spain on the eve of Columbus's voyages to the New World with his "Juan Cabezón" novels, *1492 Vida y tiempos de Juan Cabezón de Castilla* and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*. Although Columbus is not the protagonist in the Aridjis novels as he was in *Los perros del paraíso*, these two novels both portray Columbus as a *converso* hiding his Jewish identity. However, Aridjis's two novels differ from Posse's in that they read much like a historical account, or a memoir, when compared to the playful, anachronistic tone of *Los perros del paraíso*. As Victoria Eugenia Campos notes: "the novel is a composite of other historical works which Aridjis organizes around a fictional frame called 'Juan Cabezón' and presents to us in the form of one (fictional) man's historical memoirs" (187). *1492* and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* have been called companion novels, or alternatively, *Memorias del*

Nuevo Mundo is considered a sequel to *1492*. Christopher Columbus makes very few appearances in *1492*, therefore I will mostly examine the characterization of Columbus in Aridjis's second Juan Cabezón novel, *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*.

The protagonist of Homero Aridjis's historical novels, *1492* and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* is the *converso* Juan Cabezón. In *1492*, Cabezón narrates his picaresque existence in Spain, complete with a blind man Pero Meñique as a companion, persecution by the Inquisition, and his first meeting with Christopher Columbus (who is also being questioned by the Inquisition for judaizing), before he finally makes the decision to travel to the New World on Columbus's first voyage on the eve of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* relates Columbus's first trans-Atlantic voyage and arrival in the Caribbean, Cortés's conquest of Mexico, and the establishment of New Spain, mostly from Juan Cabezón's point of view. *Memorias* is narrated in third person until the final chapters when Juan Cabezón resumes the first person narration seen throughout *1492*.

Previous critical approaches to *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*

Relatively little critical attention has been given to these Aridjis novels in comparison with Posse's *Los perros del paraíso*, perhaps in part because Aridjis's poetry has overshadowed his prose. Not surprisingly, most of the criticism that has appeared has not focused on Columbus, but rather on the *converso* protagonist Juan Cabezón. Kim López's study of Latin American novels of the Conquest includes a chapter devoted to 1492 and *Memorias*, in which she focuses on Juan Cabezón's ambiguous *converso* identity, and later, the evolution of his identity as he interacts with the indigenous other in the New World. According to López, Cabezón has an ambiguous identity divided between his Jewish heritage and his New Christian status. López claims that: "Aridjis's protagonist alternately accepts and rejects an identification with his Jewish heritage" (138). She also claims that having had a problematic identity in Spain, Juan Cabezón uses the New World to "fashion a new identity" (171). Nevertheless, even in the New World his identity remains in flux. López describes Cabezón as "an antihero with whom we cannot entirely identify because of his vacillation between ideological positions" (174). Campos sees the novel as Aridjis's critique of commonly

accepted notions of Mexican history and that history's connection the present. She states that the *Memorias*

does not presume to be a fifteenth century Spanish chronicle, but rather a work richly informed by a twentieth century language and post-1968 intellectual concerns. As such, it is a version of the past that seeks to explain the emergence of national inequities and the genesis of the marginados" (223)

James J. Lopez believes that many common interpretations of the "Juan Cabezón" novels, such as Campos's and Kim Lopez's are valid, but incomplete. Instead, he states in his study of the narratives of Aridjis that:

Responden estas novelas al proyecto totalizante de Aridjis, a su visión simultaneísta del tiempo y del espacio en donde todas las tradiciones, toda la documentación, todos los datos que componen nuestro acervo informativo...se revelan en su naturaleza doble... (205)

Columbus as Double Agent in *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*

Most criticism on *Memorias* touches briefly, if at all, on Christopher Columbus's role in the novel. Perhaps this is because a large part of the novel takes place after Columbus's death. Aridjis's narrator also mentions when and where, and how Columbus dies, leaving the reader to shift his focus on the many other characters introduced, such as Hernán Cortés and Malinche. Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero, who are explored in a previous chapter of this study, are also characters in *Memorias*. Despite the limited presence of Columbus throughout the novel, I believe he is one of the most relevant characters. This is demonstrated in the epigraphs to the novel; the first of epigraphs is from Columbus's *Relación del Tercer Viaje* and states: "Tierras que agora nuebamente e descubierto, en que tengo assentado en el ánima que allí es el Paraíso Terrenal". I will also show how the characterization of Columbus as a double agent (hiding his Jewish identity among other things) in Aridjis's novel is relevant to my study.

The importance of identity in *Memorias* is obvious by its introduction in the first lines of the novel. The converso protagonist is described in the following way: "Juan Cabezón vino de gaviero a bordo de la *Santa María*, a

tres de agosto del año del Señor de 1492..en busca de fortuna y *de sí mismo*, y para huir de los inquisidores que pos esos días quemaban herejes..." (11) [my emphasis]. In this passage it is revealed that the protagonist has a complex identity that he wants to resolve, and also that his departure from Spain is due to the stifling and dangerous social environment in which he and other conversos are living. Columbus later expresses a similar idea when the narrator reveals Columbus's thoughts to us: "Yo he soñado este mundo con los ojos abiertos y he medido las noches por sus claros de luna. Mucho he viajado por los caminos de Portugal y Castilla, pero más he andado por los caminos *de mí mismo*" (18) [my emphasis]. The Christopher Columbus character is introduced almost immediately, in the third paragraph of the novel: "Partió con Cristóbal Colón, hacia las Indias por el occidente, después que los Reyes Católicos decretaran la expulsión de los judíos de toda España..." (11). The coincidence of Columbus's departure date from Spain for the Indies and the the expulsion of the Jews is a well-known historical fact used at times as evidence of Columbus's *converso* background. In introducing Columbus in this way, Aridjis makes the first of many insinuations that his fictional Columbus is of Jewish stock and that he and the protagonist are fleeing Spain for

similar reasons. There is also a scene in the first Juan Cabezón novel, 1492, in which Columbus and Cabezón are being questioned at the same time by the Inquisition. At that time, both men deny that they are practicing Judaism or have a Jewish background.

On the second page of the novel the topic of the expulsion of the Jews continues. There is a long description detailing the images of ships full of refugees, the various destinations and fates of those who were fleeing, the conversion process of the Jews that remained in Spain, as well as the fate of the wife of Juan Cabezón, Isabel de la Vega. The narrator filters this description through the eyes of Juan Cabezón by introducing it with: "Juan Cabezón creyó ver en la distancia los barcos llenos de judíos que dejaban España..." (12). The paragraph concludes by foreshadowing the fate of many *conversos* who would flee to the New World by stating that: "Gran parte de los expulsados ya no hallaría reposo ni asiento en este mundo, sufriendo de tierra en tierra vejaciones, miserias, cárcel y muerte" (12). Such a description further connects Columbus to converso status as it resembles the fate of the historic Christopher Columbus, as well as that of Aridjis's Columbus, whose death is recounted later in the novel.

Crew Members' Gossip Session about Columbus and his Identity

The subject of Columbus's hidden identity and agendas comes up almost immediately through conversations among the crew of Columbus's three ships. They question Columbus's loyalty to the Spanish Crown and wonder if he is hiding other things, including his Jewish heritage:

--¿Le habrán pagado los portugueses a este genovés aventurero para perdernos en el fin del mundo?— preguntó el primero.

--Antes de decir o hacer algo invoca la Santa Trinidad, profiere el nombre de Jesús...para hacernos creer que no es un converso fugitivo de la Santa Inquisición—reveló el segundo.

--Husmeo que es uno de esos cristianos nuevos que han pasado los últimos doce años huyendo de Sevilla a Zaragoza, de Zaragoza a Teruel, de Teruel a Toledo, de Toledo a Guadalupe...supuso el veedor real.

--Su empresa fue financiada por el descendiente de judíos Luis de Santangel..exclamó Rodrigo de Sánchez de Segovia. Muchos aragoneses se apellidan

Colom, bien puede ser éste un hijo de aquel
Abraham Colom, de la villa de Borja. (15)

The preceding passages indicate the crew members' suspicions of Columbus on multiple levels. Not only do they question whether or not he is a *converso*, but also his allegiance to the Spanish Crown, his alleged allegiance to conversos through funding of his voyage, and even his national origin, suggesting he is from Aragon and not Genova. As the characters close to Columbus begin to question the true loyalty and agenda of the fictional Columbus, so do the readers. It is not only through the voices of the characters that doubt is expressed regarding Columbus's *converso* origins and general deceptive nature. The narrator also reveals these two conflated ideas in other parts of the novel. For example:

A lo largo y a lo ancho de la Santa María
intercambiaron malos propósitos, se declararon
víctimas de una suerte injusta por encontrarse en
las manos de un advenidizo; quizás hijo de
conversos, que había engañado tanto a los reyes
como a ellos...(19)

All of the alleged theories of Columbus voiced by the fictional crew members and the omniscient narrator in the preceding passage have their roots in historical

documents. As mentioned earlier, there has been little consensus about Columbus's life and origins among historians. Raising these questions here in fictional form gives them life once again and makes the reader question not only Columbian historical constructs, but any "history" from the Colonial period.

In the novel, Luis de Torres, the translator for Columbus's voyage overhears the conversation about Columbus and jokingly interjects yet another possible theory of Columbus's origins. Irritated that Luis de Torres had been listening to their conversation, and is now mocking their gossip session, Rodrigo Sánchez de Segovia asks Luis de Torres the following question: "¿No os vi en Málaga entre los conversos huidos de la Inquisición cuando el rey nuestro Fernando los mandó quemar vivos al tomar la ciudad?" (16). Luis de Torres openly acknowledges that he is a converso: "En Málaga y en Zaragoza, en Toledo, y en Córdoba muchos me vieron en la hoguera, pero no fui yo el que quemaron, siempre fue otro converso" (16). This would seem to indicate that there would be no reason for the fictional Columbus to hide his *converso* status either. Yet the crew members believe Columbus is deceiving them. And it is true, in fact, that Columbus is deceiving the men. It is revealed that he keeps two logs of the voyage: one that is

accurate and another that is created for show. "Cristóbal Colón llevaba dos cuentas de las leguas recorridas desde la isla de Hierro: una fingida para los marineros, de 584, y otra verdadera, para él, de 707" (18). These two "leguas", one true and one invented for show, serve a double function in the novel. The fact that Columbus recorded two logs is historically documented and accepted by historians, so it adds verosimilitud to the novel. At the same time, it also stands as a symbol of the fictional Columbus's two identities.

Confronting Columbus

Not surprisingly, the suspicion and scrutiny of Columbus by his crew members continues.

Colocó una linterna delante de la cara larga y pecosa de Crsitóbal Colón, como si quisiera descifrar el enigma de sus facciones en medio de la noche.

--¿Adónde nos conducís, genovés aventurero?--
balbuceó.

Él, interrogado de esa manera, no respondió.

--Creéis que habrá viento para tornar a España o nos lleváis a una muerte segura--preguntó el otro,

paseando la linterna sobre los cabellos blancos,
que habían sido bermejos, del Almirante. (16)

The narrator points out that the crew members' suspicion of Columbus and his true agenda extend and are related to the Admiral's physical appearance, which they apparently view as unusual and mysterious ("enigma"), including mentioning his formerly red hair, a characteristic that has traditionally been connected to negative superstitions. Even though Columbus immediately, calmly, and confidently reassures the men they will find the Indies and return to Spain with gold and wealth, the sailor reacts in the following way:

El marinero desdenó sus palabras. Ambos se
observaron como si se vieran por primera vez.
Colón apartó la linterna de su cara, se pasó la
mano por las barbas blancas. El marinero dio a
Cabezón una mirada escurridiza. (17)

The look given to Juan Cabezón in this scene is significant because he is also a *converso* and is therefore viewed by the crew members with the same suspicion as Columbus.

The narrator gives Columbus the final word in the previous scene. Columbus praises "Dios" upon entering his room for the night. Columbus declares: "Maravilloso es Dios en las profundidades—exclamó el Almirante, metiéndose en su

pequeña cámara" (17). Even though there is relatively little dialogue in the novel, there are numerous occasions in the text when Columbus openly mentions God. This religious devotion is also grounded in historical documents which tend to agree that Columbus was an openly practicing Catholic. Likewise, in the novel we see Columbus invoke God in the following passage:

--A Dios Nuestro Señor muchas gracias sean dadas--
apunto Colón cerca de él, el martes 2 de octubre,
porque la mar era llana y buena (19).

The crew members notice and comment that he frequently invokes God. As cited previously, they believe he does this in order to appear pious, and thereby throw off any suspicion that he may be anything other than a devout Catholic. For a *converso* to employ such a strategy, even if it occurs on a subconscious level on the part of the fictional Columbus, is understandable and useful, especially in order to alleviate the tension between Columbus and his crew members in the scene cited above.

When they land in the Indies, the frequent references and thanks to God continue. Upon stepping onto land, the fictional Columbus gives thanks to God in Latin: "Domine Deus, eterne omnipotens..." (24). The narrator then informs

us that Columbus has named the island "San Salvador", a clear reference to Jesus Christ. When they encounter indigenous inhabitants of the island, Columbus immediately makes his priorities clear and declares first and foremost: "Creo que ligeramente se harán crisitianos...placiendo a Nuestro Señor llevaré de aquí al tiempo de mi partida seis a sus Altezas para que aprendan a hablar...apuntó el Almirante" (24).

Columbus Silences Talk of *Conversos*

Once on land, the speculations and accusations regarding Columbus's *converso* status continue among the crew members. The following extended dialogue reveals the extent to which the crew members suspect that Columbus is a *converso* and also the importance they assign it. Columbus's reaction to their conversation is also revealing.

--¿Cristóbal Colón es un converso?—tomó aparte

Rodrigo de Escobedo a Luis de Torres.

--No lo sé, y si lo supiera no os lo diría—se alejó este último.

--No tenéis nada que perder, habéis perdido vuestra religión, vuestro nombre de Simuel o Judá,

¿qué más da que perdáis a un amigo?—lo siguió el
veedor real.

--No soy informador de informadores del Santo
Oficio, soy cristiano nuevo.

--Válgame la Virgen, otro judío más cristiano que
yo—chilló Rodrigo de Escobedo.

--No hay nadie mejor que un converso para
descubrir a otro converso—intervino Rodrigo
Sánchez de Segovia.

--Yo, ¿descubrir al descubridor de estos mundos?
¿Con qué fin?—se alzó de hombros Luis de Torres

--Para decírselo a un amigo mío muy querido que
mora en el convento de Santa Cruz de Segovia, gran
quemador de hombres vivos y muertos.

--¿Debe un hombre hurgar en el vientre de su madre
para conocer su origen? ¿Debe preguntar a que fé
pertenece su natura, si es judía o devota
cristiana? ¿Tal pureza de sangre cuando nuestros
frailes van con las manos tintas en el líquido
precioso?—les interrogó el converso.

--¿Me ayudaréis guardando silencio—los calló
Cristóbal Colón (26)

The question posed to Luis de Torres about Columbus's *converso* status is more of a statement, which is revealing because it indicates that Rodrigo de Escobedo already believes that Columbus is a *converso*, and is only requesting confirmation. Luis de Torres's evasive response is also telling. Torres himself is a *converso* and would likely protect the identity of another. The *veedor real*, Rodrigo de Sánchez, and Rodrigo de Escobedo try to persuade him to reveal or investigate Columbus's true identity using various psychological tactics such as suggesting that Torres has nothing to lose and is the ideal one to ascertain the information. Torres simply replies that he is a New Christian, not an informer, has nothing to gain from ascertaining whether or not Columbus is a *converso*, that Torres himself is no better equipped than anyone else for the job, and essentially states (with a shrug of the shoulders) that he simply does not care. Torres's answers in this dialogue have a contemporary ring to them that makes the topic of identity in the Colonial period relevant to today's identity issues in Latin America, not only with regard to Jewish identity, but any marginalized group. Columbus, as Admiral, once again has the final word. Without acknowledging the content of their conversation one way or the other, he simply silences them. His non-

acknowledgment is revealing. If he found the conversation distracting enough to ask them to quiet down, it is likely that he heard what they were discussing. The fact that he did not defend himself against accusations that he was a *converso*, and even more importantly, his desire to drop the subject entirely—despite the fact that the men under his command were probing deeply into his personal identity—reveals that he likely is hiding a *converso* background. Shortly after this exchange between Escobedo, Torres, Sánchez and Columbus, Martín Alonso Pinzón comments on Columbus's view of the world and states that Columbus: "acomoda las gentes y las cosas según conviene a su quimera" (27). Aridjis's Columbus operates in this way not only with people around him, but also with himself.

Columbus's Death in *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*

Aridjis continues to focus the narration on Columbus for only a few more chapters, with most of the action involving his return to Spain and remaining voyages to the New World. Like most of the novel, these sections are less characteristic of a novel and more comparable to an historical account of the time period, albeit with a

contemporary slant. One aspect of these sections which does resemble fiction rather than history is that the investigations and questions surrounding Columbus's Jewish heritage continue. The narrator reveals that Rodrigo Rodríguez accompanies Francisco de Bobadilla to the New World with a secret agenda of investigating the Admiral on behalf of the Inquisition: "el fraile dominico don Rodrigo Rodríguez, el enano que había sido familiar de la Inquisición en Ávila y otras partes, y había venido con el comendador para saber si Cristóbal Colón era judío oculto" (49). This indicates that suspicion towards Columbus was not limited to his crew members who may have had other reasons to distrust him, but rather, was also a concern to the Spanish Crown. Shortly after this report of the Inquisitorial investigation of Columbus for being a crypto-Jew, Columbus's death is described in a very bleak fashion: "partió de la Española en el año 1504 para nunca volver al Nuevo Mundo: murió de gota en Valladolid, en lecho de pobre, enterrado como pobre, sin obispos ni enviados de la corte" (52). Columbus's location and cause of death, as well as the timeline does correspond to accepted historical accounts. Described in such a manner, the word "pobre" is used twice, and apparently without the support of the Church or the Crown, suggests he had been fallen out of

favor among the authorities in Spain. Given the narrator's report that he had been investigated by the Inquisition just prior to this, it is logical to assume the two things are connected in Aridjis's account. It can be considered a criticism of the Inquisition and the intolerance towards Jews, conversos, and crypto-Jews which characterized the period.

Conclusions

These two novels that fictionalize Columbus as a double agent converso Jew complement each other in several ways. Posse's novel narrates the beginnings of Columbus's life in Genoa and show his struggle to win favor with the Crown. The majority of the novel takes place in Spain prior to the 1492 departure for the New World. Homero Aridjis's novel on the other hand starts with the Columbus's three ships already at sea, describes the initial encounter with the natives, and mentions Columbus's after having returned to Spain following his various voyages to the New World. In contrast to the Posse novel, virtually none of the action in *Memorias del nuevo mundo* takes place in Spain. Still, each novel treats Columbus's life and possible Jewish heritage. The two works also contrast greatly in style. *Memorias del nuevo mundo* is written in a very objective

style, almost resembling a chronicle. *Los perros del paraíso* is fantastical and parodic throughout. While each novel will likely reach a different audience, they both share a similar goal: namely, to call into question official history, while at the same time relating the topic of Jewish and crypto-Jewish identity in the period of the Conquest to present day issues Jewish identity concerns in Latin America. As Renée Levine Melammed notes that:

The strength of the converso identity has proven to be long lasting and powerful; it is doubtful if their 14th and 15th century ancestors ever dreamed that in the 21st century the question of converso identity would still be a matter of debate. (174)

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Many contemporary re-writings of the Conquest recover the images of the past in Latin America through the eyes of marginalized characters who chose to mask their original identity, thereby functioning as a kind of double agent. Ethnicity, gender, and religion continue to be factors in how individuals in Latin America identify who they are to themselves and to others. In this study I focus on marginalized individuals such as Jews, Crypto-Jews, transvestites, homosexuals, and transculturated Spaniards who adopted the lifestyle of indigenous groups of the New World to answer a series of questions such as: 1) Why do certain fictional characters choose to become double agents? 2) What strategies do these characters use to negotiate their multiple identities? 3) What connection exists between these characters and their real life counterparts? These are pertinent to the broader questions I address such as: Why are contemporary writers and readers interested in the experiences of marginalized, dual identity individuals in a Colonial context? How and why are

the experiences of these double agents relevant to a construction of Latin American history? How does having a dual identity in the Colonial period relate to those individuals living with a dual identity in contemporary society?

I believe that ever increasing globalization and its impact on culture around the world has prompted many writers in Latin America to examine the past as a means of negotiating and/or maintaining a unique identity. For many Latin Americans the Colonial period is a logical place to search for identity. As García Canclini explains:

Identity is a narrative construct. It involves the establishment of a set of founding events, which almost always refer to the appropriation of a territory by a people. The narrative proceeds by adding up the feats through which the inhabitants defend their territory, order conflicts[...]in order to distinguish themselves from others. (89)

Contemporary Latin American authors such as those considered in this study—Abel Posse, Eugenio Aguirre, Carmen Boullosa, Homero Aridjis, Herminio Martínez and Carlos Fuentes—portray double agent characters in the Colonial period because the dual identity conflict mirrors

the essence of the identity conundrum throughout Latin American history up to the present day. Through these narratives devoted to dual identity individuals, the authors re-write Latin American history to make it more relevant to the inhabitants of Latin America today who are concerned with the problems inherent in identity formation. Fictionalizations of real life personages such as Gonzalo Guerrero, Jerónimo de Aguilar, the three Francisco de Montejos (father, son and nephew), Christopher Columbus, and Boullosa's Claire (largely inspired by the real life cross dressing Catalina de Erauso) as opposed to characters with whom the reader has no previous association, further reinforces a new vision of history. Through the mixing of fiction and non-fiction in the novels in this study, readers can consider an alternate version of history, an explanation of events that includes voices and experiences previously omitted. Contemporary readers on the margins, who often wrestle with a dual identity, are able to identify with the double agent characters. Non-marginalized readers see a new version of history that is more inclusive and representative of reality. Silvia Spitta claims that:

If the characters depicted in novels and if the subjectivities of writers are assumed to be split and in flux, then one must also call for the

creation of new types of readers, that is, readers who are capable of reading at least bi-culturally.

(8)

Globalization

Latin American nations have been in the shadow of the United States economically and politically since they achieved independence from Spain in the early 19th century. U.S. influence in Latin America has been particularly prominent in Mexico, due to its geographic proximity and to the money remitted to Mexico by its residents working abroad. The large Mexican American population residing in the U.S. also is relevant. García Canclini asserts:

It is now a commonplace of history that Latin America was "invented" [...] Initiated by Spain and Portugal through the Conquest and colonization [...] and into the 20th century by new linkages to the U.S. (4)

The globalization and homogenization of culture that continues to take place in Latin America and elsewhere in the world cause individuals in societies on the periphery to search for, examine, define, preserve and maintain a unique identity of their own. Many middle class Latin

Americans today are as likely to shop in stores and eat in restaurants owned and operated by foreign companies, often from the United States, as they are to patronize locally owned businesses. In the United States many residents prefer to buy products "Made in the USA", but a resident of Mexico who continually supports foreign-owned businesses may begin to question his or her own identity and patriotic allegiances. As Alberto Moreiras notes: "Identity is always open to commodification by the cultural-ideological apparatus of global capitalism" (279). The impact of capitalism varies from one region to another in Latin America but in the most economically developed countries such as Mexico, Chile, and Argentina, the competing cultural paradigms from abroad can often cause individuals to reflect on their identity, particularly those who already possess a problematic or divided sense of identity. The constant reminder of a foreign presence can result in a greater consciousness of difference. Moreiras suggests that all narratives of identity are negatively influenced by the "false dialectic of modernization" (51), a phenomenon that occurs often in Latin American countries that participate most actively in economic and cultural globalization. A dynamic of cultural resistance in such circumstances can lead to increased insecurity regarding identity. Peter

Standish comments on the cultural erosion in Mexico and the melding of U.S. popular culture with Mexican culture: "the U.S.-oriented inhabitant of Tijuana, in a city of two million people on the busiest border in the world, sells visitors Bart Simpson spin-offs and Osama bin Laden piñatas" (169). In addition to foreign businesses and the economic issues, U.S. based mass media products such as movies and television have a strong presence in Latin America. García Canclini has addressed the diminishing influence of local television and cinema in Latin America and its effect on a national identity:

In the 1940s and 1950s, Mexican and Argentine cinema projected their identity narratives through mass viewed culture[...]All of this waned in the 1980s. The opening of each country's economy to global markets and processes of regional integration diminished the role of national cultures. (90)

Hollywood's dominance of the world movie market may be waning but still persists. The vast majority of films shown at mainstream Mexican cinemas are produced by American-owned studios. U.S. television programs, both in their original language and dubbed into Spanish, air frequently on Mexican television stations. Latin American television

programming, with some exceptions such as the "telenovelas", is often heavily influenced by U.S. programming. For example, the television program "La Academia" in Mexico, is a Mexican version of the popular American program "American Idol" which, in turn, originated from the British television program "Pop Idol". The perpetual preoccupation with identity (dual and multiple identities) in Latin America, and perhaps throughout the world, has been exacerbated by globalization. As Maarten Van Delden notes: "Mexican nationalism, then, is a necessary defense against the expansive rationalism of its powerful neighbor" (199).

"Mestizaje" and Other Dual Identities in Latin America

Double identity issues in Latin America date back to the 1492 encounter between Europeans and the indigenous peoples living in the "New World" as well as the resulting mestizaje. In a search for one's identity, it is quite natural to go back to one's origins, and this has led to increasing interest in the Colonial period among Latin American writers. Simón Bolívar wrote on the eve of Independence: "We are not European; we are not Indians, we are but a mixed species...American by birth and European by

law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict" (176).

Fernando Aínsa describes how this dialogue on identity has continued among Latin American intellectuals since independence:

Terms such as Martí's 'mestizo America', José M. Argueda's 'Indo-America', Angel Rama's 'transculture' and Ventura García Calderon's 'Indo-Afro-Sino-Ibero America' indicate an attempt to conceive of Latin American culture as a hybrid.

In the same way that Latin America's peripheral economic position has continued up to the present day, the dual identity conflict persists. Marilyn Grace Miller notes that:

Even after such multicultural monuments as Plaza de las Tres Culturas, categories such as 'indio' and 'negro' were still used in pejorative ways, while ideology declared the worth and occasionally even the superiority of the non-white. (4)

In contemporary Latin American society, it is not only those of indigenous origins who are marginalized. Machismo and anti-Semitism often continue to keep individuals who transgress gender norms, as well as Jews and persons of Jewish origin, into double agent status, leading them to mask or suppress their identities.

Narrative Fiction/Rewriting History

For persons of dual identity living on the margins in a globalized world, narrative fiction is an ideal form to rewrite the past and present new experiences of marginalized individuals. As Elizabeth Monasterios notes:

What Latin American works of art can do in times of globalization is to insist on the need of intercultural dialogues in order to expand the horizon of human discourse but also to avoid ways of thinking that do not require a past...to reshape present actions. (105 in Blayer)

The double agent fictionalized characters I examine in these novels serve as a bridge between the origins in the Conquest and the contemporary identity issues that continue today for marginalized individuals in society. Stories of subaltern individuals were left out in the Colonial period, a fact that contributes to their continued presence on the margins today. Linda Hutcheon asserts that: "All past 'events' are potential historical 'facts', but the ones that become facts are those that are chosen to be narrated" (75). By narrating the experiences of dual identity characters like Claire, Paco, Gonzalo Guerrero, converso

Jews, and others, in a fictional context, these authors increase our consciousness of their contemporary counterparts. Homi Bhabha theorizes that:

Counter narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres, through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. (300)

Each of the three core chapters in this study considers the depiction of double agent characters in two novels of very contrasting styles. *Gonzalo Guerrero*, *Invasores de paraíso*, and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* narrate their stories in a traditional manner. They aspire to present a relatively objective approach to historical events, almost resembling chronicles, although each contains a clearly contemporary political stance. *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo* and *Gonzalo Guerrero* include a bibliography for example. The other three works studied, the novella "Las dos orillas", *Duerme*, and *Los perros del paraíso*, contrast widely in style with the first three: they are fantastical, anachronistic, and often times bizarre. For example, in *Los perros del paraíso*, Christopher Columbus has webbed feet and is called an "anfíbio", while the inhabitants of the New World in Posse's novel speak Hebrew.

Despite the contrasting styles of the works, each pair of novels deals with very similar issues of importance in Latin America today through double agent characters. The novels in Chapter Two address transculturation, mestizaje and cultural hybridity; Chapter Three shows how machismo and a patriarchal society lead to the suppression of the feminine side of both protagonists; and Chapter Four analyzes two fictional representations of a converso Christopher Columbus and the 1492 Spanish expulsion of Jews and conversos and its consequences. With a wide range of writing styles these novels address topics such as mestizaje, machismo, and religious intolerance, that are all of great interest in Latin America today. In considering these complex issues, these six novels depicting the experiences of double agent characters in the Conquest show that many authors and readers continue to look for explanations and answers to the identity question in the violent beginnings of Latin America.

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