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Luziris Pineda Turi  
December, 2012

WRITER MARÍA LUISA GARZA: PRECURSOR OF HISPANIC FEMENISM

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Hispanic Studies

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

The beginning of the twentieth century marked a period of change for women; many Mexican were affected by the Mexican Revolution, Temperance and modernity. María Luisa Garza, an exiled elite woman, wrote and traveled between Texas and Mexico during this time. This dissertation takes a closer look at her literary production as seen in *La Época* and *El Herald de México* along with two of her novels: *La novia de Nervo* and *Tentáculos de fuego*.

In approaching her journalistic production, this work traces the historical roots of the *crónica* genre up to its incarnation in U.S. Spanish-language newspapers. There is also a consideration of how the author's gender and choice of literary genre matter. The *crónicas* are treated to close-readings with regards to: womanhood, class, the Mexican Revolution and femininity. This dissertation also provides a context for Garza's novels and exposes her literary liberty when self-publishing them. What discursive growth or differences are apparent in the novels as compared to the *crónicas*? Lastly, Garza's activism is vital to understanding her and the research here highlights her community involvement.

Finally, the work here initiates a discussion of the theoretical tools necessary for this archival recovery. The U.S. Hispanic archive is still being recovered and most scholars are working with makeshift theories constructed from archival theories of writers from the United States or elsewhere. This dissertation also explores a theoretical framework with which future scholars can guide their own work. Moreover, this dissertation proposes that both U.S Hispanic literary studies and Chicana feminist history would benefit from taking a closer look at the work of these women. By exploring

Chicana categories of identification that limit the literary figures deemed relevant and by making use of the theories proposed by Emma Pérez and Chela Sandoval, women like Garza can then be considered pertinent to Chicana studies.

The type of archival recovery done for this research is developing as more archives are found and scholars develop the theoretical tools necessary for the analysis of said archives. This dissertation presents one possible mode of recovery and analysis for María Luisa Garza and women like her.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My work in U.S. Hispanic literature was guided and encouraged by Dr. Nicolás Kanellos, or “el Profe,” as he is known to those of us lucky enough to work with him. His groundbreaking work with the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project afforded me opportunities for research and travel that would have never occurred otherwise. I am indebted to Dr. Kanellos and the Recovery for their intellectual and financial support.

My journey in literary studies began earlier in my university career. As a junior majoring in Biology at the University of Houston and hoping to become a Geneticist, I had the opportunity to take a Spanish class with Dr. Anadeli Bencomo. Through many meetings and conversations, she nurtured and affirmed my love for literature and encouraged my intellectual curiosity in the field. Since then, Dr. Bencomo has been a constant source of inspiration for the type of woman and professional I seek to be.

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Along with my committee, the Women’s Gender and Sexuality Studies program gave me the opportunity to work as a Graduate Assistant and granted me financial support for travel. WGSS also introduced me to a number of positive role-models:

Jeanne Scheper, Mamta Accapadi, Lauran Kerr-Herally and Elizabeth Gregory. These women not only offered academic support but also extended kindness and understanding that have proven crucial to my success, and shared wisdom I will take with me into the next phase of my career.

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These acknowledgements remind us all that our work is never the product of an individual. I am only as great as the people who surround me and who have supported me. This dissertation is as much theirs as it is mine. I am humbled and grateful.



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## **Dedication**

*In memory of María Alejandra Luna,  
Ramiro Pineda, Dr. Leopoldo Maler  
& Rebecca Maler whose legacy  
and love guide me.*

## Introduction

The *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project* provides scholars with an archival arsenal rich with the literary and cultural legacy vital to the study of U.S. Hispanic literature pre-1960<sup>1</sup>. For these scholarly researchers recuperating, indexing, microfilming, digitizing and subsequently analyzing these recuperated and obscure archives implies a high level of academic responsibility and accountability since they will potentially be the first to offer said archives to the academic community and general public. By default, one becomes the expert on the recuperated archives and one's interpretative work of the archives will shape the initial response the academic community and general public will have to the texts recovered. Therein lies the need for a sense of academic responsibility. This fact makes the archaeological work exciting and overwhelming as researchers try to sustain some level of objectivity when initially introducing recuperated authors and their works so as to provide interpretative tools instead of dictating how the archives should be interpreted.

The literary production of María Luisa Garza, who wrote under the pseudonym *Loreley*, can be found among the many archives at the Recovery Project. These archives include Garza's journalistic work and some of her books on microfilm and in digitized form. Garza's other novels, poetry, essays, letters, and personal family documents can be found in various institutions in the United States and Mexico. My work with and study of these archives made apparent that not only was María Luisa Garza virtually unknown in Mexican and U.S. literature, but also that there were only a total of nine works that

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<sup>1</sup> "Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage is a program that works with an international board of scholars, librarians, and archivists to constitute and make accessible an archive of cultural production by Hispanic or Latino peoples who have existed since sixteenth century in the areas that eventually became part of the United States" (Kanellos, 371).

mentioned and/or analyzed any aspect of this author's work. Consequently, there was a need to recover a large portion of her missing body of work and a need to develop a literary analysis to demonstrate why her work mattered to both Mexican and U.S. literary studies.

Garza's biography, which was pieced together from documents in many archives at various institutions, as well as from family documents and interviews of her living relatives, represents part of the archeological work that I conducted, subsequent to the encounter with her texts.. The data collected was found in libraries, institutions and familial homes in New York, San Antonio, Monterrey, Mexico City and other places I visitedtraveled. Most importantly, this work as a whole will demonstrate how Garza fits into and is relevant not only to the study of U.S. Hispanic literature pre-1960 but also to Chicana feminist studies.

### **Theory and Methodology**

Although Garza's body of work includes poetry, novels, editorials, *crónicas*, short stories (both published as collections and as serialized numbers in newspapers), the literary analysis here will solely focus on her *crónicas* and two selected novels. Chosen for their importance within U.S. Hispanic print culture at the beginning of the twentieth century and because other scholars have already begun to study them, Garza's *crónicas* play an important role in defining her work. On the other hand, her novels provide a point of contrast with her *crónicas* as they help explore the hypothesis that different genres provided Garza with different literary possibilities. One of the books not included in this analysis is *Escucha*, a collection of poetry, because this investigation focuses solely on novels and *crónicas*. The other novels not integrated into this study are

*Los amores de Gaona* (1922), *Alas y quimeras* (1924), and *Soñando un hijo* (1937) due to the focus of this research. The three novels previously mentioned produce narratives that depict traditional gender roles and ideas about class and Mexican cultural. The goal for this work is to examine those works by Garza that deviate from what was expected of a Mexican and elite woman author writing in the United States and Mexico.

The analysis of her *crónicas* takes from the work of scholars working with this genre: Monsiváis, González, Rotker, Kanellos, et al. Taking from their work in creating a working definition of the function of the *crónica* both in Latin America and the United States, some of Garza's *crónicas* do in fact fall in line with the generic definitions provided by the aforementioned scholars. As an expansion to this work, the analysis of the *crónicas* includes the theoretical tools provided by Foucault and echoed by Chela Sandoval about the importance of *interstitial spaces*. In this sense and for the analytical work here, these *interstitial spaces* are understood as the margins of Garza's *crónicas* and as the messages and ideas that can be recovered when reading between the lines. As Foucault calls to us to "reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the words; in any case, we must reconstitute speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them" (27). The *crónicas* studied are grouped thematically. Through the use of the theoretical tools provided by Foucault and Sandoval, Garza's contradictions, ambiguity and multifaceted point of views will be discussed while making the case that her ideology is more complex than previously believed.

Initially, Garza's novelistic body of work will be placed into dialog with the literary movements of her time: Naturalism and Modernism. In this sense, a basic

analysis of the ways in which Garza's novels followed, modified or countered the esthetic of her contemporaries will initiate the novels' analysis. The content of the novels: domestic abuse, alcoholism, infanticide and gender relations will be viewed through the lens of the nationalist agendas linked to the Temperance Movement and the Revolution in Mexico.

In this manner, the forthcoming literary analysis hopes to add to the already existing scholarly material about María Luisa Garza's work by including a larger portion of her body of work into the analysis and by proposing new ways of interpreting her work.

### **Chapter Summaries**

As a precursor to the literary analysis found in chapters two and three, chapter one establishes and discusses theoretical considerations about the relationship between Chicana and Mexican feminist history. In particular, the discussion begins by questioning the way in which Chicana feminist history has been selective in choosing what part of the history of Mexican women both in Mexico and the United States is relevant to theirs. By revisiting and contesting the traditional definitions of such terms as "history," "Chicana" and "feminism," I develop new ways of seeing Chicana feminist history in relation to the history of Mexican women on both sides of the border. As a result of this inquiry, Mexican writers, like María Luisa Garza who wrote in Mexico and in the United States, may be considered relevant to the history of Chicana feminism instead of being studied apart from it. This not only applies to Garza but also to her contemporaries who may then be included and placed in dialogue with Chicana feminist

history as well<sup>2</sup>. In summary, this first chapter's theoretical proposal is that the history of immigrant and exiled Mexican women in the United States should be examined in conjunction with Chicana history.

The theoretical possibilities set forth by Chapter One serve as a basis for analyzing Garza's journalist work. The bulk of María Luisa Garza's journalistic production is comprised of *crónicas*, some of which have already been interpreted by other scholars. This chapter will revisit these past interpretations, borrow from them and elaborate new modes of studying these *crónicas*. Additionally, I will explore other *crónicas* not yet studied. The *crónicas* are approached by taking into account the specific characteristics of this particular genre while simultaneously incorporating theory on the relationship between gender and genre. A large number of María Luisa Garza's *crónicas* were published in newspapers in San Antonio, where the community of conservative exiles from the Mexican revolution and its giant labor pool of Mexican immigrants, overwhelmingly male, were not open to progressive thought by and about women. How does being a woman *cronista* play an important factor in her writing? By reading the margins of the unconscious of these *crónicas*, the genre's limitations become clear. What were once considered *crónicas* opposed to feminist thought can be reevaluated; doing so reveals traces of feminist thought interlaced within the discourse of these columns. It also becomes evident that Garza deviated from the traditional form of the *crónica* by creating her own tone, views and approach to the art of cultivating this genre.

Juxtaposed to Garza's generic restrictions in writing for male-dominated newspapers, Garza's novelistic body of work presents a contrasting view of her

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<sup>2</sup> These would include but not be limited to: Jovita Idar, Leonor Villegas de Magnón, Jovita González de Mireles, etc.



creativity. Chapter Three studies Garza's two novels: *Tentáculos de fuego* and *La novia de Nervo*. In particular, *La novia de Nervo* demonstrates Garza's choice to self-publish and to be free from the purview of male editors and commercial imperatives. In the introduction, María Luisa Garza speaks freely about her rejection of the publishing services of two of the most important male publishers in San Antonio. This gesture helps better understand Garza's role as a novelist versus her role as a *cronista*. How does María Luis Garza's notion of womanhood, feminism, race and class transform within the context of her novels versus her *crónicas*? On the other hand her novel *Tentáculos de fuego* was commissioned by the National Committee against Alcoholism in Mexico. Forming part of the national movement in Mexico to create sober citizens, this novel also confronts popular ideas about gender, class and race. To guide our study of the Temperance Movement in Mexico, Gretchen Pierce's detailed historical work about anti-alcohol campaigns in Mexico plays a key role.

Chapter Four highlights María Luisa Garza's social work and community involvement. Her travels within the United States and to and from Mexico demonstrate her commitment to various causes, which may be seen as the foundation of her literary work. Because her literary production is intertwined with her activism, it is important to dedicate a chapter to her participation in such organizations as the Pan-American Roundtables, her commitment to the protection of children, her work for immigrant rights and her dedication to combat alcoholism and drug abuse, among others. These concerns are reflected in her literary productions in which the conflicts related to child-bearing, drugs, family, feminism and personal relationships are highlighted. Furthermore, a large portion of Garza's literary persona played out within the pages of the same newspapers

she worked for. Announcements and articles detailing her travels, social work and projects can be found in newspapers on both sides of the border.

### **María Luis Garza: The Life of a *Mujer de Talento***

The pieces of María Luisa Garza's life are scattered throughout newspaper articles, limited scholarly research, personal letters, books, anthologies, private family documents and interviews of her living family members. Therefore, by combining the research done by scholars such as Gabriela Baeza-Ventura, Nicolás Kanellos, Juanita Luna-Lawhn and Irwin McKee, who each provide details and portions of this author's life, this dissertation takes from and adds to these brief introductory works in order to expand what is already and not yet known about María Luisa Garza, "Loreley." The following biographical sketch is composed of information from newspaper articles and interviews of her living relatives.

María Luisa Garza, daughter of Francisco Garza González and Petra Garza Quintanilla, was born the twenty fifth of August 1887 in Cadereyta Jiménez, Nuevo León (Núñez Charles), Mexico into a significantly well-to-do family (Cantú, F.)<sup>3</sup>. It is this upbringing that allowed her to have an education not accessible to other Mexican women of her time. Her family owned one of the largest ranches in the state of Nuevo León, Rancho San Juan, where María Luisa Garza, as the eldest, had the responsibility of distributing land and money to the farmers (Cantú, F). Through personal initiative she provided workers a free education in order to decrease illiteracy (Cantú, F.). The tendency to help her father's farmers and the desire to help working-class men and women is later more fully appreciated in her writings and social activism.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2007, Federico Cantú was at his home in Mexico City, Mexico. Information obtained from that interview is noted as such.

Her early love for poetry, and specifically the work of Amado Nervo, inspired her to attend literary events (*tertulias*) in Cadereyta during which she met her future husband Dr. Adolfo Cantú Jáuregui (Cantú, F.). It is around 1902 or 1903, the exact year is unknown, that a teenage María Luisa Garza married Dr. Adolfo Cantú Jáuregui; he also shared Garza's love for poetry. What married life was like for María Luisa Garza is relatively undocumented and unknown but what is apparent through Dr. Jáuregui's appearance in the magazine *Zig-Zag* and in the poetic anthology *Antología de poetas neoleoneses* is that at this point in time, Dr. Jáuregui was the one recognized for his poetry in the literary scene of Monterrey. Interestingly enough, the poem included in the anthology is dedicated to María Luisa. It highlights her feminine and deceiving ways, and Dr. Jáuregui wrote it close to the date of their marital separation. (Treviño González, 103)

After having four children (Adolfo, Magdalena, Diana and Federico), the marriage began to fall apart; this was due to Dr. Jáuregui's controlling and abrasive attitude towards his wife (Cantú, F.). In spite of President Venustiano Carranza's legalization of divorce in México in 1914 and perhaps because Dr. Jáuregui was not partial to this decision, María Luisa Garza left the marriage and headed north to San Antonio with her two youngest children, Diana and Federico, without ever legally divorcing Jáuregui (Cantú, F.). She left behind her other two children in Dr. Jáuregui's care and the family inheritance that her husband had been endowed with when they first married which included land titles and family jewels (Cantú, F.). Garza abandoned a life of luxury during to pursue journalism in San Antonio.

The *crónica* “Siempre periodista” reveals that María Luisa Garza arrived in San Antonio in 1919. The move to San Antonio marked Garza’s dramatic change in social status as she was no longer the wife of an illustrious doctor but was now a single working mother in need of supporting her two children. During her time in San Antonio, María Luisa Garza actively participated in the literary culture the city had to offer. Garza’s work is found in various newspapers in Texas including *El Imparcial de Texas*, *La Época*, *Patria*, *La República* and *La Prensa*.

On August 8, 1920 in *El Imparcial de Texas*, Garza’s most noted and most studied regular column, *Crónicas femeninas* appeared. In this weekly contribution, she commented on topics ranging from women’s issues to art, education and morality. Neither family interviews nor bibliographic data from Mexican encyclopedias and newspapers reveal why María Luisa Garza assumed the pseudonym of *Loreley*, taken from German mythology<sup>4</sup>. It is in San Antonio that Garza cultivated important friends and developed professional relationships with key literary men of San Antonio, such as the expatriate Mexican intellectuals Nemesio García Naranjo and Luis G. Urbina; these relationships gave her the opportunity to publish her novels and continue her journalistic activities. To date, *La novia de Nervo* (1922) has been considered the author’s first publication, but the newspaper *La época* on October 10, 1920 published an excerpt of Garza’s collection of short stories *Hojas dispersas*, making this her first publication. Unfortunately, the exact date of *Hojas dispersas*’ publication is still unknown. Additionally, an analysis of dates of travel for Garza announced in several newspapers place the author in San Antonio beginning in 1920; by October, 1921, she was in

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<sup>4</sup> Loreley is the name given to mermaids of the Rhine river known for luring men with their singing and as such are seen as the German equivalent of the Greek sirens who lured Ulysses in *The Iliad*. (Braña Rubio)

Monterrey again. Her stay in Monterrey was short, and she returned to San Antonio soon after. Evidently, although she was a single mother of two, she was still able to maintain a certain lifestyle that allowed her to travel to and from Mexico as she pleased which would raise questions about journalism being her only occupation.

The year 1922 was a very active one for María Luisa Garza, beginning with the establishment of her magazine *Alma Femenina*. Word of this magazine traveled from Texas to California as newspapers from each respective state published and reported the arrival of the magazine. In her family documents a letterhead with the magazine's name and Loreley as the editor have been kept intact. Alongside this publishing endeavor, in early 1922 Garza accepted the Presidency for the Cruz Azul, a humanitarian organization designed to help Mexican immigrants in the United States who lived in poverty. Interestingly enough, by February, several newspapers had published reports of her resignation from the presidency. In an article written by Garza, she attributed her move to the organization's lack of community involvement and excess of social events for members instead of a true commitment to eradicating poverty. Not slighted at all by the media coverage of her falling-out with the organization, María Luisa Garza headed to Baltimore as a media representative for Tamaulipas at a feminist convention. It was during this trip that Garza was invited to meet the first lady, Mrs. Warren G. Harding, to whom she gave a copy of her latest novel, *La novia de Nervo*.

During her travels in 1922, Garza also found time to act on behalf of an immigrant facing the death penalty, according to her letter to Governor Pat Morris Neff, which was published in *El Heraldo de México* through the article "Un mexicano fue salvado del patíbulo en Tejas." The brief article "El gobernador Neff contesta a Loreley

sobre el indulto de Pedro Sánchez” cites that the governor wrote in response stating that her plea had been heard and that the immigrant would not be hung. That same year she not only published the novel *La novia de Nervo* but also another novel *Los amores de Gaona*. Toward the end of 1922, rumors began to surface in California and Texas newspapers about Garza’s departure to Mexico in order to permanently reside there. This is confirmed in her *crónica* “Hacia la patria” in which she lets her readers know about her departure and explores her fears and concerns about leaving her independent life and the clout she has accumulated through her journalist work.

María Luisa Garza continued writing but this time she found herself, as previously speculated by several newspapers, in Mexico City. She continued her journalistic work by writing for *El Universal* and *El Demócrata* while her *crónicas* were still circulated in the United States in such newspapers as Los Angeles’ *El Heraldo de México*. Clippings from various newspapers demonstrate her frequent travels between Mexico and the United States to attend several conferences, events and gatherings. On one such occasion, Garza was denied entry into the meeting of the Liga Femenina Pan-Americana despite her role as representative of feminists from Nuevo León. The debate around this denial plays out in several newspapers to be discussed later. Towards the end of 1923, a group of women established El Centro Loreley in Linares, Mexico to honor the author (“Fue inaugurada en Linares, N.L., el ‘Centro Loreley’.”). The center sought to focus on the same issues María Luisa Garza was involved with and wrote about: the education and progress of women. From 1923 until 1927, Garza remained in Mexico City writing for *El Demócrata*, opening schools, establishing a friendship with

Gabriela Mistral and continuing her travels for conferences and events promoting feminism, children's rights, education, and immigrant rights.

In 1928, Garza found herself living with her son Federico Cantú and her daughter-in-law Luz Fábila Montes de Oca in Los Angeles, California (Cantú, A.). It is important to note that Garza's stay in Los Angeles was cited as part of a medical treatment for the author whose health was beginning to deteriorate (Cantú, A.). Luz Fábila's biography is being written by Adolfo Cantú<sup>5</sup> and it details parts of Garza's life during her years in Los Angeles. The biography speaks of Garza's romantic involvement with Amado Nervo and her relationship with her daughter-in-law's brother, Alfonso Fábila. It also reveals details of María Luisa Garza's friendship with José Vasconcelos during the last years of the 1920s. Fábila recalls that María Luisa would often have her son Federico translate foreign texts for her due to her love for international literature (Cantú, A.). Additionally, Luz Fábila states that Vasconcelos would visit Garza and would often have lively discussions with her about Mexican politics and the state of affairs. During her time in Los Angeles, Garza's work continued to appear in the local newspaper, *El Herald de México*. In 1928, the local Spanish-language press began to speculate if Garza would start another magazine with a feminist focus, but no such publication has yet been found.

Towards the end of 1928, María Luisa Garza found herself again in Mexico City. This time, she worked as director of a school for women: Escuela Hogar para Señoritas Gabriela Mistral. Juxtaposed to this position within a school are Garza's Hollywood aspirations, as mentioned in *La Prensa* at the beginning of 1929 ("Van a ser filmadas en este país varias películas de ambiente Mexicano."). Several articles highlight the author's trips to California with the hopes of turning *Los amores de Gaona* into a motion picture.

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<sup>5</sup> Adolfo Cantú shared the manuscript of Luz Fábila's life. He is María Luisa Garza's great-grandson.

During the last years of the 1930s, Garza lived in Mexico City surrounded by her children and grandchildren, who all lived in adjacent houses to hers (Cantú, A). Few details have been found about her last years. It appears she left behind her persona as Loreley, the activist and author, to become a caring grandmother:

Sin embargo años después, un día algo pasó; unos dicen que le dio un derrame cerebral y otros aseguran que la habían sorprendido corriendo desnuda en la calle; fuera lo que fuera, su hijo “Doctor Adolfo” llega de Monterrey se instala en la casa de a un lado de Loreley, le quita la máquina de escribir y la mujer de mundo emprendedora, lucida, capas, luchadora social, será reducida a una simple abuelita que regala pañuelos en los cumpleaños. (Cantú, F.)

She never wrote again and many of her personal possessions related to her work as an author and activist were not archived by the family. The Cantú children and extended family left Loreley’s work unattended and in the shadows of the artwork produced by her son, Federico Cantú. A few tattered papers and forgotten letters remained in the family’s possession, mirroring Garza’s own tragic end.

Garza was a complex woman involved with many causes. Her life and literary corpus provide us with a glimpse of what it meant to be a separated woman who emigrated from Mexico to the United States alone with two children and, through force of will, successfully published her works when few other women were able to do so. She was more than just an elite Mexican immigrant; she is a woman with contradictory and complex views on gender, race, class and nationality, as documented in her novels, poetry, *crónicas* and activism.



## CHAPTER 1

### **CREANDO LAZOS: CHICANA STUDIES AND MEXICAN FEMINISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1910-1940**

Knowledge is constructed through and by those in power who may erase, empower, silence, or privilege that which will become the official story.

Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*

The need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity.

Audre Lourde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

#### **Introduction**

In 1976, Martha P. Cotera published what has been identified as the first attempt to construct a complete history of Chicanas: *Diosa y hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.*<sup>1</sup> Cotera chronologically traced Chicana history by beginning with key female figures in Mexican pre-Columbian history<sup>2</sup> and ending with a discussion

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<sup>1</sup> In her article “Six Reference Works on Mexican-American Women: A Review Essay” Cordelia Candelaria signals this text as the first of its kind; and the text’s publication date, 1976, situates it as the first comprehensive history of Chicanas.

<sup>2</sup> A key component in the creation of Chicano/a identity was a return to and idealization of an indigenous past; particularly, Chicano discourse focused on building its nationalist agenda based on an Aztec heritage and a mythical homeland: *Aztlán*.

The Chicano movement was recovering a past in order to undo fragmentation and alienation by stressing our common culture and oneness...Aztlán, the legendary homeland of the Aztecs, claimed by Chicano cultural nationalism as the mythical place of the Chicano nation, gave this alternative space a cohesiveness. Chicano identity was framed in Aztlán. And, Aztlán provided a basis for a return to roots, for a return to an identity before domination and subjugation – a voyage back to pre-Columbian times. (Fregosos & Chabram, 27)

In reference to Chicanas, Cotera highlighted important indigenous women such as *La Malinche* in attempt to reconstruct her negative image into one of empowerment. As an archetype in Chicana discourse, *La Malinche* is one of the most referenced and studied female figures:

of Chicanas' work within the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Of the various historical periods highlighted by Cotera, the inclusion of Mexican women in Mexico and in the United States from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1940s will be the focus of this initial chapter. This inclusion is of interest because the history of Mexican feminist discourse, whether situated in Mexico itself or expressed from within the United States between 1910-1940, is not often placed in conversation with Chicana feminism nor is it considered a part of Chicana history<sup>3</sup>. Anna Marie Sandoval in *Toward a Latina Feminism of the Americas: Repression and Resistance in Chicana and Mexicana Literature* affirms this lack of connection: "Bringing together Chicana and Mexicana feminism presents a tremendous challenge...the two histories have been disconnected in a variety of ways for over a hundred years" (11).<sup>4</sup> In fact, of the six Chicana historical

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[Chicanas] are not only engendered under machismo but their gender is disfigured at the symbolic level under malinshismo, an ideological construct signifying betrayal that draws inspiration from the generic Malinche. (According to the official Mexican histories, she is the Mexican Eve who delivered her people to Cortez.)... There were Chicanas who would go on to rename the much misunderstood Malintzin, figuring her as a precursor to Chicana nationalism *and* feminism, and opening up another alternative space for cultural production. (Chabram-Dernersesian, 165)

<sup>3</sup> The work is in the process of being developed by scholars like Clara Lomas, Chela Sandoval and Priscilla Falcón and it is precisely within their framework that this work places itself.

<sup>4</sup> Sandoval makes reference to an anthology *Mujer y literatura mexicana y chicana* as the texts that comes closest to a comparative study of Mexican and Chicana discourse: "Nonetheless, the work initiates an important dialogue between Mexicanas and Chicanas because it offers them and their respective communities a better understanding of their mutual historical and cultural experience" (Sandoval, 6). She also highlights that Mexican feminism has been studied within a larger Latin American context and Chicana feminism has been placed within an U.S. context (Sandoval, 11).

anthologies examined for this project, only three briefly make mention of the time period between 1910 and 1940 and assert its relevance to Chicana history.<sup>5</sup>

Many Mexican women in Mexico and in the United States between 1910 and 1940 are yet to be considered important to the field of Chicana studies. In line with the projects of other Chicana and Mexican historical scholars, this work seeks to propose new ways of approaching the work produced by Mexican women in the United States and Mexico during the first half of the twentieth century so as to contribute to the development of a theoretical conversation between both Chicana feminist history and their history. By focusing on the author María Luisa Garza, this work attempts to provide a possible model for the recuperation and study of other women similar to her. Programs like the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Program and their work preserving and making accessible archives and new information from this time period is key to helping Chicana and Mexican scholars make vital connections.

The period between Mexican pre-Columbian history and the Chicano Movement of the 1960s includes many important Mexican women. These women wrote in Mexico and in the United States and their contributions could potentially add to Chicana history as whole. The reflections found here hope to function as a catalyst for a comprehensive look at the relationships, parallels, connections, relevance, and similarities between Mexican women in the United States and in Mexico pre-1960 and Chicana feminist. Additionally, this work seeks to insert itself precisely within a discussion of how Mexican women's history in the U.S. and Mexico helps to better comprehend Chicana

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<sup>5</sup> Those would be: *Mexican Women in the United States: Struggles Past and Present*, *Diosa y hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.*, and *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical*

feminism and the theoretical benefits of placing the two in dialogue. It is not the premise of this work that Mexican women prior to the Chicano movement should be labeled Chicanas, as that identity marker and political label has and is still being deconstructed and re-evaluated; the intention is to expand the way Chicana history is studied so that the experiences of Mexican women in the United States and in Mexico between 1910 and 1940 can be appreciated as important to better understanding Chicana history and vice versa. Mexican women from the beginning of the twentieth century did not work within the same discursive realm that Chicana feminists worked, yet they share common tropes. Along these lines, before dismissing certain women as *not feminist* and irrelevant to the study of Chicana history, this dissertation is developing the analytical framework considering and identifying the many forms that feminism takes by examining the ways a writer like María Luisa Garza practiced her own brand of feminism.

This initial chapter will discuss in broad strokes the birth of Chicana feminism from within the Chicano movement in order to arrive at a discussion of how Chicana feminist studies have constructed their history and field of study.<sup>6</sup> This discussion includes a study of the terms history, Chicana and feminism. Along with exploring terminology, the common representation of this time period as silent and inactive is called into question. Was the first half of the twentieth century truly a period of silence and inactivity for Mexican women or has there been a lack of theoretical tools necessary

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*Writings*

<sup>6</sup> I will be working with Foucault's concepts of genealogy and history and this will be outlined in an upcoming section.

to recognize and identify diverse modes of *being feminist* as expressed by the Mexican women of this time?

### **A Brief History: Chicana Feminism and the Chicano Movement**

The social movements of the 1960s generally produced nationalist ideologies that created unity among its constituents through common religious, familial and cultural values; this is particularly true of the Chicano movement: “*Chicanismo* emphasized cultural pride as a source of political unity and strength capable of mobilizing Chicanos and Chicanas into an oppositional political group within the dominant political landscape in the United States” (García 3). Confronting the dominant Anglo-American cultural hegemony required that the Chicano movement present a united front created through strong cultural nationalism. When Chicanas began to see the shortcomings of such a strategy they were able to critique the effectiveness of this *strategic essentialism*<sup>7</sup>. Unlike Spivak’s notion that *strategic essentialism* is a conscious use of essentialism when politically advantageous, the cultural nationalism of the Chicano movement was not only used to demonstrate a united front in the face of Anglo-American domination but was in fact a part of everyday social interactions and a part of a core belief system lived out in a Chicano society that subordinated women. Chicanas’ discomfort with such cultural nationalism is discussed by Alma García: “Many Chicana feminists believed that a focus on cultural survival did not acknowledge the need to alter male-female relations within Chicano communities ... One such change was to modify the cultural nationalist position that viewed machismo as a source of cultural pride” (222). Chicana feminism was

therefore built upon Chicana's response to the ideological conflicts they faced as women within the Chicano nationalist movement.

The many disgruntled Chicanas of the Chicano movement decided that voicing their concerns about their status in the community was not betraying their culture. Once these women began to take a stand and speak, the Chicana experience began to officially make its mark on the trajectory of the Chicano movement.<sup>8</sup> They did not deny the need to confront the racism Chicanos faced within Anglo-American culture but simply made known that the sexism in their own community was not being addressed. Unfortunately, Chicana scholars and activists were told that a critique of the *machismo* they experienced and noted in Chicano discourse and political activism would in essence undermine the community efforts to confront the dominant culture; the adversary was not the patriarchal structure of the Chicano community but the Anglo-American culture which suppressed the community at large:

Chicana feminists came under attack for their explicit critique of Chicano cultural nationalism. Some were criticized as followers of white feminists or as lesbians. Their feminist concern with patriarchal oppression was

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<sup>7</sup> In *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Gayatri Spivak discusses the term *strategic essentialism* in reference to subaltern studies. Ultimately, the term refers to the use of positivist essentialism as a means to an end all the while conscious of its temporal nature.

<sup>8</sup> In *Chicana Feminist Thought Basic Historical Writings*, Alma M. García traces the experiences of Chicana feminists during the Chicano movement

A Chicana feminist movement, like that of African-American women, originated within the context of a nationalist movement. As Chicanas assessed their role within the Chicano movement, their ideological debates shifted from a focus on racial oppression to one that would form the basis for an emergent Chicana feminism discourse: gender oppression.... Ultimately, the inherent constraints and cross-pressures facing Chicana feminists within the Chicano movement led to the broader development of Chicana feminist thought. (4)

labeled by their opponents as secondary in importance to the more salient issue of racial or even class oppression. (García 6)

Once Chicanas began to critique the sexist double-standards at the core of early Chicano nationalist thought, Chicano theory was motivated to grow in ways never imagined by adding new concerns to its agenda: religion, gender, cultural norms, sexual orientation, etc.: “Thus, Chicana feminism went beyond the limits of an exclusively racial theory of oppression that tended to overlook gender and also beyond the limits of a theory of oppression based exclusively on gender that tended to overlook race” (García 534). These women were aware of how the nationalist agenda of the Chicano movement was concurrently stifling women and non-heterosexual Chicanos<sup>9</sup>. The work of writers such as Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (both Chicana lesbian feminists) became the basis for reforming Chicano studies instead of being seen as theoretical threats. Their texts and that of other feminists allowed Chicano theory to move away from a monolithic national identity towards a more fluid and complex interpretation of how gender and sexuality are construed in Chicano discourse:

In intellectual terms, cultural nationalism has now been transcended thanks to the revisionist work of feminist Chicanas and Latinas who experienced exclusion and oppression from masculinist ideologies therein as well as critical analyses of gay issues and the recognition of transnational dynamics in the social construction and development of Latino identity. (Aparicio 5)

Chicana feminism was born as a response to and critique of the oppressive patriarchal construction of the Chicano movement. Despite this antithetical relationship to Chicano nationalist discourse, Chicana feminism held on to several basic pillars of Chicano/a identity, two of which are: radical discourse and working-class foundations. By reconsidering these two concepts and deconstructing traditional modes of writing/creating history, I will make the case for the inclusion of Mexican women as part of the study of Chicana feminist history.

### **Chicano Studies: A Process of Redefinition**

Before exploring the idea of redefining Chicana feminist studies and some of its key terms, it is useful to identify the same type of redefinition that took place for Chicano studies. A few years into Chicano studies' inception, scholars began questioning what it meant to be Chicano and how Chicano literary studies were being defined.

The call for new approaches to Chicano studies in the early seventies challenged Chicano scholars to self-reflect on and reevaluate the way the field had established its discursive and literary space, a space which had excluded many Chicanos' works. In "Freedom of Expression and the Chicano Movement, An Open Letter to Dr. Philip Ortego" Bruce-Novoa called for artistic freedom for Chicano artists with the hopes of moving away from prescriptive modes of qualifying Chicano art. In essence, he argued that Chicano art had been dominated by the Chicano movement by establishing, "[...] norms young artists must follow to qualify as Chicanos" (14). With this proposal Bruce-Novoa sought to give Chicano artists the liberty to express themselves freely without the

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<sup>9</sup> In her article "Will the 'Real Chicano' Please Stand Up? The Challenge of John Rechy and Shelia Ortiz Taylor to Chicano Essentialism" Karen Christian speaks about the homophobia present in Chicano cultural



fear of not being “Chicano enough”. This freedom was to be achieved by letting go of the notion that Chicano art was inevitably linked to the Chicano Movement since there were Chicano artists whose art did not necessarily fall in line with any political agenda.<sup>10</sup> By doing this, Chicano art and literature could be freed from the chains of political representation and could represent anything and everything.

Bruce-Novoa continued with this new approach to Chicano literature in his essay “Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production”. He furthered his argument by demonstrating the oppressive nature of Chicano literary studies and its exclusion of works not demeaned reflective of the *true* Chicano experience:

When I first started working in Chicano studies, much of our cultural space was being bracketed out by those ideologues who were defining Chicanismo in the most narrow terms and reducing literature to a mere adjunct of political rhetoric. Exclusionary practices of different groups competed for the position of sole authentic model of early Chicanismo. (163)

The author recognized that the Chicano movement sought to develop a unified identity that was responding to “[...] the continual threat of extinction” (164). This continual threat of extinction came from the dominant Anglo-American society. Bruce-Novoa referenced this Anglo-American culture when mentioning American publishers

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nationalism; a topic which goes beyond the limits of this work.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce-Novoa was not proposing a post-modernist reading in which identity was completely destroyed and null. It is clear that “A limitless void is not a potential, there must be some relative points from which to determine the boundaries, although these may grow as we draw new tangents from our points of reference” (Valdes, 16). Bruce-Novoa opted for defining Chicano as those people of Mexican heritage who write about any subject freely without necessarily limiting themselves to political awareness.

who sought writers and works that reflected a certain type of token Chicano experience; additionally, he recognized Chicanos' antagonistic relationship with the American part of their Mexican American heritage. This antagonistic relationship stemmed from the idea that, "[...] we are in constant need of reaffirming unity, because the threat of disintegration is ever present; that we see existence in the basic terms of struggle against the outsider, and that we do not tolerate well those of our own who do not remain faithful to the group" (165). Individual freedom of expression, he believed, was sacrificed when creating a homogenous and unified ethnic identity. More than a simple critique, Bruce-Novoa recognized that the exclusionary practices within Chicano literary studies stemmed from the urgent political need to confront the dominant Anglo-American society by creating a unified field but this did not justify it. While understanding the root of the Chicano practices of identity, Bruce-Novoa provided a healthy critique to help prompt Chicano scholars to reexamine their ideology.

More recently in *Tolerating Ambiguity: Ethnicity and Community in Chicano/a Writing* Wilson Neate explores the impact that dominant ideology has over minority groups. Particularly, Neate examines how the dominant Anglo-American culture has affected Chicano identity. The author furthers Bruce-Novoa's initial discussion of the relationship between Chicanos and Anglo-Americans by exploring the way dominant ideology often times informs the way minority identities are created and defined: "The reconstitution of hegemonic ideology, through a denial of differences within the ethnic group, led to internalized practices of repression" (251). Because the Chicano movement and, ultimately Chicana feminism as well, were both responding to a dominant culture

which presented itself as monolithic, both felt pressured to respond with the same type of homogeneity in order to be recognized. Nationalist discourses are founded on *difference*: “The rhetoric of difference and cultural separatism may, however, be seen to reinforce or even to legitimate the claims of the national group to primacy, insofar as an internalization of dominant ideology produced an image of otherness required by the latter in order to sustain its centrality” (Neate 105). If minority groups create a monolithic identity to counter the apparently monolithic dominant ideology, it oppresses all those identities that do not fall within the established discourse.

This process of redefinition is also present within the realm of Chicana feminist thought. Gloria Anzaldúa is known as one of the field’s prominent theorists whose reflections on feminism, culture, race, class and sexual orientation within Chicano/a studies provided the foundations for current Chicano/a scholarship. In one of her last publications before passing, Anzaldúa contemplated the future of Chicana studies and the need for a reconfiguration of the field. She made reference to the text *This Bridge Called My Back*, which functioned as groundbreaking work for feminists of color and offered essays on race and feminism from a Third World feminist perspectives. Edited by Cherrie Moraga and Anzaldúa herself, the text broke ground in the field of feminism and ethnic studies. Almost twenty years later in the introduction to *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, Anzaldúa issued a call for a process of redefinition for feminists of color. “*This Bridge We Call Home* is our attempt to continue the dialogue, rethink old ideas, and germinate new theories.” (2) In the same way that

Bruce-Novoa and Neat identified the limits of nationalist discourse and ethnicity in identity formation, so did Anzaldúa face the limitations of divisions based on race:

Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference. While *This Bridge Called My Back* displaced whiteness, *this bridge we call home* carries this displacement further. It questions the term *white* and *women of color* by showing that whiteness may not be applied to all whites, as some possess women-of-color consciousness, just as some women of color bear white consciousness. This book intends to change the notions of identity, viewing it as a part of a more complex system covering a large terrain, and demonstrating that the politics of exclusion based on traditional categories diminishes our humanness. (2)

In *This Bridge Called My Back*, women of color critiqued this politics of exclusion in mainstream Anglo-American feminism, but in the previous quote Anzaldúa was able to identify the ways in which women of color had themselves participated in exclusionary practices. This was specifically related to Chicana feminist discourse and its limited view of which works are relevant to the field. By calling attention to these limitations in categories of identification, Anzaldúa was able to call for new modes of categorization and analysis of race and gender:

Today categories of race and gender are more permeable and flexible than they were for those of us growing up prior to the 1980s. *This bridge we call home* invites us to move beyond separate and easy identifications, creating bridges that cross race and other classifications among different

groups via intergenerational dialogue. Rather than legislating and restricting racial identities, it tries to make them more pliant. (2)

The work here hopes to place into an intergenerational dialogue the work of Mexican women in the first half the twentieth century and Chicanas; more specifically, I seek to incorporate the work of María Luisa Garza. What can be gained from such redefinition and expansion?

It's about honoring people's otherness in ways that allow us to be changed by embracing the otherness rather than punishing others for having a different view, belief system, skin color, or spiritual practice. Diversity of perspectives expands and alters the dialogue, not in an add-on fashion but through a multiplicity that's transformational, such as mestiza consciousness. To include whites is not an attempt to restore the privilege of white writers, scholars, and activists; it's a refusal to continue walking the color line. To include men (in this case feminist-oriented ones) is to collapse the gender line. These inclusions challenge conventional identities and promote more expansive configurations of identities – some of which will soon become cages and have to be dismantled. (Anzaldúa, 4)

To honor the different ways Mexican women and Chicanas responded to issues of class, race and gender, is to explore discourses with differing and even contradictory points of view and to consider them important to both Mexican and Chicana feminist history. By including the work of Mexican women belonging to an intellectual elite

class, this text refuses, like Anzaldúa affirmed, to stay within the established limits of the study of Mexican women and Chicanas. The work here proposes the ways in which María Luisa Garza's work can contribute to the study of not only Mexican feminism but also Chicana feminist history. Anzaldúa was aware that her proposals would also need to be questioned one day, as hopefully the contributions here will spark debate and future redefinitions.

Therefore, Bruce-Novoa, Neat and Anzaldúa have indicated the need to move away from the creation of a monolithic minority discourse as the only successful tool to dismantling and confronting dominant ideology. More specifically, Anzaldúa challenged scholars to find common ground with the same discourses once seen as in complete opposition to minority studies. Bruce-Novoa began to notice the limitations of ethnic identity while Neat traced the root of these limitations to the structure of the dominant Anglo-American culture under which Chicano thought arose. Finally, Chicana feminism was born out of the patriarchal system imbedded in the Chicano movement while the Chicano Movement itself was attempting to dismantle the oppressive nature of Anglo-American society. In this sense, Chicana history followed the mode of Chicano history, which in turn attempted to emulate the historical tradition set forth by the dominant Anglo-American culture. Recognizing this cycle of oppression, Anzaldúa called upon scholars to view identity, race and gender for women of color from newer perspectives, to break away from the need to present a linear and united historical discourse and to include and discuss once excluded figures and events. Ultimately, Chicano/a history can only grow and benefit from such a proposal.

In this dissertation, same type of approach presented by Bruce-Novoa and Neate when dealing with Chicana feminist theory and history will be applied. This will be done by taking a closer look at and questioning the limitations set by some of the pillars of Chicana feminist identity and theory. The political term *Chicana* is a label taken consciously by Mexican-American women who fought for their civil and political rights and it was not coined as such until the Chicano movement, but women of Mexican and Mexican-American descent have thought and written about gender relations and women's rights well before the existence of said term and the Chicano movement. This text will explore Mexican and Chicana feminism together because both these groups of women wrote about the same issues that ultimately became part of Chicana discourse. By studying figures like María Luisa Garza, links can be created between the work of Chicanas and that of Mexican women in the United States pre-1960. Along with Garza, some of these forerunners include Jovita González, María Amparo Ruíz de Burton, Jovita Idar, Leonor Villegas de Magnón, Andrea and Teresa Villarreal and many other women whose archives have begun to be recovered and studied by scholars like Rosaura Sánchez, Clara Lomas, José Limón and others.

This text proposes that there are two important obstacles to discuss when making the case for the importance of Mexican feminists in the U.S. pre-1960 to Chicana feminist history. The first obstacle centers on the traditional definition of history and the need to cross temporal and geo-political boundaries in order to study Chicana feminism alongside Mexican feminists in the United States pre-1960. For this, Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* provides the theoretical tools

necessary. The construction and definition of the term Chicana is the second obstacle since it is precisely the limitations created by such constructions and definitions that delegate what becomes relevant to the study of Chicana feminism, limitations that have excluded certain Mexican and Mexican American feminists in the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Two particular characteristics of the definition of Chicana that will be discussed are its working-class foundation and its notion of what type of feminism is specific to Chicanas. By no means are these points exhaustive of the theoretical complications that can arise when approaching Chicana feminism and Mexican feminism in the United States pre-1960. I will begin with notions of historicity.

### **A New Kind of History**

Traditional and mainstream constructions of history are founded on a chronological linearity that establishes clear order and unquestionable origins. This mode of creating history becomes problematic when historians uncover events, figures or stories that contradict established historical facts or disrupt the historical order. New approaches to history provide the space to include often marginalized groups and insert them into a larger context. By using Michel Foucault and Emma Perez' contributions about history, I hope to make room for Mexican women from 1910 to 1940 in the larger literary context of Chicana studies.

Mexican women living either in Mexico or the United States during the first half of the twentieth century are a part of a *genealogy* of Mexican and Chicana feminism in

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<sup>11</sup> I say *certain* because there are Mexican and Mexican-American feminist figures from the first half of the twentieth century in the United States that have been recuperated by Chicana discourse while others have not. The reasoning behind these particular exclusions will be discussed later in the text.



the *foucaultian* sense of the term<sup>12</sup>. Foucault's use and definition of genealogy helps us better understand the significance of including the history of Mexican women from 1910-1940 in the study of Chicana history. Genealogy contests the ideas of origins and linearity with regards to history:

As if, in that field where we had become used to seeking origins, to pushing back further and further the line of antecedents, to reconstituting traditions, to following evolutive curves, to projecting teleologies, and to having constant recourse to metaphors of life, we felt a particular repugnance to conceiving of difference, to describing separations and dispersions, to dissociating the reassuring form of the identical. (Foucault 12)

Foucault indicts the tradition of seeking origins. In Chicana studies, the historical females that were generally of use in the field's historical construction were those who allowed Chicana scholars to establish foremothers and who reiterate Chicana feminist discourse. Additionally, Foucault's idea that conventional history called for the negation of anything different explains the exclusion of women writers like María Luisa Garza from the Chicana imaginary because she was not the typical foremother needed in the construction of Chicana history. As Foucault states, history has often be constructed on unifying the identical and not incorporated the different (22).

Following Foucault's theory, with the inclusion of apparently contradictory histories, the fields of study are enhanced and expanded. Therefore, a critical look at the

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<sup>12</sup> Throughout the first half of the twentieth century there was an influx of Mexican woman immigrants into the United States. From diverse backgrounds encompassing working-class women to elite and intellectual

origin-oriented and linear construction of Chicana history may lead to new modes of studying this field:

We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness. (Foucault 22)

The particular silences and exclusions in Chicana history that I want to focus on here are those of Mexican women in Mexico or the United States during the first half of the twentieth century and more specifically within the realm of this text, I will focus on María Luisa Garza as an example of this.

Along the same lines as Foucault, Emma Perez not only questions the modes of historical creation but also extends her theory to the study of Mexican women of the Yucatan. The first useful piece from Pérez' text is her redefinition of history which rejects the notion of historical linearity. Following Pérez, this work proposes that Mexican feminists in the United States during the first half of the twentieth are somehow a part of an "origin" narrative for Chicana feminism. These figures are not *foremothers* or *predecessors*, given that these terms imply that Chicanas looked towards them as inspiration and figures who paved the path for them. Rather, these women should function as *points of connection* between Chicana feminist history and Mexican feminist history. This is explained by Foucault: "The analysis of the discursive field is oriented in a quite different way; we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its

occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it” (28). The them of connections is reiterated by Pérez:

I found myself returning to my original questions regarding the formation of Chicana nationalist identities beyond the geographic and political border of the United States. Chronologies and origins, however, no longer concerned me as much as an enunciative moment. Foucault’s premise that “discourse must be treated as it occurs, and not in the distant presence of the origin” allowed me to think again about seeking origins that serve only to impose false continuities. I found it necessary to traverse centuries and borders to unravel contemporary Chicana feminisms rooted in a past which may be understood as an enunciation in the present. Deconstructing systems of thought that frame Chicana history is my task. In other words, I experimented with a consciousness of Chicana knowledge. (Pérez, xviii)

This project, also does not seek origins or tracing *foremothers* of Chicana feminism so much as it rearticulates the construction of Chicana feminist history. The most vital tool for studying these feminisms is linking the various utterances, discourses and/or ideologies that share common morals, strategies, negotiations, social contexts, and foundations throughout time and space:

As the decolonial imaginary disrupts the Chicano/a historical imagination, a new consciousness is born in which “Chicano/a” identity is forced beyond its own borders by new cultural critiques; in which the Mexican

immigrant experience can parallel transnational, third world diasporas; in which social history derives its appeal from its multicultural imperative; in which gender as a category of analysis explodes as technologies remap the category to reinvent fresh ways of interpreting sexualities and social/political desires. (Pérez 14)

In this manner, the initial theoretical obstacle of conventional modes of history is dismantled through the *decolonial imaginary* proposed by Emma Pérez, an imaginary that calls for the widening of and sophistication of the way history is perceived and constructed. In doing this, the contributions of Mexican women in the United States prior to 1960 provide the catalyst for a new approach to Chicana studies. In other words, this work is not signaling an official “History” that begins with Mexican women immigrants and exiles and ends with Chicanas, but rather, it is establishing important connections that enable us to better interpret the discursive practices of each. “Tracking “things said” about feminism and the intellectuals and leaders of a historical event – in this instance, the Mexican Revolution – can make clear the production of discursive formations” (Pérez 31). Particularly for Pérez, taking a look at the Yucatecan women in Mexico during the Revolution helped her analytical approach to Chicana feminism because she was able to situate both discourses within and against nationalist agendas: the Mexican Revolution and the Chicano movement, respectively. Although, the focus of this work, María Luisa Garza, published during and after the Mexican Revolution, this work contends she was also writing from and within another revolutionary nationalist agenda, the very prominent

México de Afuera<sup>13</sup> ideology that surged as a means to preserve Mexican culture in the United States. Using Pérez's model of analysis of Yucatecan women and Chicana women within nationalist agendas, this work can be included with Mexican women in the United States circa 1920-1940 and their response to and accomodation within the México de Afuera nationalist agenda.

What can be gained from researching how both groups, albeit chronologically and/or geographically distant, shared discursive strategies that confront issues of sex, ethnicity, education, equality, family, reproduction and gender relations? It is precisely this innovative approach that will result in a more inclusive and theoretically sophisticated method of understanding both Chicana and Mexican feminism in the United States:

For many historians, Chicano/a history materialized only after 1848, and any probing back into Mexico is illegitimate, or should I say "illegal"? Chicana/o history from Mexico that tries to cross the U.S. border is detained there as only Mexican in origin. Our "undocumented" history is barred by a political border, as if that imagined boundary can erase centuries of Spanish-Mexican domain. The [Mexican] revolution occurred after Euroamerican conquest in 1848. It should qualify as Chicana/o history; however, many historians narrowly dictate Chicana/o

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<sup>13</sup> Nicolás Kanellos defines the ideology of El México de Afuera, "Inherent in the ideology of *México de Afuera* as it was expressed by many of the cultural elite, including the publishers and their newspapers, was an upper-class and bourgeois mentality that ironically tended to resent association with the Mexican immigrant working class." In addition, this nationalist ideology was based on preserving Mexican culture and language and to some extent these exiles saw themselves as "more Mexican" than those living in México itself. This ideology was used to guide the working-class' behavior while in the United States and was also used to ridicule any behavior outside the norm.

history within the United States perimeters and argue that a study of the Mexican Revolution must remain within those perimeters to be considered Chicana history. We run the risk of contributing to colonialist historiography when we narrow and bind Chicana/o history to the post 1848 continental United States. (Pérez 146)

Pérez highlights that by forcing Chicano/a studies into traditional ways of constructing history, these fields of study are essentially being colonized again. The work here accepts that what is pertinent to Chicana historical studies is not only post-1848 U.S. history when Mexican-American<sup>14</sup> identity is initially noted nor is it only in post-1960 history and the birth of the politically conscious label Chicano/a. With this theoretical foundation, one can argue that a writer like María Luisa is, in fact, relevant to the Chicana feminist history. Despite Garza writing during the beginning of the twentieth century and despite her status as an elite Mexican exiled in the United States, her publications, social service and work have much to contribute to the study of Chicana and Mexican feminism. By moving beyond established norms of history, could it be possible that other Mexican feminists in the United States and in Mexico during the early twentieth century and Chicana be placed into a fructiferous dialogue?

### **Against Monolithic Chicana Feminism: Class Issues**

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<sup>14</sup> In 1848 and with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico seceded a large portion of its land which included what are known today as Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. The treaty stated that Mexican citizens could either remain in what was now the United States eventually becoming U.S. citizens or they could decide to move further south into Mexico. The first generations of children born to the Mexican citizens who remained on U.S. soil are seen as the first subjects with a dual identity marked by the label Mexican-American. (Acosta & Winegarten, 56-57).

The second obstacle in Chicana feminist studies relates to the term *Chicana* itself and what constitutes a Chicana feminist. Many Mexican and Mexican-American women during the beginning of the twentieth century did not use the terms “Chicana” or “feminist” to define themselves, yet were aware of the issues surrounding gender and race, issues that eventually became the centerpieces of what is known as contemporary Chicana feminist thought. In order to confront this semantic quandary I will question what it means to be Chicana and/or feminist in order to open the lens with which Chicana feminist discourse has defined, interpreted and categorized its constituents.

Alongside this is the redefinition of what is relevant to the study of Chicana feminism. Is it intellectually advantageous to restrict the study of Chicana feminism to texts or works produced by self-identified Chicanas? What representations of Chicana feminism have been excluded in the traditional Chicana feminist discourse? Michel Foucault proposes that the study of knowledge and discourse signifies the study of their exclusions:

The analysis of the discursive field is oriented in a quite different way; we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statements it excludes. (28)

Traditional construction of history creates grand statements related to certain groups, eras or peoples and often times a single sentence or idea is what defines them. According to Foucault, historians and other scholars need to place said statements into a

historical and social context or “specificity of its occurrence”. Being Chicana came with “conditions of existence” and therefore, limited in its scope. Lastly, the “statement” (read identity markers: working-class and liberally leaning feminist) that has defined Chicana feminist studies has excluded other “statements” (other modes of representing class and feminism). In order to open up the field of Chicana history, I seek to uncover the other possible *statements* that Chicana feminism excludes? What forms of being *Chicana* are accepted for Chicana feminists and which are not? Similar to any other category of identification, the term Chicana brings with it rules and norms about what is permissible. To begin this questioning, one of the first elements to the “statement” that defines Chicano/a studies is related to social class.

The definition of the term Chicano/a that has prevailed to-date is that of men and women of Mexican-American descent cognizant of a political struggle for Mexican-Americans in the United States who actively participated in the Chicano movement:

Chicano[a] was ultimately a term we had coined for ourselves and which “we” invested with new meaning: Chicano signified the affirmation of working-class and indigenous origins, and the rejection of assimilation, acculturation, and the myth of the American melting pot. Implicit in the term Chicano[a] was a strategic relation and a strategy of struggle that thematized the Chicano community and called for social struggle and reform. (Fregoso and Chabram 28)

Similarly, in the *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Latino Literature*, Nicolás Kanellos states:



In the 1960s the word *Chicano* was elevated from its 1920s denotation of working-class Mexican immigrant – and from the slang of the 1940s and 1950s, when it substituted for *Mexicano* – to symbolize the realization of a new found and unique identity...The term really gained prominence in the 1960, however, when the children of Mexican immigrants and long-standing Mexican American communities became involved in a widespread civil rights movement. (230-231)

The term Chicano/a is linked to identity politics and its use prior to this historical moment is not widely referenced. Yet, it is important to note that the use of the term Chicana/o is not limited to the civil rights movements and that the definition of this term has been transformed through time. The term Chicano/a during the first half of the twentieth century did not mean what it came to mean during the movements of the 1960s and it was/is an ever-changing term. This idea about the terms Chicano and Chicana allows one to reconsider what is important to the study of Chicana feminism. The field is no longer fixated on only citing texts that employ the term Chicana as it is currently understood but realizes that what defines and is significant to being Chicana is much more complex than a temporal term. Additionally, many Chicanas active during the 1960s belonged to generations of Mexicans who had been in the southwest during the exploration era, Spanish rule, Mexican rule and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded most of this same territory to the United States; Chicanas were descendents of a long history of Mexican and Mexican-American women. Even if Mexican and Mexican-American women prior to the 1960s did not use the term Chicana

nor were direct inspirations for Chicanas, their importance for the study of Chicana and Mexican feminism in the United States must not be overlooked, dismissed or silenced.

Chicana as a term borne out of and defined by the social movements of the 1960s includes a working-class perspective. The construction of Chicano/a as working class is based on figures, images and cultural representations such as Luis Valdez's *Teatro Campesino*, the United Farmworkers Union, César Chávez and others. Kanellos further explains the working-class ties of the term Chicano:

By the 1920s, an immigrant literature had emerged in the Southwest that identified its readers as Chicanos, or Mexican immigrant workers. The term was somewhat negative, however, when used by middle- and upper-class Mexicans, who were embarrassed by the poverty and lack of schooling of their lower-class immigrant compatriots...They resuscitated the term Chicano and applied it to themselves and their working-class educational and political movement.... (231)

The construction of Chicano/a as predominantly working-class, implies that the works produced by women/men of an elite class are often not within the discursive reach of Chicana feminism nor are their texts found to be significant to its field. Chela Sandoval also subscribes to this idea: "As immigrants became laborers, 'work' became the privileged site for scholars who wrote 'labor history.' Mexicans and Chicanos/as became laborers, with little mention of their lives beyond the fields or factories" (18). This working-class affinity is also noted in anthologies on Chicana feminism; one of the few texts that depicts feminist work by Mexican and Mexican American women between

1910 and 1950 only references women whose work was solely concerned with working-class issues. This can be seen in other collections. For example, Martha Cotera's first history of Chicana women dedicates a chapter to what she denotes as *Chicana precursors* during the beginning of the twentieth century. Cotera limits herself to figures tightly linked to working-class concerns, such women as Andrea and Teresa Villarreal, Soledad Peña and Jovita Idar. Cotera's synopsis of feminist activity of Mexican women in the United States centers around their civil rights accomplishments and labor rights work while the intellectual strides or other issues are scarcely –if at all– mentioned.

This supposed antithetical relationship with intellectuals has not allowed the history of Chicana feminism to be completely open. Traditionally, writers belonging to the elite-class have been depicted as disconnected from working-class issues and/or eager to assimilate. “Middle-class leaders, however, lost their influence with the Chicano movement because they clung to integrationist politics and accommodation to the Anglo establishment as a way to achieve equality” (Acosta & Winegarten 230). The relationship between the working-class and middle or elite classes cannot be overly simplified, given that many figures in both sectors found the relationship to race, gender and class to be complex and multi-faceted. Just as it is not easy for a woman of color to grapple with both her race and gender, it is just as difficult to confront class differences. A step toward reconciling this barrier entails placing both discourses in dialogue and exploring how each have contributed to the history and current status of Chicana feminism instead of continuing to personify this relationship as irreconcilable.

In the work here, this reconciliation will be personified through my attempt to incorporate María Luisa Garza and her work into the larger context of Chicana history despite her seemingly elite social class point of view. In the few studies done about Garza, her work, all of which was written under the pseudonym Loreley, and discourse have been framed as typically elitist because of what, at first sight, appears to be a frequent elitist and conservative stance on issues such as religion, women, culture, and morality:

Loreley pertenece a una clase social alta que le da libertades y derechos que otras mujeres jamás tendrán como el escribir en un periódico semanalmente... Obviamente, una más dentro de la comunidad elitista y de la clase alta pues como Ulica, Loreley escribe desde una postura alejada, desde la que examina a la sociedad mexicana. (Baeza-Ventura 62-63)

The important work done by Baeza can now be expanded through the recovery and study of more of Garza's work. One can now take a closer look at María Luisa Garza's literary production by reading the interstitial spaces of her texts whose ambiguous and contradictory statements will allow me to move beyond her categorization as another Mexican elite exiled writer in the United States. If in fact a portion of the author's literary production expresses elitist values, these do not make her any less relevant for the study of Chicana feminism.

Chicano/a studies began in the fields with the United Farm Works and student walk-outs with a focus on working class issues and soon these same workers gained

access to higher education and brought the movement into the academic world. While some Chicano scholars remained working-class others became more privileged as their education progressed. Both working-class and privileged modes of understanding Chicano thought are connected and should be mutually exclusive. Both points of view inform and expand what is meant by Chicano and this duality exists in Chicana feminist thought which encompasses both working-class and privileged discourses. Those who called themselves Chicanos and Chicanas are not only farm workers or immigrants; they are intellectuals, millionaires, politicians and hold an array of positions at different social levels. By understanding that both working-class and elite have place within the study of Chicano/a studies, a writer like María Luisa Garza can be seen as relevant to Mexican feminist history as expressed from the United States but also relevant to understanding Chicana feminist thought. By going beyond the literary works by María Luisa Garza already studied, this work seeks to expand the way this author has been classified and viewed. Once the barrier of class is overcome, the term feminist needs to be addressed.

### **Will the True Feminist Please Stand Up?**

With the inception of Chicana feminist studies, the limitations and usefulness of the term feminist has been a topic of interest. Responding to a mostly Anglo-American and upper-class feminist movement in the United States, Chicanas took on the task of redefining what feminism meant to them. Unsatisfied with the U.S. feminist movement's lack of concern with the intersection of race, class and gender, Chicanas developed their own feminist agenda.

Generally speaking, to define feminism is to try to decipher the way many women and men have responded to the inequalities and disparities between the sexes. My argument thus far has signaled Chicanas' construction of the term *Chicana* as almost exclusively working-class. This explained the inclusion of only working-class related Mexican and Mexican American women writing during 1910-1940. Adding to this, it is important to take into account that Chicana historians looked toward figures that were visible, accessible and whose discourse was and is easily identifiable as *feminist*. This means that Chicana feminists are deliberately and overtly feminist which poses an obstacle for feminist who are subtle or express complex and nuanced positions with regards to feminism. That is to say, the rhetoric of women like Sor Juana, Jovita Idar or more recently Gloria Anzaldúa or Cherie Moraga is straightforward and direct with regards to notions of women's rights, labor rights, sexual freedom, reproductive rights, and anti-*machismo*. In *The Chicana Feminist*, Martha Cotera contributed to this construction of Chicana feminists: "The Chicano community has traditionally encouraged the participation of aggressive women..." (11). This aggressiveness is then translated to pieces that speak loud and clear about the author's stance on feminist issues. When speaking of Mexican women's feminism in the United States from the early 1900s, Alma García also cites women who are openly feminist and outspoken advocates for women's rights, such as Soledad Peña, María Rentería and María Villarreal. "[They] raised the consciousness of other women in the Mexican-American community on matters relating to women's development and feminism" (227).

This particular feminist discourse is in no way filtered nor negotiated, which becomes problematic when considering that many Mexican and Mexican-American women writing before the movements in the 1960s did not have the literary liberty or clout to fully express any feminist inclinations. Additionally, their response to issues of sexuality, marriage, child-rearing and morality was not always clear-cut and direct, given that they were working from within and sometimes against Mexican and North American cultures. More nuanced readings of the texts produced by Garza will facilitate the identification of those of her works that subtly and strategically advocate for women while balancing the reality that they had to work within patriarchal societies and literary scenes. Beyond the labels that authors themselves take on, it is also of value to expand what falls under the category of feminist. Echoing this sentiment Hannam proposes: “Feminist ideas, in theory and in practice, were complex. It is important, therefore, not to be too quick to label individuals as feminist or non-feminist on the basis of an ideal model of what a feminist should look like” (12). Chicana discourse in fact would consider overtly feminist and liberal two key characteristics of the ideal model of what a Chicana feminists should look like.

As previously detailed, Chicanas took what was considered an elite class’s control of feminism by Anglo-American women and added their working-class perspective on feminist issues. In order to distinguish themselves from their Anglo-American feminist contemporaries during the social movements, Chicana developed a discourse initially related to feminism through issues of race, labor, and familial concerns, distancing themselves from the mainstream focus on sexual liberty, reproductive rights, white-collar

work places issues, etc. Additionally, it is understood that the relationship women had with feminism was and is ambiguous and complex and this is important when approaching the texts of María Luisa Garza. The work done here with Garza could potentially provide clues for other scholars studying the work of Mexican woman immigrant writers in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

The antifeminist movement felt in the mainstream United States culture called women back to their femininity and this deterred many women from using this term. In her history of modern American women Lois Banner recalls that, “By the late 1920s, articles appeared in popular journals contending that in gaining their rights, women had given up their “privileges” (74). The feminists of that time were “pitied” since they could no longer enjoy the joys of femininity. This division between feminism and femininity was also felt by the Mexican women confronted with the same issues. Intellectuals, activists, philanthropists, educators and the other well-educated women who had the funds, education, time and access to be involved with the inception of a feminist movement in Mexico were making choices about the terminology that could best describe their efforts. Not only did being labeled a feminist entail losing one’s femininity but it also implied a certain level of Americanization and a potential loss of Mexican culture for Mexican women. Yet, can it be argued that those that did not use the term *feminist* were not as concerned with issues surrounding women, equality and progress? If the marker for identifying that which is relevant to feminist history is the use of the term *feminist*, then a whole body of work that could be beneficial to the study of feminism is being excluded. Because the relationship to the term feminism was not stable, women who did



not use this label cannot be excluded; after all, some were equally as concerned with issues linked to women's status in society as their cohorts comfortable with using the term.

With regards to Mexican women's relationship with the term feminist, Foppa and Aguilar write about the first ever documented Mexican feminist convention in *The First Feminist Congress in Mexico, 1916*:

The declarations, discussions, misunderstandings, and confusions are more interesting and revealing, in the context of the congress, than are the ideas. It is curious that they never speak about the vote already hotly debated in the United States and Europe; this omission demonstrates both the immaturity of the women who flung themselves into so great an adventure and their great courage and determination as well as the ties that bound them to an essentially feminine culture and the conflicts between the will to break and the will to preserve them. (197)

Not only did the congress expose concerns with the terms *feminism* and *femininity* but it also prompted discussions about the definition of each: "Yet even with such narrow participation, disagreements abounded regarding the contents of 'femininity,' as women adopted elements of seemingly divergent gender ideologies" (Oloctt 32). The conflict surrounding feminism and femininity was bound to an ideology in Mexico that sought national unity through cultural autonomy. As stated before, nationalist ideologies could not be reconciled with gender issues. Additionally, the Mexican woman distinguished herself from her European and Anglo-American counterpart through her particular

Mexican femininity. This so-called femininity was hailed a Mexican national treasure that was the envy of other countries (Olcott 46). Because of the tumultuous relationship with the term *feminist*, Mexican and Mexican-American women who did not use the term should not be automatically excluded from the feminist canon. With or without the term, many women were actively discussing and articulating their views on gender relations.

Reading in the margins and between the lines of these texts becomes the essential tool for this specific historical recuperation. What is useful for the study of Chicana feminism cannot be reduced to texts whose feminist inclinations are apparent and whose discourse is transparent; many women's experiences at the beginning of the twentieth century and before were not well-defined with relation to feminism. The way these women negotiated with the tools and discursive spaces made available should be researched and taken into consideration. In the chapters that analyze some of Garza's journalist and fictional works, the methodological process that will be employed will include exposing the subtle messages within the margins of the texts and exploring how the author negotiates with the literary space afforded to her while keeping in mind that her works were restricted by male newspaper directors, male publishers and a male-dominated society. By revisiting, expanding, redefining and questioning terms such as *Chicana* and *feminist* for this work's approach to Garza, one could take this model when studying other archives by Mexican women writing in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **Chicana Feminism's Opposing Views**

Lastly, Chicana feminist history would benefit from studying the work of Mexican women that displays an awareness of issues commonly found in Chicana discourse (ie. gender, race, etc.) without filtering out texts solely on the basis of their views about these issues. That is to say, the way women respond to an array of topics should not be a factor in determining whether they are significant to the study of Chicana feminism; what should be a factor is that they discuss the topics that eventually became the centerpieces of Chicana feminist thought. This becomes all the more difficult when confronted with a Mexican or Chicana author who does take what seems to be the *Chicana side* to a particular matter.<sup>15</sup>

This multiplicity within feminist discourse has been doted its greatest weakness when in reality it is this same multiplicity which makes feminism theoretically rich (Warhol & Herndl, x). The study of Chicana feminism has only to gain and grow by incorporating similar, dissident and ambivalent voices into its field and history. Echoing this sentiment, Sandoval states, “Nonetheless, the work initiates an important dialogue between Mexicanas and Chicanas because it offers them and their respective communities a better understanding of their mutual historical and cultural experience” (6).

Mexicans and Chicanas who respond favorably to feminism and are concerned with issues of race do not exist in a vacuum and often are cognizant of their counterparts

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Chicana writers who do not identify with nor pay tribute to indigenous culture might easily be excluded for their interruption of the current indigenous foundation of Chicana thought and might even be deemed *un-Chicana*. Yet their voices and points of view may be extremely important in the creation of a more complete and inclusive history of Chicanas. This notion of authenticity has been the topic of several studies in which it the idea that some authors are more Chicano than others is elaborated. See: Bruce Novoa’s *Retrospace* and Christian, Karen’s “Will the ‘Real Chicano’ Please Stand Up? The Challenge of John Rechy and Sheila Ortiz Taylor to Chicano Essentialism.”

with opposing and/or ambiguous views; therefore, it is necessary for Chicana feminists to engage with not only supportive discourses but also with discourses that appear to counter them. Frequently, views that are seen as conservative are considered irreconcilable with a feminist agenda, but a broader interpretation of feminism that includes non-traditional approaches to the inequalities between the sexes, race, sexual orientation and culture could prove fruitful. There are some conservative women who deem themselves to be feminists and they too should join in the discussion with those who do not necessarily take on that label.

For example, a salient topic within feminism is sexual freedom; yet there are those who believe remaining abstinent can be seen as feminist, that is, women taking control over their own bodies without allowing men to use them solely for sexual ends. At the same time, abstinence can be seen as not feminist, because it prohibits women from doing as they please or negates a biological function. The true feminist response, thus would be that of complete sexual liberty. In response to this, bell hooks, one of African-American feminism's most prominent theorists, states:

... whether or not sexual freedom should be a feminist issue is currently a much-debated topic ... sexual freedom can exist only when individuals are no longer oppressed by a socially constructed sexuality based on biologically determined definitions of sexuality: repression, guilt, shame, dominance, conquest, and exploitation. (149-151)

The intent here is to demonstrate how both views can represent a feminist inclination, even if one is seen as liberal and the other conservative. What is gained by a

process such as this is better understood through Foucault's discussion on discursive formations:

Rather than seeking the permanence of themes, images, and opinions through time, rather than retracing the dialectic of their conflicts in order to individualize groups of statements, could one not rather mark out the dispersion of the points of choice, and define prior to any option, to any thematic preference, a field of strategic possibilities? (37)

## **Conclusion**

Embracing the complex relationship that many Mexican women and Chicanas had and have with feminism, class, race and other important matters creates a more innovative method for studying and understanding Chicana feminist history by presenting *strategic possibilities*. As explained above, this is accomplished by first deconstructing traditional modes of history, redefining the terms *Chicana* and *feminism*, placing into dialogue working-class and elite discourses, and, lastly, embracing *strategic possibilities*.

In deconstructing traditional modes of history, there is a movement away from linear and origin-centered objectives towards a genealogically-based history.

Additionally, redefining the term *Chicana* requires the questioning of the divisions of class within Chicana discourse and the often homogenous creation of ethnic identities.

The redefinition of feminism calls for the ability to recognize the many different ways feminism is practiced, which means that being feminist can take on many forms.

Embracing the differences within Chicana history and discourse will not render it inferior to traditional Anglo-American feminist history and discourse; this is more apparent as

Anglo-American feminist history itself has been revamped and questioned by Third World feminists and historians who call for the inclusion of dissident voices and different points of view. Lastly, the dialogue that can occur between elite and working-class writers and their works will demonstrate that Chicanas and *Mexicanas* came from diverse social classes and had diverse views on class as a category of identification. My overarching theme points to a reconciliation of the differences found within a particular cultural or ethnic group instead of using these differences to divide the field or exclude certain figures.

In doing all that is outlined above, the following chapters will explore the work of María Luis Garza, who published all of her work recovered until now under the pseudonym *Loreley*, and demonstrate that her work is multifaceted and that many of her pieces can be connected to the issues and concerns found in Chicana feminist discourse despite not always responding to these issues in the same way. In her *crónicas*, poems, short-stories, novels, Garza confronted and responded to the same issues, concerns and situations later found in the work of other Chicanas and that makes her work relevant to Chicana feminist history. By showing how a writer like Garza can be taken into account for both Mexican and Chicana feminist history, this text provides a model for the inclusion and insertion of other women who are yet to be recuperated or whose voices have been silenced.

## CHAPTER 2

### IT'S A MAN'S GENRE: CHRONICLING A FEMALE *CRONISTA*'S WORK

¿Cómo empezar a definir un género en prosa

que parece caracterizarse por su indefinición?

Aníbal González, *La Crónica modernistas hispanoamericana*

#### **Genealogy of the *Crónica***

The following reflections about the literary genre of the *crónica* and its development in Latin America explore the different historical and literary moments that implicitly and explicitly contributed to the type of *crónica* ultimately seen in Spanish-language newspapers in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. The *crónica*'s rich literary heritage has occupied the work of international scholars who have drawn similarities and differences between the Latin American *crónica* and other journalistic forms from various eras and countries. In this manner, rather than signaling out a point of origin for the *crónica*, the following passages will examine the varying genres and literary movements that can be said to lead to the development of the *crónicas* produced by Hispanics in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century. By moving away from a traditional historical account of a genre, one is free from the need to demonstrate a direct cause and effect; and instead, one develops a richer discussion in which literary moments need not be geographically or chronologically linear to be placed in dialog. More than sharing geography or chronology, the most important concept in creating a literary genealogy in a Foucaultian manner is the identification of similarities between the *crónica* and different literary genres across geographical boundaries and time. The colonial records of religious figures and

conquistadors, eighteenth century French *chroniques* and Spanish *cuadros de costumbres* all offer insight into the Latin American tradition of the *crónica* and its transplant to the United States and in particular its development in the southwest in the hands of Mexican writers like María Luisa Garza during the first half of the twentieth century.

In his anthology of the *crónica* entitled *A ustedes les consta: Antología de la crónica en México*, Carlos Monsiváis traces the history of the *crónica* in México; he begins with a discussion of the conquistadors who chronicled their exploratory endeavors and the missionaries' records of evangelization in the New Spain:

En el siglo XVI la crónica es un gran instrumento de afirmación de los conquistadores. A la gesta de tan bravos y leales súbitos de la corona española le corresponde el canto homérico que combine intimidación y relatos majestuosos, ojos maravillados y la sangre que chorrea en los altares. Los cronistas de las Indias observan, anotan, comparan, inventan. Su tarea es hacer del Nuevo Mundo el territorio habitable a partir de la fe, el coraje, la sorpresa destructiva antes los falsos ídolos, la instalación de costumbres que intentan reproducir las peninsulares. (15)

For Monsiváis the early works of Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, Sahagún and others mark the origins of what eventually became known as the modern *crónica* in Mexico and Latin America. These texts represent for Monsiváis the earliest constructions of Mexican cultural history through *crónicas* that attempted to capture with the written word the new world being discovered. In this sense, Monsiváis sees the *crónica* as primarily functioning as a medium through which to describe, decipher and create this new world. As the author moves into the twentieth century, he argues that the *crónica* preserves some



aspects of the earlier works at the hands of explorers and missionaries since it also attempts to make sense and/or decipher the chaos of the Mexican Revolution while describing the everyday life of the Mexican people. In describing what it means to be Mexican, they are purporting an agenda of national pride:

Durante un periodo prolongado el detallismo de los cronistas sirve a un propósito central: contribuir a la forja de la nación describiéndola y, si se puede, reconviniéndola. Documentemos al país, cedámosle a los lectores los más variados y amenos ejercicios mnemotécnicos, que les dé gusto y les adule los pormenores de comidas, paseos, crímenes célebres, festividades, conmociones políticas, personajes ilustres o excéntricos, sobresaltos históricos e innovaciones de la moda. El folclor (aún sin connotaciones peyorativas) está allí. . . . (35)

The *crónicas* that are the focus of this chapter by María Luisa Garza “Loreley” align with Monsiváis’ definition in that they describe everyday life of Mexicans in the United States while being linked to a nationalist agenda. Ultimately, Monsiváis proceeds chronologically by detailing the growth and development of the *crónica* in Mexico. To a certain extent, for him the *crónica* at times functions like a mirror that allows Mexicans to gaze into their own life and customs, a tradition that is manifested in the U.S. Hispanic version of the genre:

La crónica es moderada en su desfile de tipos populares y sin embargo convence al lector: lo descrito no es accidente, sino esencia. No estás leyendo. Estás frente a un retrato de tu país y, sobre todo, de la ciudad capital. Seas o no arquetipo catalogado, eres lector que se mueve entre

arquetipos y, por tanto, existes doblemente: verifica (reflexivo) los alcances morales de la conducta ajena, y diviértete (frívolo) con los excesos del pintoresquismo, la vulgaridad o la pretensión. (41)

Along with Monsiváis' history of the *crónica* in Mexico that supposes that the colonial exploration era is its point of origin, Aníbal González in *La Crónica modernista hispanoamericana* offers his own historical account and presents another possibility in which the Latin American *crónica* is influenced by 18<sup>th</sup> century England and France.

Aware that his gaze towards Europe when tracing the Latin American *crónica*'s history can be and is a contested point, González clarifies what genealogy means to him, "Sabemos, sin embargo, que las genealogías producen una impresión de continuidad que es, en buen medida, ajena a lo que en realidad ocurre en la historia literaria; entre la *chronique* y la *crónica*, y los anteriores artículos de costumbres y <<tradiciones>>, existen semejanzas y diferencias significativas que conviene explorar brevemente" (65). The author acknowledges the limitations of proposing a sole point of origin for the *crónica* and instead reiterates the importance of exploring both commonalities and points of departure between the *crónica*, *cuadros de costumbres* and *chroniques* that can help one better understand the *crónica* genre itself. This is why in his particular exploration of the *crónica*'s origin it is beneficial to explore several authorities.

González begins by traveling to the Industrial Revolution of eighteenth century England during which the country encountered developments in politics and in the sciences that functioned as a catalyst for a new literary genre. Addison and Steele introduced this new form through their articles on customs and manners, commonly referred to as periodical essays. Taking cue from Locke's notion that the best human

sense for interpreting reality was sight, Addison and Steele's *Spectator* functioned as a literary mechanism with which to measure to what extent the observed subjects were maintaining their *place in the world order* (González, 66). In issue ten, Addison makes clear the aims of the periodical with regard to its readers:

For which Reasons I shall endeavor to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality, that my Readers may, if possible, both Ways find their account in the Speculation of the Day. And to the End that their Virtue and Discretion may not be short transient intermitting Starts of Thought, I have resolved to refresh their Memories from Day to Day, til I have recovered them out of that desperate State of Vice and Folly, into which the Age is fallen...and I shall ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee-houses. (41-42)

In this sense, Addison and Steele made accessible topics previously restricted to traditional intellectual spaces by inserting them into public spaces.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the rest of the essay Addison reveals that *Spectator* not only provides observations on human behavior, but also offers its readers instructions on how to engage in meaningful conversation and social interaction.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This particular aspect of moving knowledge from the private realm to the public is also later seen at the end of the twentieth century and in the *crónicas* written in Latin America: "Esta tribuna fue también la encargada de propagar entre un amplio sector de la población las ideas que se gestaban en círculos cerrados y exclusivos. Antes que la educación gratuita, el periódico sirvió para extender los conocimientos y ponerlos al alcance de los ciudadanos." (Touissaint Alcaraz , 7)

<sup>2</sup> *Crónicas* written in the United States by Hispanics often functioned as a tool to critique social behaviors with the hope of maintaining a social order in the face of the Anglo-American culture: "[The *crónica*] became essential in forming and reinforcing community attitudes." (Kanellos, 9)

González points out that this tendency is also found in the *physiologies* and *chroniques* of France during the same time period. Related to the movements of Naturalism and Realism, these genres also engaged in categorizing and describing reality, particularly the reality of the Parisian metropolis. *Physiologies* were hand-sized and widely popular reading material that generally depicted social customs and relationships with a mix of prose and scientific-like discourse; the series included *Physiologies* on marriage, love and types of people. The Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* is credited for publishing the first known *chroniques* by Auguste Villemot mid-eighteenth century (González, 73). Like the narrator of *The Spectator*, the *chroniques* maintained a central narrator who observed Paris and its population's social habits. That both these genres grew out of and alongside journalism explains their tendency to describe the human experience in objective and scientific modes due to journalism's goal to provide accurate news and facts to its readership. Ultimately, the journalistic root of the periodical essay of England, the *physiologies* and *chroniques* of France in combination with the period's engagement with Realism and Naturalism provided a foundation for genres focused on scientific description and social analysis of everyday life.

By the nineteenth century, Spain, influenced by its European contemporaries, also began to develop a tradition similar to its French and English counterparts in journalistic writing since it also was influenced by Realism. González begins by studying the most noted journalist, Mariano José de Larra, who published a monthly pamphlet *El duende satírico del día* and consequently the newspaper *El pobrecito hablador*; both literary productions are readily compared to the earlier works of Addison and Steele in England. *El duende satírico del día* functioned as a medium through which to critique Spanish

society via satire; later *El pobrecito hablador* would also provide Larra with a platform to critique Spain's lack of progress. This tradition of *costumbrismo* (literature of customs) was also influential for the work of Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, who also wrote of and critiqued Spanish life and society. For González these two main figures of *costumbrismo* brought out a *passion* not seen in the work of Addison and Steele, “El costumbrismo romántico comienza a exhibir esa ‘pasión crítica’ que caracteriza a la modernidad...” (González, 68). Again, this critique of life and society along with the use of satire is present in the *crónicas* of Hispanic journalists in the United States.

Lastly, one of the authorities within the field of U.S. Hispanic literature, Nicolás Kanellos, reiterates González' trail back to Addison and Steele while simultaneously taking from Monsiváis critical work to propose a paradigm with which to study the *crónica* as produced by Hispanics in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Initially, Kanellos defines the *crónica* in the Spanish-language periodicals of the United States as, “...a short, weekly column that humorously and satirically commented on current topics and social habits in the local community” (Kanellos & Martell, 44). In this sense, the interest in the local and the idea of creating *cuadros de costumbres* remains intact in the U.S. version of *crónicas* produced by the Hispanic intellectual elite. Both Monsiváis and Kanellos point out that the Mexican *crónica* sought to create a Mexican identity in the nineteenth century but when the *crónica* is transplanted to the United States, it is transformed:

In the Southwest, it came to serve purposes never imagined in Mexico or Spain. From Los Angeles to San Antonio and even up to Chicago, Mexican moralists assumed pseudonyms (as was the tradition in the

*crónica*) and, from this masked perspective, commented satirically in the first person as witnesses to the customs and behavior of the colony whose very existence was seen as threatened by the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. The *cronistas* were very influenced by popular jokes, folk anecdotes and vernacular speech, and in general their columns mirrored the surrounding social environment. It was the *cronista's* job to fan the flames of nationalism . . . . (Kanellos & Martell, 45)

As the child of the Spanish *cuadros de costumbres*, the French *chroniques*, the chronicles of the conquistadors and missionaries, the *crónica* written by Hispanics in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century is the ultimate conglomeration of all these literary genres. More importantly, the *crónicas* gave the Hispanic community a vehicle with which to simultaneously promote nationalism, keep social customs in line and offer humorous entertainment. Therefore, the *crónica* becomes one of the most important tools in the preservation of Hispanic identity and culture through its capacity to reach a large audience via its place within newspapers

Whether one follows Monsiváis' chronology that begins with the colonial explorers' and missionaries' texts or one follows González's chronology beginning with Addison and Steele, the reality is that México and Latin America ultimately replicate (consciously or not) the ideas seen in all the genres previously mentioned and transform them into an autochthonous literary genre known as the *crónica*<sup>3</sup>. From there and through the massive and continuous immigration and exile of Hispanics to the United

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<sup>3</sup> Another point of view with regards to the *crónica's* history is provided by Linda Egan's *Carlos Monsiváis: Cultura y crónica en el México contemporáneo*; in this book the author argues that one must look back to the epic poems of Hellenistic Europe in order to trace this genre's development, which is a discussion that is beyond the limits of this chapter (151-153).

States, the *crónica* continues to be used in Spanish-language newspapers in the United States. As shown by Kanellos' definition of said *crónicas*, they maintained many of the features seen in conquistador chronicles, *chroniques* and *cuadros de costumbres* while being shaped into a narrative relevant to its Hispanic immigrants and exiles in the United States.

### **Women and the Press**

Along with the historical account of the *crónica* genre, María Luisa Garza's particular situation as a woman writing within the male-dominated field of the press will create the context from which her work will be analyzed. Since both the *crónica* and the press were literary spaces dominated by men, the question becomes: What was the state of women within the context of twentieth century press? In searching for the answer to this query with regards to Hispanic women in the United States, one will not find a historical text that covers this particular history; instead, the story of Hispanic female journalists is put together by piecing the history of U.S. women's journalism and, in María Luisa Garza's case, Hispanic women's journalistic history is found in dispersed articles dedicated to the stories of specific women journalists.

Women's mainstream struggles to gain access to traditionally masculine fields like politics, higher education, etc. were the same struggles they faced within journalism in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. As noted in the previous chapter, the twentieth century afforded women the ability to explore new social areas in part due to the Suffragist movement, modernity and the World Wars that allowed some women to fill the empty positions left by the men fighting in the war. The twentieth century was a complex and at times contradictory time for women since it was common

to see women who had gained a new level of access filling in for absent men forced back into the shadows once the men returned. Nevertheless, the changes and setbacks these women confronted would forever change gender relations and affect women's future progress; this obviously influenced the world of journalism and its female constituents.

In *Women and Journalism* by Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, the authors not only trace the history of women in journalism from Britain and the United States, but also highlight the many obstacles that women had to overcome in order to make headway in this arena. These were trying to insert themselves into a field that was male-dominated. What were the roles assigned to women who did eventually get hired by newspapers?

Only when advertising became necessary to newspapers' survival in the last decades of the nineteenth century were women actively sought as journalists to produce articles that would directly appeal to women readers and around which lucrative advertisements targeting women consumers could be placed. (Chambers, Steiner & Fleming, 15)

Therefore, women's initial role in journalism was limited to writing pieces that ultimately met the consumerist agenda for the newspaper they worked for. Topics related to crime, politics, economics and others were generally reserved for male writers since the target audience for this type of news was male, while women were assumed to be the only ones interested in topics centered around beauty products, home appliances, medications for children, fashion, etc. "When women were allowed to write about world events, they were encouraged to provide what has come to be referred to as the 'human-interest' angle by demonstrating how events affected people in their everyday lives" (Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 16). Clearly, women were still being seen as not capable



of providing factual reporting like their male counterparts and were asked to write emotional responses to world events, which once again relegated the female sex to emotions not rational.

The situation for Hispanic women was very similar to that of their Anglo counterparts in the United States but they had an added cultural pressure that was not necessarily present for Anglo women:

Of course, in both groups, the Mexicans in the Southwest and the Latinos in the Northeast, Hispanic women were seen as the center of the family and the key to survival of the group, the culture, the language. Of course, it was men doing the seeing, and they controlled the media: publishing houses, newspapers, theaters, etc. It was these very men who saw themselves as the self-appointed conscience of the community in the *crónicas* that were so popular in the immigrant communities. (Kanellos & Martell 57-58)

Women were given the task of writing about housekeeping, fashion, home remedies, and social mores. The existence of “Women’s Pages” placed women journalists in a controlled literary space in which they could only explore topics related to being a woman. The front pages of most newspapers were dominated by male journalists while “Women’s Pages” were often found in the last pages of the newspaper and surrounded by advertisements.<sup>4</sup> Like their Anglo-American counterparts, the columns Hispanic women wrote were habitually related to the products advertised so that if their piece focused on remedies for a sick child, the column would be next to an advertisement

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<sup>4</sup> This was also the case for Spanish-language newspapers where women’s writing was published within the context of “Women’s Pages” or “Literary Pages.”

for cough syrup or the like. In essence, women journalists wrote under the watchful eye of their male editors. For women with aspirations to go beyond these limitations, their literary task became to develop methods to gain access to more salient topics or to work within their given space and exploit the lines between the text and the margins.<sup>5</sup>

Despite few sources that are directly concerned with depicting what life was like for Hispanic female journalists in the Southwest, the historical and bibliographical work done by Dr. Nicolás Kanellos and Helvetia Martell entitled *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* provides some essential information about what the literary scene was like for a writer like Garza. The work's geographical index indicates approximately more than fifty newspapers during the first half of the twentieth century in San Antonio, TX. With these recovered newspapers, it is evident that Garza arrived at a vibrant city with a lively journalistic community. Additionally, Juanita Luna Lawhn's "María Luisa Garza: Novelist of *El México de Afuera*", the author reveals that Garza was well accompanied by other women writers from Nuevo León: Hortensia Elizondo, Andrea Villarreal, Adriana García Roel and Loreto Ayala López. The extent to which these women were in contact or influenced one another is in the process of being explored; Dr. Carolina Villarreal's dissertation "La mujer Mexicana ante el feminismo: Nación, género y raza en la literatura femenina del destierro" the work of Angelina Elizondo de Garcia Naranjo, Dolores Bolio and Elena Arizmend are analyzed: "El objetivo de este trabajo es recuperar y estudiar cuatro voces femeninas mexicanas y su producción literaria en Estados Unidos durante

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<sup>5</sup> At the same time that many women wrote for male-run newspapers, there were also women founding their own newspapers that focused on an array of topics that included: politics, education, housekeeping and other salient issues. Some examples of Hispanic women publishing in the United States during this time are: Teresa Villarreal's *El Obrero*, Blanca de Moncaleano's *Pluma Roja* and Josefina Silva de Cintrón's *Artes y letras* (Kanellos & Helvetia).

dicha época” (n.p). At the national and international levels, María Luisa Garza participates in the monthly magazine *Feminismo Internacional*, which serves as a literary space for women from the entire Spanish-speaking world to write about women’s issues. Although spread throughout the Spanish-speaking world in various countries, the importance of a literary space that brings together the voices of these women, is evident. In chapter four, Garza’s participation in this magazine and the details of her social activism will be further discussed.

The body of work dedicated to the recuperation and analysis of Hispanic women’s contributions to the journalistic legacy of Hispanics in the United States is limited at best. Kanellos and Martell have provided scholars in this field a strong foundation with their work, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography*; alongside them one can find scattered articles and book chapters with regards to specific writers. With the existence of texts dedicated to the history of U.S. and Mexico’s women’s journalistic history, respectively, research and texts on Hispanic women’s journalistic history is the natural next step. It is the hope of this work to provide a starting point for thinking about this history through its recuperation of one of its protagonists: María Luisa Garza “Loreley,”

### **Genre and Gender: On Being a Female *Cronista***

The only comprehensive analysis of a portion of the *crónicas* written by María Luisa Garza “Loreley” can be found in Gabriela Baeza Ventura’s book *La imagen de la mujer en la crónica del “México de Afuera.”* The chapter dedicated to Garza focuses on her work in the San Antonio newspaper *El Imparcial* (1920-1921) and Ventura’s literary analysis finds Garza’s work in that particular newspaper as clearly aligned with the

*México de Afuera* ideology.<sup>6</sup> The conclusion is reached by highlighting and studying the *crónica*'s traditional view of women's roles and its promotion of the conservation of Mexican culture among other markers of the *México de Afuera* school of thought. With this analysis Ventura determines that the *crónicas* in *El Imparcial* demonstrate Garza as uninterested in feminism and more precisely, that the author situates herself against feminism because it was counterproductive to the cultural and nationalist goals of the *México de Afuera* ideology. María Luisa Garza's work in this newspaper is seen to be clearly nationalistic, conservative and elitist.

Now that other *crónicas* written by María Luisa Garza "Loreley" have been recovered, one can add to the work already done by Ventura in order to piece together a more complete portrait of this *cronista*. In what follows, Garza's *crónicas* from the newspapers *El Heraldo de México* and *La Época*, published after 1920, are analyzed with regards to several salient topics: class, politics and feminism. Gabriela Baeza Ventura's work encompasses the first *crónicas* written by Garza upon her arrival in the United States; therefore, with this new body of work covering the years 1921-1928, one can move closer to understanding how María Luisa Garza "Loreley" navigated the male-dominated world of the *crónica* and if her work transforms or not across time and within different newspapers.

With regards to the genre of the *crónica* as it was produced in the San Antonio press and as the genre Garza chose to work with, the most common and most studied *crónicas* are those that held true the pillars of the *México de Afuera* ideology by its male and female writers. In particular, María Luisa Garza "Loreley" as a female *cronista* brings up questions about her own use of this genre:

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed definition of the *México de Afuera* ideology please refer to chapter 1.

What are the conventions by means of which gender is represented, and in what sense is there or is there not equal presentation? 2. What values are attached to the representation of gender, and how are such values supported and called into question by the specific genres? 3. What are the major contradictions that persist with respect to gender representation and gender valuation, and how does the multiplicity of genres enable readers to avoid, to appropriate, or to resolve those contradictions? (Gerhart, 4)

María Luis Garza's own manipulation and use of the *crónica* genre is studied in relationship to the transformation of her view point on certain topics from her early work in *El Imparcial* to *El Herald de México* and *La Época*. As mentioned above, contradictions within Garza's crónicas are exposed and viewed as literary strategies for a writer who was working with limitations set by her gender and the genre she worked with. One should also keep in mind that Garza's work in the novel genre demonstrates yet another and perhaps more nuanced approach to the same topics covered in the *crónicas*. This approach will be shown to ultimately be a movement away from the culturally conservative views of the *México de Afuera* ideology; this fact points to the idea the different genres provided different literary spaces for women journalists/*cronistas* like María Luisa Garza.

Additionally, the awareness of gender and genre as intersecting categories of analysis allow both terms to be rethought and unpacked. The *México de Afuera* texts and authors used to define what is expected of a *crónica* give rise to questions about gender and genre:

Generic and gender analysis enable us to become aware of questions that would otherwise go unnoticed. How do generic predispositions set up expectations about the ways in which a text should be read? How do traditions provide both restraints and incentives to the development of new genres? In what sense can a text be said to “belong” to a genre? How does the recognition of genre and gender reduce the possibility of misinterpreting a text and at the same time invite maximum reinterpretation? (Gerhart, 7)

At a basic level, being a female *cronista* meant that María Luisa Garza was at the mercy of her editors in a way that her male-counterparts were not, since she was limited to certain enumerated topics considered feminine. Interestingly enough, Garza was writing within a genre infamous for castigating women and/or poking fun at them: “Women, in particular were a target for these chroniclers, apparently because the men were worried that their wives, daughters and girlfriends would take the example of the Anglo woman in assuming some of the leadership and responsibility heretofore reserved for men in Hispanic culture” (Kanellos, 116). How does a woman work within a genre known for this less than positive portrayal of her own gender? As it will be demonstrated in the following analysis, Garza stands clear of the use of harsh humor to get her message across while she does not steer clear of the harsh critique of society. Ultimately, the best source of information about how Garza viewed her role in the world of journalism are her own pieces dedicated to writing about her work as a journalist and about journalism.

Throughout her career, María Luisa Garza “Loreley” produced introspective pieces about her role as a female journalist. Despite their anecdotal nature, Garza’s reflections are invaluable to the construction of a fuller history of Hispanic women

journalists' experiences at the turn of the twentieth century. In her piece "Un bello gesto" from *El Herald de México* (20 Apr. 1921), one is able to see that Garza, despite her limited access within journalism, sees herself as a part of the press, "embadurnadores de cuartillas – como suelen llamarnos despectivamente a los que ganamos el pan al amparo del periódico." (47) The use of the *we* subject pronoun reveals that in this *crónica* Garza views herself not in the periphery of the press or as a minority (which she was) but as a member who, like her male counterparts, uses her writing as a means for survival. Yet, Garza's view of herself as a female journalist is not one-dimensional, as can be appreciated in the *crónica* "Dos palabras" from *La Época* (16 Oct. 1921). This piece is a replica of a letter she sent to the *Congreso de Chihuahua* for journalists held in El Paso, Texas in 1921. Unlike her previous writing that appears to demonstrate that Garza sees herself as part of the press, in this work she simultaneously excludes and includes herself in the world of journalism. The *crónica* begins with a portrait of a "regular" journalist, and this figure is blatantly male while his female companion at home provides emotional support, accepting to live in poverty so that he can pursue his journalistic dreams, "en su casa, donde escucha el lamento de la infeliz esposa, de la fiel compañera que en el lecho, ha de perecer sin auxilios médicos porque es la mujer de un periodista...." (11). Continuing with this idea of journalism being a man's world, Garza ends by reaffirming her femininity, highlighting her lack of talent and minimizing her involvement within journalism: "Vosotros, hombres, tenéis la supremacía-----dejadme el derecho, ya que el destino me colocó cerca de ustedes, no de pregonar genio (Dios me valga), sino de hacer resaltar que a pesar de trabajar entre los hombres, seré siempre mujer, sentimental y soñadora...." (11). The shift from using the *we* subject pronoun and directly placing

herself as a fellow journalist to figuratively placing herself merely working “close to” but never as well as men gives a glimpse into a complex perception that Garza had with regards to her role within journalism as a woman. Moreover, this could also be viewed as a strategy in which humility is used as a smoke screen to Garza’s true perceptions of being a woman journalist.

This seeming contradiction is also seen in María Luisa Garza’s thoughts about her role in the press as a woman in “Siempre periodista” from *La Época* (4 Dec. 1921) in which she reflects on the honors and awards she has received during a month-long stay in Monterrey. She demonstrates a humble gratitude: “Durante un mes sentí todos los agasajos y todos los honores que se le presentan a una persona de valor...por qué tanto halago, por qué tanto homenaje para mi modestia personalidad?” (9). Interestingly enough, Garza simultaneously cherishes the acknowledgement she receives but laments her status as a virtual unknown: “... he venido en acuerdo de que nada soy, de que nada es mi nombre, de que nada significa Loreley en el cuerpo tan extenso y fecundo del periodismo nacional” (9). One can see that she is cognizant that the regional accolades she receives in Monterrey are a reminder of the lack of recognition for her journalist work at the national level. Again one is confronted with a perceived humbleness combined with a subtle critique of the status of women in the press. This *crónica* also reveals that the editor of *La Época* has “pulled” Garza away from providing informative pieces, and that she has been relegated to a “literary” space within the newspaper: “El director de esta publicación me ha alivianado la carga. Me arranca de la labor informativa que fue siempre dura y pesada para mí y me coloca honrosamente (y también inmerecidamente) al frente de una sección literaria” (9). The use of the verb “to pull out”



implies that Garza had been holding on to this section and is unwillingly moving into the literary section of the newspaper. What makes the interpretation of this quote complex is her reference to informative journalism as difficult for her. As with most of Garza's work, there is an ambiguity and a lack of a clear stance on the issue at hand, perhaps because being a female *cronista* was, at the time, ambiguous at best.

Almost a year later in her *crónica* "Hacia la patria" from *El Herald de México* (1 Dec. 1922) Garza has developed an appreciation for the clout she has acquired in world of the press. In lieu of her move back to México, Garza compares the differences between being a female writer in San Antonio versus México. The article is dedicated to the author expressing concern for what lifestyle awaits her in Mexico and her sadness at leaving the city and country that afforded her many liberties and opportunities for success. In the following quote, Garza admits that in the United States she has been able to conduct business as "a man" and laments that in Mexico instead of conducting business in this manner, her literary clout will be measured by her ability to socialize instead of being measured by her work:

Allá, no habrá amigos desinteresados, ni podré arreglar negocios como hombre, porque allá se tasa el valor literato de una mujer, según el palmito de ella. Y si no sé reír, y si no sé guascar (que no sé) y si no sé irme de paseo con los compañeros y tomar champagne hasta embriagarme...no seré buena literata. (6)

It is evident that for Garza gender plays an important role in defining the way she can participate in the literary world. Additionally, the word *palmito* references the idea that women are judged by either their body or fashion as this word can reference both.

Therefore, Garza is arguing that in Mexico her worth is measured not by her work ethic but by superficial categories like looks and socializing. Regardless of the limitations present for her in the San Antonio press, Garza expresses that her literary limitations in Mexico are greater than those present in the United States. Unlike the letter sent to the group of male journalists in which Garza distances herself from the masculine aspects of working in the press, here Garza has come to realize the advantages of being able to “do business as a man.” In complete contradiction to the *México de Afuera* ideology that reinforces traditional gender roles, María Luisa Garza is admitting to behaving in a masculine way while in the United States and to rejecting the idea of performing femininity upon her return to Mexico. Another example of the lack of independence she will face in Mexico is reflected in her concern with not being able to drive in Mexico because she is a woman: “Allá no habrá paseos en automóvil; porque una mujer no se ve bien manejando un auto” (5). Garza’s discourse transforms and evolves across time; in the author’s earlier works she distanced herself from her male journalist contemporaries in order to highlight her femininity yet ultimately in this piece she expresses lament at not being able to do business as a man in Mexico.

Additionally, several of María Luisa Garza’s pieces reflect the author’s mindfulness of the lack of female figures in the press. This topic is explored in Garza’s *crónica* “Alma Femenina” from *La Época* (25 Dec. 1921) in which she announces the launch of her own magazine *Alma Femenina*. In speaking about this journalistic adventure she seeks to first highlight that she will be free from the restrictions she has had as a journalist for different newspapers: “Hago un periódico, sola, libre de trabas, ajena de servilismo. Mi periódico no tiene amos!” (11). In this sense, it is safe to assume

that Garza is pointing to the limitations she as a woman journalist has faced under the editorial and watchful eye of her male editors. The importance of this is underscored as she ends by stating, “Desde luego, me felicito una y mil veces – hago un periódico sin ayuda ni protección de nadie...” (11). This urgency in establishing her independence demonstrates the author’s sensibility vis a vis her role as a woman journalist. One could argue that Garza is going against the notion of the traditional feminine qualities of needing protection and help. Not only is Garza aware of her journalistic limitations but also of the need for women’s voices in the press: “He meditado mucho – hace meses, desde que me lancé al periodismo y advertí que a mi mesa de redacción no llega un periódico femenino. Comprendí la falta que estaba haciendo en el estadio de la prensa, un colega que excitara, los sentimientos dulces de la mujer” (11). Likewise, Garza argues that this journalistic gap should only be filled by women and for women. This purely womanist view is reminiscent of other feminists whose strategy for access to education and various fields centered on women creating their own spaces and not necessarily invading men’s fields. Women who were not overtly feminist created innovative modes of negotiating with the tools accessible to them; aware that they could not directly invade male spaces, they sought to create similar spaces for women. This idea of negotiating with the dominant male-centered ideology of the time by proposing is echoed in Dr. Carolina Villarroel’s work:

Al momento de producir sus discursos, las autoras asumían un lugar de marginalidad y entraban en negociaciones con el campo social intelectual. Dentro de estas negociaciones era fundamental el mantener su status como miembro confiable de la comunidad; esto implicaba mantener una

*performance* de género que implicaba cierta conducta que les permitiera continuar siendo relacionadas con el símbolo de la Mujer Mexicana, mientras introducían matices que redefinieran este símbolo hacia uno más favorable a su género. Este *performance* envolvía una serie de actitudes y comportamientos administrados por el sistema hegemónico que imponía feminidad en las mujeres y que al mismo tiempo exigía ciertos comportamientos masculinos a los hombres. (22)

Villarroel goes on to explain that this discursive strategy often times meant that these women's ideas came across as conservative but nonetheless they were still feminist in their goal of creating better opportunities for women.

Despite this woman-centered approach in Garza's *crónica*, in 1922 in the article "La union de la Prensa Asociada de los Estados" from *Alma Femenina* it is revealed that Garza is the sole female member of the Prensa Asociada de los Estados<sup>7</sup>. What this means for Mexican female journalists, for future female journalists and for the barrier broken by Garza cannot be quantified. Additionally, this same piece demonstrates an awareness on the part of Garza of what this means, and she calls out to other women, "Y ojalá, que este ejemplo sirva para otras mujeres y que lentamente se vayan percatando las escritoras de la falta que está haciendo en el periodismo su actuación" (4). Here we clearly see that Garza appreciates what it means to be given access to male-only spaces while in another *crónica* she advocates for women to create their own equivalent spaces.

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<sup>7</sup> The history of the Prensa Asociada de los Estados can be found in their webpage: "A principios de los años 30, surge en México una Organización Periodística que buscó la unión de gran cantidad de periódicos diarios de toda la República, para formar un verdadero movimiento que pugnara por la libertad de prensa y para tener representatividad mayúscula ante los tres poderes del Gobierno Constitucional. Esta agrupación se llamó Prensa Asociada de los Estados (PAE), y logró en gran medida reunir un buen número de diarios de todo el país."

Again, we must return to the idea that Garza is straddling between different views about women in journalism, views that evolve while her own position within journalism changes.

Ultimately, the following analysis of Garza's *crónicas* seek to expose those interstitial spaces that expose the complex relationship the author had with the most salient topics of the time, with the *México de Afuera* ideology and with the genre she worked with.

### **Dialectical Strategies: *Crónicas* and Themes**

In approaching the *crónicas* by Garza in *El Heraldito de México* and *La Época* there are specific literary strategies that need to be defined and explored. One of these literary strategies frequently present in Garza's *crónicas* can be described by using Mary Louise Pratt's term *autoethnographic text* which she defines as, "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (2). For Garza she engages with the representations of women as feminine, homely and destined to motherhood to speak about education, politics, poverty and other important topics of the time. By using the genre of the *crónica* that has already been used by men to describe and in some cases castigate women, Garza is using the same literary vehicle used by the hegemonic group (in this case men) to write about the women in her community which is precisely the premise of Pratt's investigation with regards to autoethnographic works:

Rather they involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations

intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding.

Autoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speakers own community. Their reception is thus highly indeterminate. Such texts often constitute a marginalized groups point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture. (2)

By taking on and using the language already in use by male *cronistas* to describe women in their *crónicas*, Garza is able to enter into the world of the *crónica* as a non-threatening figure who seems to echo the discourse of her male counterparts. A closer reading and a reading of the margins of her *crónicas* demonstrates Garza's use of varying strategies to insert a message not necessarily feminine or traditional. The idea that Garza is working with the tools of the male conservative hegemony, which controls the press, allows one to read her *crónicas* in a more nuanced way and in a way similar to the idea of *auto ethnographic texts*. Although Pratt uses this term to refer to the indigenous mimicking the literary structures of the conqueror, women had to also use the literary models accessible to them to talk about themselves, even if this model was not of their own creation:

Autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with those texts. Autoethnographic texts are not, then, what are usually thought of as autochthonous forms of expression or self-representation . . . Rather they involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or the conqueror. (Pratt, 2)

What will be explored ahead are the ways that Garza appropriated the genre of the *crónica* and the terminology already in use by her male-counterparts in order to create her own discourse about womanhood and other topics.

Another facet of the literary strategies observed in Garza's work is developed and explored in Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Opressed*. Based on Garza's work in *El Imparcial* it would seem that she is indeed simply positioning herself in line with the *México de Afuera* school of thought, but when one encounters certain changes in tone, topic and writing in her later work in other newspapers, one is left to wonder what literary strategies, if any, are at play. Did Garza drastically change her views or was she consciously navigating her way within and around the dominant ideology of the *México de Afuera* ideology? Perhaps, as Sandoval states, "This process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront or speak to power – and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary – is a method for survival" (29).

In this regard, writers like Garza appear to create a contradictory duality that places their work within and against dominant ideology. In the following analysis there will be examples of Garza producing an apparently traditional discourse about motherhood, femininity, religion and other traditional *México de Afuera* topics while actually simultaneously providing a contrary view about the same topics:

The idea here, that the citizen-subject can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to "break with ideology" while at the same time *also* speaking in, and from within, ideology, is an idea that lays the philosophical foundations

enabling us to make the vital connects between the seemingly disparate social and political aims. . . differential consciousness . . . permits functioning within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology. (Sandoval, 43)

Essentially what are observed in Garza's work are at times a chronological transformation and the development of the strategy of speaking from within the *México de Afuera* paradigm as a means to put forth alternatives ideas about women, social issues and class that go against that same ideology.

### **Social Class: Working for the Working**

If the analysis of Garza's *crónicas* in *El Imparcial* demonstrates an elitist Garza who consciously places herself far from and above the Mexican working-class, a close reading of her work in *El Heraldito de México* and *La Época* reveals a different kind class consciousness on the part of the author. In what follows, *crónicas* that reveal a complex vision about class will be studied and Garza's shift between opposing views will be discussed. Taking into account that *México de afuera* authors are defined by their harsh critique of the working-class and by a chastising tone, it becomes evident that Garza does not fit neatly into this school of thought.

Initially there are subtle moments in which Garza identifies with the working-class as seen in a reflection on the anniversary of Mexico's independence: "Festividades del centenario, --digo yo--, cuando apenas podemos comer un pedazo de pan que nos avientan de arriba" ("Las fiestas centenarias, 5). The author does not position herself as an elite that talks about the poor of Mexico; she speaks from a working-class position from which she looks up to see the rich and elite of Mexico. In this sense and as a



reflection of her own life, Garza moves between having formed part of an elite class when married and living in Mexico but ultimately identifying with the working-class when she becomes a single mother who has to work in journalism to survive in the United States. Yet while she identifies with the working-class in one piece, she distances herself in another. Her awareness of her privileged upbringing is used by María Luisa Garza as the reason she is now able to view philanthropy as essential to her Mexican identity. Garza admits that she is not a part of the Mexican working class she defends but not belonging to this group does not mean she is unable to empathize with them. This empathy allows her to see the need for action: “No soy tampoco una mujer nacida entre ese pueblo a quien defiende y por el que ruego...mi cuna y mi infancia no han sabido jamás del dolor ni de la necesidad” (5). This can be read as either Garza’s attempt to clearly situate herself as not part of the working class or as Garza’s idea that one must not necessarily belong to the working class in order to come to their defense. Lastly and in the vein of the themes of belonging and class, one of the more interesting commentaries made by María Luisa Garza about class is found in the article “Por qué acepté la presidencia de la Cruz Azul” published in *El Heraldo de México* on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1922. Here she clarifies that her work with the working-class does not imply her lowering her own status as an educated elite: “Yo no me he rebajado hasta esas clases casi analfabetas...antes bien, las he alzado hasta mí” (Garza, 5). While this reiterates class difference and highlights her elite status, one must not lose sight that Garza has revealed that upward mobility is possible, thus removing the barrier between the working class and the elite through education. Even though her advocacy for class equality does not rely on respecting the working-class but does imply that they become educated so that they can

joining the elite class, this idea of the class boundaries being malleable is a departure from the elitist discourse that reinforced the distance between the elite and working-class through their affinity of the *México de afuera* ideology and through a discourse that made fun of the working-class: “The *cronistas* tried to whip their community into conformity, poking fun at common folks” (Kanells & Martell, 45).

Whereas Garza’s identification with the working-class is a bit weak, her critique of the elite presents a stronger stance on class. The most studied *cronistas* have been categorized as elite exiled intellectuals who write *crónicas* from a position of power looking down upon their readers<sup>8</sup>; Garza’s discourse does not precisely fit this description due to her constant critique of the elite. In “Un amigo de los mexicanos” from *El Heraldo de México* published on March 29th, 1922 Garza keeps in line with this idea and as a warning to young Mexican immigrants she explains why she would not send these men to ask for the help of a “rich person”: “Yo sé bien que si los mando a un millonario nada hará por ellos, pero si los mando a Mr. Purcell, sin duda se inquietará por su suerte, buscando aquí o allá alguna colocación para mi protegido contemporáneo.” (5) It is important to note that according to Garza, Mr. Purcell is considered a model citizen due to his rise from humble beginnings to a position of power within Mexico’s train corporations; it would appear that Garza is working with two archetypes of the rich: an elite class that is actively engaged in philanthropy and service for fellow Mexican immigrants versus an elite class that is disengaged and apathetic to their compatriots. The latter is often the kind that writes humorous *crónicas*, since they poke fun at and judge the working class whose lack of education and high culture make all Mexican

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<sup>8</sup> See Kanellos, Nicolás. “Cronistas and Satire in Early Twentieth Century Hispanic Newspapers.” *MELUS* 23 (1998): 3-25.

immigrants look bad to their American counterparts. Continuing to lash out at the rich, Garza accompanies a nurse to see firsthand the poverty-stricken Mexican immigrants of San Antonio. In her *crónica* “La cauda de la miseria” published in *El Herald de México* on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1922, she critiques the elite Mexican exiles for not being willing to extend a helping hand to their fellow Mexicans:

Es la caridad de la mujer americana, porque en San Antonio, Texas, hay mansiones palaciegas de los refugiados rebeldes y de banqueros que temen la revolución y prefieren egoístamente venir a consumir aquí su “spleen” donde sus millones no corran riesgo...porque en San Antonio hay automóviles de mexicanos que importan más de diez mil dólares cada uno y...no hay una casa Mexicana de auxilios.... (5)

Imbedded in this critique of the lack of contribution to society by the elite Mexican class is, again, an admiration for American culture and in particular its practice of altruism. This type of acknowledgement of a trait of American culture that Mexican’s are encouraged to emulate also contrasts with the traditional México de Afuera *cronista* discourse which sought to ridicule such admiration:

It was the *cronista's* job to fan the flames of nationalism and to enforce the ideology of *México de afuera*. *Cronistas* had to battle the influence of Anglo-Saxon immorality and Protestantism and to protect against the erosion of the Spanish language and Mexican culture with equally religious fervor. But this was done not from the bully pulpit but through sly humor and a burlesque of fictional characters who represented general ignorance or who were adopting Anglo ways as superior

to those of the Hispanics (Kanellos, 10).

Along with a critique of the upper classes, María Luisa Garza also critiques the structure of Mexican charities for using social events and other extravagant means to “help the poor.” Garza distances herself from her own elite demographic and finds the process of these charitable organizations disdainful:

Se instalan pomposas que blasonan de caridad, que se informan como enfermeras y que ponen reclamos en los periódicos y engañan con tanto ruido a los que nunca se toman el trabajo de descender hasta los barrios que yo he visto, donde nunca una de estas mujeres piadosas (¿) se sienta a la cabecera de un enfermo ni llega con su canasta de provisión al brazo.

(5)

This point becomes interesting as Garza is considered a member of the intellectual elite, yet constructs her own identity apart from this group. In this sense, she is claiming to be in touch with reality while her counterparts look from above. In the previous chapter on the study of the genre of the *crónica*, the *cronista* was defined as someone who looks down upon their readers and instructs them on behavior: In contrast, in Garza’s *crónicas* the *cronista* is looking down upon Mexican intellectual and wealthy elites and is instructing them on appropriate behavior. The author clearly departs from the traditional *crónica* that seeks to educate the working-class Mexican on appropriate behavior.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the traditional *crónica* sought to demean American culture as it

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<sup>9</sup> See Kanellos, Nicolás. “Cronistas and Satire in Early Twentieth Century Hispanic Newspapers.” *MELUS* 23 (1998): 3-25.

was seen as invasive and a threat to the *México de Afuera* nationalist agenda<sup>10</sup> but Garza chooses to praise American women and their work within the community to help the less fortunate. The author's *crónicas* that critique American culture demonstrate that she does not simply and completely admire said culture; what this does demonstrate is Garza's nuanced stance on American culture, a stance that is much more complex than the one dimensional critique of American culture seen in traditional male *crónicas*. Garza is able to distinguish between those things of American culture that Mexicans should emulate and those things that are detrimental to the Mexican community. Another example of Garza's critique of the elites is found in the article "Escuela...Luz Redentora!" from *La Época* published on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1921. In this piece the author calls upon the elite of her community to do more to fund schools to educate the poor: "Enseñemos al pueblo. Abramos escuelas, paguemos al maestro" (13). Garza's concerns with the elite's waste of their resources and time is also a recurring theme: "Cuando se piensa también, en tanto zángano que en los ministerios, puliéndose las uñas pasan las horas muertas --no puede menos de sentirse que los maestros, se mueran materialmente de hambre en su hogar, sin humor para explicar al niño sus clases" (13). Again Garza is constructing a message about class that advocates for educating the masses and urges the elite to do their part in this. Whether through her understated identification with the working-class or her harsh critique of the elite, Garza's discourse on class does not align with traditional *México de afuera* ideology. She struggles with her past as a part of the elite in Mexico, her status as working-class woman in San Antonio and her simultaneous privilege as one of a few women who work in journalism.

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<sup>10</sup>. "It was the *cronista*'s job to fan the flames of nationalism and to enforce the ideology of "*México de afuera*" (Kanellos, 45).

Therefore, what most distinguishes María Luisa Garza from her male counterparts, aside from her gender, is her movement away from humor and/or harsh critique and lack of understanding of the working class. She aligns herself with the working-class, “¡Estudia, elévate-- vive! Y yo estaré siempre contigo, y yo iré a tu vera, y yo reiré cuando rías y lloraré cuando llores.” (“Escuela...Luz Redentora!”, 5). Garza demonstrates not only empathy but also admiration for her fellow working-class Mexicans. In “La verdadera mujer honrada” (*La Época* 10 Jul. 1921), Garza publishes an ode to working-class women by dismantling the innate honor of elite women and admiring the honor earned through the personal tribulations and ultimate survival of working class women. Using the profiles of two women who have survived domestic violence and poverty, the author presents what she considers true honor. Garza reveals a position that does not attribute honor to social class; instead, she develops an argument for the identification of honor in the lives of everyday women surviving perilous situations. Perhaps because of her restrictions as a female *cronista* who could not report political news with regards to working-class issues, she is able to approach the topic through the lens of personal stories that touch on themes relevant to working class-women: domestic violence and poverty. It is precisely this unique touch to the topic of class that Garza sets herself apart from other *cronistas* of the time because of her empathy, respect and admiration for the working-class coupled with harsh critiques of an elite class unwilling to truly help those in need.

### **Loreley’s Revolution**

For Mexican nationals the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by the instability brought on by the Mexican Revolution. Spanish-language newspapers in

the United States not only served as fountains of information about the war but also as sites of resistance or support with regards to the politics of the time. María Luisa Garza “Loreley’s” stance on the Revolution as expressed in her *crónicas* reveals a discourse of peace more than a specific political affiliation. Unlike other Mexican elites, her argument against the revolution does not stem from a sense of entitlement as an elite intellectual displaced by the revolution but instead is born out of a desire to see Mexico unified and providing education for the masses as a mode of reaching peace. For Garza, unity through education is the key to Mexico’s future: “... festejemos el centenario con la unión de todos los mexicanos, con el cese de una guerra fratricida y criminal...con la apertura de escuelas donde se ilustre a la raza y se le enseñe a dar los primeros pasos sobre el camino de la paz.” (“Las fiestas centenarias,” 5) Here Vasconcelo’s influence on Garza via their long friendship is clearly seen. As Minister of Education, Vasconcelo sought to bring unity to Mexico through the power of cultural pride and education. Adding to Garza’s political discourse, she produces *crónicas* that critique the Bolshevik influence in Mexico and the worker strikes which appears to fall in line with the *México de afuera* paradigm. This notion is problematic because Garza does not offer up these critiques through the lens of elitism; her political leanings against the revolution and Bolshevik ideology are born out of the idea that political turmoil and the Mexican Revolution have only worsened the working-class’ situation. For her the working-class has been fooled into thinking that this is their war when in reality they are, once again, the victims: “... en aquel ayer, el pueblo, el campesino, tenía hogar aunque miserable...ahora, no tiene ni ese hogar tan siquiera, porque los cañones han arrasado hasta con la última brizna de paja en sus endobles viviendas” (5). The degree to which

this quote is sincere and not merely the political strategy of an elitist attempting to appease the working-class by reminding them of how “stable” and “better” things used to be, cannot fully measured. While Garza did express conservative and Porfirista views on many topics as seen by the work of Dr. Gabriela Baeza Venture, she also did a lot of social activism (see chapter four) and journalistic work in support of the working-class’ plight. Could it be possible that Garza supported Porfirio Díaz but her support was not necessarily a complete support of his political views as it was the support of an era during which there was stability; the stability does mean social equality; it means that the working-class were not submitted to the violence of the revolution. It would almost appear as a choice between the lesser of two evils: unfair social discrepancies or movement toward fairness at the cost of constant violence and death. For her the value of Díaz resides in the fact that during his presidency and/or dictatorship as she deemed Mexico peaceful even if under the systemic repression of Díaz: “Nadie se acuerda de aquello...nadie se acuerda de que con Porfirio Díaz, se fue la paz y la única gloria de nuestro México amado.” (3)

Additionally for Garza, the Revolution and the loss of Díaz as their leader has mostly affected women negatively:

Precisamente porque soy mujer y es a la mujer a la que más ha afectado la caída de Porfirio Díaz, por eso imprecó y por eso nunca habrá bastantes lágrimas...y hay mujeres hambrientas y hay más prostíbulos abiertos; único albergue de la mujer, cuando ésta no tiene un padre que la sostenga ni un marido que la guíe... (3)



Garza's uses the effects of the revolution on women as a strategy for speaking about a topic deemed taboo for women to speak about: politics. She uses her womanhood as the very justification for her to speak about the current political struggle in her country. This strategy of balancing commentary about politics and remaining within a paradigm of femininity is seen throughout her *crónicas* and also points to the idea that she does not necessarily share Díaz political agenda but instead is an evaluation of the situation for the poor and women during Díaz' regime and now with the revolution. This use of her status as a woman to speak about the current politics of her country is also seen in an episode in which a Mexican flag gifted to the president of the Pan American Round Table is consequently rejected by the mayor of Philadelphia for display. With regards to this encounter, Garza decides to speak about women's attempts to use their femininity to end the political turmoil in Mexico: "...en su corazón de mujer, no hubo ni pudo haber jamás, otra idea que la de inefable de ternura femenina, la que podía ser quizá, una solución al conflicto actual de ambos países" ("La bandera y Mrs. Griswold", 4). Garza inserts women into the political dialog about the Mexican Revolution by highlighting how said revolution affects them and the qualities they can bring to the table when speaking about peace. Ultimately, Garza rejects the revolution as positive for the poor or for women and it is the latter constituency that is the last of the themes analyzed in her work.

#### **Feminist Femininity: La mujer de talento**

Within the realm of themes related to womanhood and matters of the feminine, María Luisa Garza fluctuates between seemingly traditional views of femininity and more modern ideas on marriage, beauty, gender and womanhood. As stated before,

Garza's discourse in *El Imparcial* during her first years in San Antonio have depicted a traditional view of femininity and feminism and it is this traditional construction of gender that allows Baeza Ventura to position María Luisa Garza within the tradition of the *México de afuera* philosophy. The *crónicas* after 1920 reveal an evolution in thought that produces ideas that do not construct traditional views about women. This coincides with the changes in the United States with regards to women:

The symbol of the "New Woman" was replaced by the "flapper," complete with short skirts, bobbed hair, and bound breasts. The flapper was a product of the rising popularity of places of commercial leisure, of the success of women in gaining the vote, and of the national sense of emotional release from the horrors of World War I." (Banner, 71)

While these images portrayed an opportunity for a writer like Garza to experiment with novel ideas about womanhood, the 1920s were also a time of revitalizing conservative thought as a result of the Bolshevik revolution: "Despite the rebellion of youth, political and social conservatism was strong in the 1920s. At the beginning of the decade, the Bolshevik takeover of Russia incited a national paranoia about internal subversion" (Banner, 72). In the following passages, Garza takes on and questions such ideas as marriage, beauty, femininity and education with regards to women and does so in a nuanced and, at times, subtle way that is reflective of the contradictory images of the 1920s liberal and simultaneously conservative discourses.

As a Mexican woman of an elite status, Garza was expected to and indeed did reject feminism, as is evident in her work in *El Imparcial*, but as stated before, the relationship women of the twentieth century had with the term "feminist" cannot be the

sole indicator of their views being feminism. Like most women, María Luisa Garza's relationship with feminism is complex.

During the presidential elections of 1928, she publishes a *crónica* in support of her friend José Vasconcelos. In the piece, another angle of Garza's thoughts on feminism is appreciated through her remarks about the Sociedad Juvenil Feminista. This *crónica* is not only used to show Garza's support of Vasconcelos' nomination for president of Mexico but also to demonstrate her support of the Sociedad Juvenil Feminista. Despite other *crónicas* in which the author seems to steer clear of the term feminist and appears to degrade the term, here Garza aligns herself with and encourages the work done by these young women: "...vayan a esas jóvenes mujeres mi sincera admiración, por su gesto de bravura y de optimismo. De ellas es el mundo, de ellas será la victoria!" ("Vasconcelos, candidato de la juventud", 3). Garza's brand of feminism is critical of women who propose concepts like "free love": "Las mujeres sin la falsa emancipación de una Elvira Carrillo que en un Congreso Feminista, pedía el amor libre; pueden si, llevar a sus hombres – como ellas dicen – desde el hogar, a una vida fructífera..." ("Vasconcelos, candidato de la juventud", 3). María Luisa Garza constructs her own conservative feminist position against what she considers as the extreme feminist and liberal agenda of free love; the way to true emancipation for women is paved through the use of the tools already at the disposition of women and from feminine spaces like the home. The author positions these feminine spaces in step with the Mexican nationalist goals of the time; she is using feminine spaces (private spaces) to insert women into issues on the national stage (public spaces). It is this use of the tools at hand that is seen throughout the rest of

Garza's writing; the author's take on feminism is conservative but nonetheless feminist since its goal is to achieve better conditions for the female sex.<sup>11</sup>

More than writing directly about feminism, what makes Garza important to the study of Hispanic feminist practices in the United States is her discourse on beauty, motherhood, marriage and all things traditionally feminine presented with a feminist inclination. Like the sort of feminism discussed in chapter one, Garza engages in a more subdued discourse to call into question traditional ideas about femininity. Beginning with a *crónica* that is dedicated to her daughter, Garza demonstrates her complex views on womanhood as she attempts to offer her daughter advice. Her commentary on motherhood begins by stating that it is in fact torture: "... comprenderás entonces, el tormento indecible de la mujer, cuando Dios, la eleva al sublime pedestal de la maternidad" ("Acuérdate de mí", 5). In one sentence Garza manages to express what honor motherhood is while simultaneously describing what an unspeakable torment it is. Before reading this as another old-fashioned model of motherhood in which a good mother is one that continuously suffers for her children, the *crónica* soon reveals that the author wishes something better for her own daughter: "Mi vida, mi angelito encantador. No quisiera que fueses tan buena! Tengo miedo de tu bondad, tengo miedo de tu candor, tengo miedo de tu alma de serafín" ("Acuérdate de mí", 5). Not only does the author's *crónica* depict motherhood as torture and not something she wishes for her daughter but the piece also curses beauty. It is her child's beauty that will be her curse as María Luisa

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<sup>11</sup> The definition of feminism that this work is applying can be found in chapter one and in the following quote, "Although there are many definitions of feminism and some disagreement concerning a specific definition, there is agreement on two core principles underlying any concept of feminism. First, feminism concerns equality and justice for all women, and it seeks to eliminate systems of inequality and injustice in all aspects of women's lives ... Second, feminism is inclusive and affirming of women; it celebrates women's achievements and struggles and works to provide a positive and affirming stance toward women and womanhood." (Susan & Lee, 10)

Garza considers men to be insatiable in their quest to conquer beauty. Instead of embracing feminine virtues, these are presented as things to fear and as undesirable. Motherhood and beauty as important aspects of femininity are critiqued but the *crónica* is abruptly interrupted and a shift in tone and message is produced. The *crónica* suddenly presents beauty as women's tool to change men and ends with the author encouraging her daughter to sacrifice herself throughout life in order to honor her virtue: "Tu belleza puede servir para convertir en buenos a muchos hombres que no tienen un angel que les enseñe el camino del Paraíso" (5). The use of the *angel* constructs woman as angelic and reveals a reference to religious imagery that is conservative. It becomes interesting to note the rejection of beauty and motherhood within the same text that encourages women to play traditional religious like roles for the sake of "saving" men. These contradictory messages and tone about feminine virtues like motherhood and beauty point to Garza's awareness of her limits as a female *cronista*. Could she publish an article that completely criticized femininity and motherhood? In a more restrained way, Garza manages to insert her critique into the consciousness of her readers even if she ends the piece by backtracking. Her words and thoughts about the limits of motherhood and beauty have been inserted into the psyche of her female readers. It is as if she has certain critical views of femininity that are veiled by a benign *crónica* dedicated to her daughter. As with the theoretical positions explored earlier, María Luisa Garza works from within patriarchy and uses its tools to navigate her way around a dialectal path that she creates to propose non-traditional ideas about the feminine.

This critique of feminine virtues is not an isolated event; in "Cosas de la vida" Garza constructs as a cautionary tale about the temporality and dangers of beauty via the

story of a rich Mexican woman's descent from the elite class to the working class. Instead of honoring beauty as one of the ultimate virtues of femininity, the author decides to depict said characteristic as futile and often as a curse. In this case, the widow's beauty causes her demise since she is forced into choosing between "prostituting" herself with her employer or being poor: "Tengo...lo que no debía tener hija ... lo que para nada sirve en esta vida . . . (5). There is absolutely no value in beauty for the protagonist's survival in life, and this sentiment echoes the sentiment of Garza's other *crónicas* in which feminine traits are negatively depicted. In the end, Garza respects and admires the widow who would rather die of hunger before falling prey to her own beauty. Unlike the discourse of conservative feminists of the time who call women to embrace femininity and beauty, Garza depicts beauty as detrimental to woman's independence and/or success. Garza warns her readers that beauty is useful in finding a rich suitor but that it can also lead them down a road of indecency. The author's discourse straddles between the traditional view of decency as essential to womanhood and the more modern interpretation of beauty as damaging for women's emancipation.

Beauty is not the only feminine attribute that is dismantled by Garza; in "Los vestidos de novia" she exposes a complex analysis of the institution of marriage. Her argument against marriage is carefully crafted to be directed towards young brides,: "Esta niña está anhelando el traje blanco...Yo sé bien que esa mujercita, no piensa para nada en los deberes que el matrimonio trae consigo" (6). It is interesting that disguised as a warning only for young brides and not as a an attack on marriage as a whole, Garza states the following: "El matrimonio es el fin de la mujer" (6). This strong anti-marital statement is immediately followed by a two-sentence attack on women who choose not to

get married. "...solteronas necias, imprudentes y vanas..." (6). This contradictory paragraph best displays Sandoval's idea of strategies that seem contradictory but that are actually dialectal tools for those working from within dominant ideologies. Therefore, for Garza to make such a statement about marriage being the end of women while at the same time criticizing single women leaves the reader with an uneasy interpretation of the *crónica*. Furthermore, Garza describes marriage as women going from one domineering owner to another: "No es lo mismo ser mandadas por el padre, que ser reciamente obligadas por el marido para que os dobleguéis a sus caprichos" (6). The amount of discourse dedicated to establishing that Garza does not believe all husbands are bad and that her critique is solely of the marriage of young women are both a miniscule part of the piece in comparison to the paragraphs dedicated to describing the disadvantages of marriage for women. For the author, the trials and tribulations brought on by marriage cannot be remedied by a spouse: "Hay dolores que no quita un marido por bueno que sea, hay penas que las más dulces caricias no pueden deshacer" (6). The ideological duality that Garza explores in her text is that of the wedding fantasy versus (according to the author) the cruel reality of marriage. The radical proposal that marriage is the end of women would liken her, at this particular time, to the feminists promoting free love; interestingly enough, this is the same type of radical thinking Garza abominates in other pieces.

Within the same topic of marriage and relationships, Garza once again demonstrates a less than positive view on marriage in "La Rima Eterna." Set up as an anecdote, María Luisa Garza tells of her encounter with a young man who complains about his search for a woman to understand and love him. Despite Garza being known

for steering clear of humor and sarcasm, this *crónica* demonstrates a rare side of the author by having both present. The piece begins with the young male protagonist expressing his desires to find true love but he is quickly interrupted: “Basta, le he interrumpido, me está usted indilgando ‘la rima eterna’, es decir la queja eternal que todos lo hombres nos cuentan a las mujeres cuando aún brillan los ojos con la fosforescencia de la juventud...” (13). To add insult to injury, not only does Garza poke fun of this young man’s search for true love but also rejects and laughs at his advances toward her: “Yo no pude contenerme y solté el trapo a reír” (13). What follows is a critique of marriage but more specifically it is a critique of men’s frivolity and manipulation of discourse to disguise their marital indiscretions. In a rare and direct move, Garza makes mention of the societal constraints on women: “... las mujeres estamos ‘incomprendidas’, lo que sucede es que las leyes sociales nos vedan de andar siempre en pos de ese ser que nos ‘comprenda.’” That men seek “to be understood” signifies for the author that men, and to a certain extent society, define women’s role in marriage as the person who will hold the relationship together and “understand.” “El matrimonio, señoritas que lo anheláis, es la vida en común de dos seres de distintos sexos, es una amistad que si la mujer sabe poetizar, puede durar muchos años a pesar de los deslices del marido, que siempre deben perdonarse y nunca tomarse en cuenta” (13). Here Garza’s satire reaches a climax that departs from her typically serious and soft tone in the majority of her *crónicas*. The last image the reader is left with is a humorous vision of her male interlocutor simply staring at her after her tirade and walking off without saying a word,, to which the witty Garza responds, “... allá va--camino de alguna incauta mozuela, cuyos pocos años o falta de talento le impiden ver qué para cuando eso



de que ‘aún no he tropezado, hasta hoy, con la mujer ideal’, nos respetan, ya ha salido de esos labios, incontables veces, la misma frase, el mismo verso--“la rima eternal” (13). If the theory of Garza’s discourse evolving across time holds true, this *crónica* demonstrates how different an older and experienced Garza responds to traditional institutions in comparison to a young and recently immigrated Garza at the beginning of the twentieth century.

To conclude one can observe examples of Garza’s appropriation of the feminine and her use of it as a source of power for women. In one of her most fascinating *crónicas*, María Luisa Garza tells the story of a young girl whose father is murdered and who then seeks out the murderer and kills him with a revolver. The juxtaposition of an innocent child and the violent crime she commits sets this *crónica* apart. As Garza describes the heinous crime committed by this girl, she alternates between and intertwines the details of the crime and reminders of the girl’s innocence and purity: “...puso la manecita inviolada, un revolver para cumplir la venganza de su corazón. ¡Pobrecita María del Pilar!” (5). Garza believes the child’s status as female should have been taken into consideration; the author claims that in the U.S. the status of a criminal as young woman would have exempted the protagonist from paying for this crime while Mexico does not protect women in the same way. While there are pieces that steer clear of celebrating traditional feminine characteristics, such as motherhood and beauty, there are pieces like this one that relies on the feminine virtues of innocence and purity as a defense for a crime. Additionally and inadvertently, Garza is demonstrating how far a scorned woman will go to defend her loved ones. It is precisely the child’s innocence and purity that were the impetus for her violent action: “... en tu inocencia pensaste que

sólo otra sangre lavaría la sangre vertida” (5). This image is also important in that a pure young girl has usurped the man’s role in seeking vengeance and killing those who harm their family. In this role reversal, the male figure is the victim and his young daughter obtains vengeance. On the one hand the author is presenting an image of a violent girl with whom she sides, thus breaking with traditional views of women as weak and non-violent while on the other hand she is advocating for special treatment for this girl on the grounds of the need for society to protect women. Juxtaposing the innocent “Virgencita” child with her violent crime constructs a disturbing and irreconcilable duality that is observed time and again throughout María Luisa Garza’s work.

Continuing with the mixture of the feminine and the powerful, Garza compares modern day elite women to vampires in the *crónica* “Los vampiros del siglo.” Through a complex series of arguments that simultaneously attribute power and frivolity to women Garza depicts these female vampires as overpowering and seducing men who ultimately lose their fortunes to them. What becomes problematic in what would otherwise seem like a portrait of women as strong is that the metaphor of vampire is used to accuse elite women of being frivolous and superficial while depicting men as mere victims of these women’s monetary aspirations. Conflicting to say the least is the idea of men as weak and women as predators within the context of women being “golddiggers.” Like the bulk of Garza’s work, one finds within the same piece seemingly contradicting ideas about gender and women. On the one hand it is progressive of Garza to depict women as the stronger sex: “... las vampiresas, cierran los ojos y exhausta la sangre de la víctima, le absorben lo ultimo que le resta: el honor” (11). On the other hand she falls into the misogynist idea of women as superficial, materialistic and seeking to benefit from the

work and sacrifice of men who preserve honor. The idea of honor resting on women also confirms *México de Afuera* views on women and nation. Additionally, Garza equates these vampire women to modern women in a gesture that seeks to subtly critique modernity's influence on young elite women who have strayed into the path of consumerism and upward mobility through marriage: "La esposa, que sin talento, sin alma y sin amor hacia el compañero de su vida gasta en un día lo que ha ganado en un mes...a no dudarlo, es la moderna vampiresa..." (11). Another point of interest is Garza's advice to young elite men to seek out modest middle-class ladies as their future wives. In what seems to be an alignment with middle-class values, Garza advocates for nobility of these women. In this case, the author's work cannot be read in a one dimensional way because the piece finds itself entangled amidst varying points of view regarding modernity and woman. In this particular case, Garza takes the figure of the vampire to expose women's power over men with regards to marriage and economic status. Negative or not, that women can overpower men is indeed a departure from traditional views about women's inferiority to men.

As a last example of this, María Luisa Garza's "Se bueno...muñeco mío" revisits the idea of women's power over men through the use of a doll metaphor. Similar to the author's vampire metaphor, this piece depicts women as capable of molding their male partners. Using a porcelain doll and a raggedy monkey doll, Garza demonstrates that women hold in their hands the power to transform and maintain men as good citizens: "El hombre es un niño en manos de una mujer inteligente" (11). While this image supposes women's superiority to men, it is conflicting to find Garza reiterating that women are responsible for men's actions since it underscores the responsibilities of

women with regards to nation as the preservers of culture through guiding the men in their lives. Again one is confronted with images of women in control but women who are relegated to the task of preserving socio-normative roles that ultimately leave women in the same inferior position. In the parable, the monkey doll is revealed to represent a male friend of Garza who would have succumbed to corruption and power had he not remembered the advice of his wife to “always be good”: “El hombre, a pesar de su fuerza, a pesar de su virilidad, a pesar de su valor, tiene horas de desaliento en que sólo el recuerdo de una mujer querida, puede salvarlo (11). The conundrum becomes the idea that women are powerful enough to influence men, but this same power limits them to playing a passive role supporting men from within the confines of matrimony and the home.

## **Conclusion**

The history of the *crónica* tells the story of a genre that has evolved and transformed across time and geography. What holds true of all the derivatives of the *crónica* is its use by writers as reflection and commentary on social mores and habits. It is precisely this function that can be seen with the *crónicas* found in Spanish-language newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the case of María Luisa Garza, the *crónica* as it was conceived and produced by Mexican male immigrants and exiles often held traditional views about gender, nation and society under the *México de Afuera* emblem. What became necessary when approaching this author’s work was taking into account her status as a woman and the possible dialectal tools she would employ to work within and against the *México de Afuera* ideology to express her own views and own brand of feminism.

It is precisely her work in *El Herald de México* and *La Época* that demonstrates how Garza has changed her messages from those on her earlier work in *El Imparcial*. Her writings develop more complex discourses on class, the Mexican Revolution and women's issues. The way Garza uses the interstices and margins of the *crónica* demonstrate her *differential consciousness* as she uses the discourses at her disposal as a Mexican woman journalist to write her own perspective about salient topics of the time. This manipulation of the genre is not necessarily present in the *crónicas* of her male contemporaries, as this need for discursive strategy is present for women writers who wished to depart from the norm when it came to class, politics and women's issues.

Once the work done by Dr. Gabriela Baeza Ventura is untied with these reflections and the rest of María Luisa Garza's *crónicas* up until the 1930s are also analyzed, we can get closer to understand the temporal and geographical changes that have been observed up to now. This is only the beginning of putting the pieces together of María Luisa Garza "Loreley's" journalistic legacy, which influences the ability to gather the journalistic legacy of the few other Hispanic female *cronistas* the first half of the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 3

### MEXICAN NATIONALISM THROUGH REVOLUTION AND TEMPERANCE:

#### TWO NOVELS BY MARÍA LUISA GARZA

Wisdom lies neither in fixity nor in change,  
but in the dialectic between the two.

Octavio Paz, *The Monkey Grammarian*

#### Historical Context: The Twentieth Century Mexican Novel

The first half of the twentieth century in Mexico was mostly occupied by the internal conflict of the Mexican Revolution. This war was the event that permeated and affected Mexico's culture, society and literary production during and after its occurrence: "La novela Mexicana del siglo XX estuvo dominada por el acontecimiento del siglo XX: la revolución social, política y cultural de 1910-1920" (Fuentes 109). Therefore, to speak about the novel in Mexico during the first half of the twentieth century is to speak of *avant garde* writers preoccupied with modernity, the Mexican Revolution and with modes of representation for the new post-revolutionary Mexican citizens who were to create a better Mexico. The common denominator for the many Mexican literary movements during the first decades of the twentieth century was the creation of narratives filled with commentary about the revolution itself while focusing on the nation-building process of Mexico: "In order to be incorporated into the twentieth-century Mexican canon novels needed to be interpreted as addressing issues of national concern" (Bowskill 5). Among the many literary traditions that were developed during

this period, the focus of the work here is on *naturalismo*<sup>1</sup> and the novel of the Mexican revolution which are the genres of the novels by María Luisa Garza that are studied here.

With this state of affairs in Mexican literature one has to wonder what the landscape was like for Mexican woman authors. Simply put: “Few women authors are included in the Mexican canon as it is represented in histories of Mexican literature” (Bowskill 3). The novels written about the Mexican Revolution most referenced are all from male novelists: Marian Azuela - *Los de abajo* (1913), Martín Luis Guzmán - *El águila y la serpiente* (1928) and *La sombra del caudillo* (1929) and Juan Rulfo - *Pedro Páramo* (1955). Furthermore, the anthologies focused on recuperating Mexican women’s work from the first half of the twentieth century have such titles as *Las voces olvidadas* and *Sin imágenes falsas, sin falsos espejos*; through these titles alone the sense that a genealogy of Mexican women’s literature, whether in Mexico or as products of a diaspora in other countries, is still being recovered and discussed. Specifically, for the period during which María Luisa Garza wrote the novels analyzed here, Bowskill offers an approach to understanding the apparent absence of work written by Mexican woman: “To be included in Mexico’s new, post-revolutionary canon a text had to be interpreted as furthering the goal of nation-building. In the aftermath of the revolution this was likely to mean that it was also State-building literature that furthered the political aims of the regime in power” (9). What did this mean for post-revolutionary woman authors in Mexico?

Woman-authored novels were rarely interpreted as being about the nation.

Furthermore, reviewers seeking nation-building literature were more likely

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed discussion of the characteristics of this movement follows when discussing Garza’s own naturalist novel, *Tentáculos de fuego*.

to adopt interpretive strategies which looked for meaning in the public and not in the private sphere. As a result, they frequently overlooked woman-authored texts which appeared to them to only relate to the private sphere and also ignored the significance of the private narratives which could be identified within male-authored texts. (Bowskill 12)

Moreover, women's representation in male-authored texts of the Mexican revolution did not give them prominent roles: "The lesson, so to speak, was quite clear: the revolution was a man's affair and women formed the decorative background for drawn-out confrontations that resulted in a nation of men with an attached reserve of women" (Monsiváis 19). The image of women in the nationalist and revolutionary literature was not the only problem women faced; what also became problematic was the interpretation of the work written by women:

In post-revolutionary Mexico the custodians of literary knowledge adopted an interpretive strategy which prioritized social value and national significance, both of which they associated with the public sphere, and it was against this standard that canonical literature would be measured for the remainder of the twentieth century (Bowskill 23-24).

It stands to reason that the work was two-fold; women were working against literary archetypes within the novels about revolutionary Mexico and they had to make the case for the importance of their own literary productions. And yet despite all of this, some Mexican female authors who wrote in post-revolutionary Mexico made their way into the Mexican literary canon. Among these are Nellie Campobello, Elena Garro and Rosario Castellanos. Even women in the United States who were either Mexican



themselves or whose narrations focused on post-revolutionary Mexico have begun to be included in any serious discussion of this literature; for example, Leonor Villegas de Magnón and Josefina Niggli. Slowly the stories women had to tell with regards to the Mexican revolution are being unearthed and placed into the appropriate socio-historical context within which they can be analyzed.

With regards to the author at the center of this work, María Luisa Garza, the following novels have been recuperated: *Los amores de Gaona* (1922), *La novia de Nervo* (1922), *Alas y quimeras* (1924), *Tentáculos de fuego* (1930), and *Soñando un hijo* (1937). There are two novels that were announced as forthcoming in a dictionary of writers from Nuevo León: *Más allá del bravo* and *Raza nuestra* (Braña Rubio 19). The scope of the work here encompasses *La novia de Nervo* and *Tentáculos de fuego* and does so based on the relevance of the themes presented in each with regards to nationalist ideologies and the possibility of comparison between the ways each novel approaches said themes.

In the analysis of Garza's journalistic work, her discourse is placed within and against the nationalist context of the *México de Afuera* ideology since this ideology informed the literary circle she has been associated with by scholars. The two novels reviewed here are also in dialog with nationalist agendas: the Anti-Alcohol/Temperance movement and the Mexican Revolution. The novels are engaging with these nationalist agendas and are written for citizens of Mexico, while the *crónicas* negotiated with the *México de Afuera* ideology that reflected the Mexican experience in the United States. Beyond a mere generic classification of her novels,<sup>2</sup> the following reflections focus on the ways in which María Luisa Garza's novels situate themselves within and against both

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<sup>2</sup> There is indeed a need for classification since these works have not been analyzed in a formal way.

the Temperance movement and the cultural post-revolutionary goals of twentieth century Mexico. What is found is along the lines of what Sandra Lorenzano expresses when speaking about Mexican women's literature: "Se trata de una literatura que se constituye de manera oblicua con respeto al discurso dominante, colándose por los intersticios de una realidad que tiende a excluir a la mujer" (362). Both novels force the reader to read between the lines and to find in those interstices a discourse negotiating with dominant ideology. For *La novia de Nervo* it is important to explore the manner in which Garza decides to speak of the Mexican Revolution through the experience of a drug addicted and domestically abused woman while not explicitly speaking about the conflict. Bowskill's theory of post-revolutionary nation-building as related to the public and private sphere will be of essence for this novel. On the other hand, *Tentáculos de fuego* also asks one to study the ways in which Garza reiterates while simultaneously questioning the nationalist agenda and discourse of the anti-alcohol movement in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Writing as a woman, María Luisa Garza is able to provide a point of view for Temperance and for the Mexican revolution that is out of reach and/or ignored by her male counterparts: "Pensar sobre los temas fundamentales que han preocupado a los intelectuales – la nación, la identidad, las raíces, el mestizaje, etc. - , pero haciéndolo desde un lugar *otro*, ha sido uno de los grandes logros de las escritoras mexicanas" (Lamas 362). Once again and as in her *crónicas*, María Luisa Garza tackles the salient topics of the time and provides a particular interpretation of their effects on women, children and other minorities. Like Lamas, Bowskill calls upon literary scholars to discover the appropriate literary tools with which to approach women's literature in

Mexico, given that analysis has privileged the male voice and mode of writing: “If we use alternative interpretive strategies to those adopted by contemporary reviewers then Mexican woman-authored texts can also be read as being about nation” (12). For the novels written by María Luisa Garza the ability to recognize what the margins and those spaces between the lines are saying becomes essential for understanding the Mexican revolution and subsequent Temperance movement from a woman’s perspective.

### **The Personal as Revolutionary: *La novia de Nervo* as a Novel of the Mexican**

#### ***Revolution***

*La novia de Nervo* tells the supposed true story<sup>3</sup> of a young morphine addicted and domestically abused Mexican-French woman: “Madeleine hablaba también con toda corrección el español; hija de una mexicana, su padre, galo netamente” (19). The story centers on her road to recovery, her struggles to leave her marriage while retaining custody of her son and lastly, her eventual participation and success in the French military as a pilot delivering mail. The great modernist poet of Mexico, Amado Nervo, appears as a figure of salvation for the protagonist Madeleine as she finds refuge in exchanging letters with him although they never actually meet<sup>4</sup>. The chapters move back and forth between Madeleine’s trials and tribulations and Nervo’s contemplation of life

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<sup>3</sup> According to the novel’s prologue the novel is based on a real life encounter the author had with a woman who identified herself as Amado Nervo’s girlfriend. This anonymous woman left Garza a journal with which the author wrote the book: “De aquel accidente resultó una mujer lesionada que conduje a mi casa. Tres días pasó en ella, y no la he vuelto a ver. Pero antes de partir, dejó en mis manos un libro de notas” (5). Research into this character was unable to verify its existence and thus it is likely that the prologue’s claim to be “based on a true story” is a literary tool employed by the author for dramatic effect.

<sup>4</sup> For Madeleine Amado Nervo saves her from her addiction: “Cada vez que llegaba del poeta una carta, la morfina era dejada en paz y cuando el recuerdo del vicio le atenaceaba, complacía en leer aquellas letras y al impulso de las palabras de suavidad y de ensueño, iba perdiéndose la fuerza avasalladora del deseo” (92).

and death<sup>5</sup> while caring for a young Spanish girl from the streets named Pimienta. The chapters dedicated to each of the character's stories are intertwined and connected through the letters they write each other. Although there is never an encounter between Nervo and Madeleine, Pimienta acts as a bridge between the two since Madeleine becomes her custodian upon Nervo's death and per his request via one of his letters. The novel concludes not only with Nervo's death but with Madeleine remaining as a single woman who will raise Pimienta in New York City and whose life mission is lived through the eventual establishment of a home for drug addicted women.

To make the case for *La novia de Nervo* as a novel of the Mexican Revolution it is necessary to understand how the novels of this genre have been classified as such and more specifically the role women's texts played. The novel of the Mexican Revolution is largely represented through the male voice, and of the works by women that have been considered important to the study of the literature of this time, Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho* has been slowly recovered from out of the shadow of the dominating male narratives. This lack of women's narrative in relation to the novel of the Mexican Revolution is explored by Niamh Thornton:

Of particular significance here is how male-biased many early representations of the Revolution were. Except for the autobiographical novels of Nellie Campobello ... the majority of novels up to Elena Garro's novel *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1964) dealt with male-centered versions of the experiences of the conflict (61).

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<sup>5</sup> Appropriate for the poet to contemplate life and death as these are major motifs of the modernist literary movement he belonged to. Amado Nervo reveals: "Hay algo muy lejos de aquí, que me llama...no sé si es la muerte que me lleva hacia el último viaje" (115).

Without the interpretive tools to approach novels written by woman about the Mexican Revolution, readers of *La novia de Nervo* are likely to be unable to fully grasp what the novel is attempting to do. For example, Robert McKee Irwin's *Mexican Masculinities* reviews the canonical novels of the Mexican Revolution, such as *Los de abajo*, *La sombra del caudillo* and *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!* among others; he even includes Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho*. He also provides a brief analysis of *La novia de Nervo*, but the novel is set aside under a section entitled "Literature beyond the Revolution: Women's Writing and Pop Fiction." Irwin concludes that in *La novia de Nervo*, "The only time the Mexican revolution is alluded to is in a moment of nostalgia for the old days before the tumult of the revolution" (142).<sup>6</sup> To add to the important work done by Irwin, it is imperative to note that the novel represents Mexico and its revolution in a more complex way beyond mere nostalgia and that *La novia de Nervo* provides fodder for making the case that it is a novel about the Mexican Revolution albeit not in the same way the male-authored novel represented the conflict. María Luisa Garza approaches the Mexican Revolution in a subtle, innovative and woman-centered way.

While we know that Madeleine is the embodiment of two cultural identities, French<sup>7</sup> and Mexican, she is depicted as more representative of Mexican culture and this is lamented by her husband: "¡Maldita la hora en que me fui a casar con esta mujer que más tiene de mexicana, que de francesa!" (Garza 81). In this sense, Madeleine, like many other female characters of Mexican nationalist literature, is Mexico and so the

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<sup>6</sup> Irwin also notes the fact that the novel mostly takes place in France. It is important to note that the mention of France or the French is limited to a few phrases that establish France's status as involved in the World War: "Corría el año 1914, la guerra mundial había estallado y Francia era el centro de las fuerzas aliadas" (Garza, 93). Beyond that, France is not a significant presence in the novel.

<sup>7</sup> The only time in the novel that Madeleine's French heritage is mentioned is in the mentioned quote about her father. Her French heritage is not mentioned while her gaze is constantly toward Mexico through her interaction with her maid and recurring theme of her dead Mexican mother.

woman as nation motif is present.<sup>8</sup> To add to this symbolism, Madeleine is configured as “every Mexican woman” when being imagined by Amado Nervo: “Una mujer impalpable cuya faz no poseía una precisión ni una línea fuerte que la señalara de todas las criaturas y que no obstante, tenía en el rostro algo celeste, algo divino que le asemejaba a la madre de Dios” (59). This additional reference to Madeleine as a personification of the Virgin Mary further makes clear that she is symbolic of Mexico not only through her Mexican maternal heritage but also because of her resemblance to such an important religious and Catholic image. In latter discussions, one will see that although Garza seems to be working with traditional images of women in Mexican culture, she ultimately deviates from this and presents a woman atypical to the novels of the Mexican Revolution.

The clearest example of Garza’s attempt to represent and talk about Mexico through the character of Madeleine is that she is constructed as a drug addicted young woman who is struggling for her well-being just like Mexico is depicted as an ailing sick young woman:

México, la bella Tenoxtitlán, grande por su belleza, por su tradición y por su historia, acababa de sufrir la convulsión horrible de la rebeldía, el ataque epiléptico de una nación que pasó su vida cual la pasara una ingenua niña, una demente, pobre loca, inofensiva enferma...pero así iba caminando...caminando. Pero he ahí que brota la idea, que un médico acaso más loco, acaso más utopista, acaso más enfermo que la enferma, en su demencia dice...yo te salvaré (Garza, 110).

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<sup>8</sup> Due her French and Mexican heritage it would seem that Garza has created a character that embodies the Mexican citizen envisioned by the Díaz, a citizen that is Mexican but that strives to be European as symbol of progress and modernity. Yet, Madeleine as character represents more than this as will be seen.

Madeleine's story is a metaphor for Mexico and the revolution's effects on it without necessarily speaking about the conflict directly. While Madeleine is a victim of her husband who is a doctor, Mexico, as per the above quote, is depicted as a sick woman deceived by a mad doctor.<sup>9</sup> By this logic, the story of drug addicted and domestically abused Madeleine is the story of a post-revolutionary Mexico where drug addiction and violence ensue. Additionally, Madeleine's drug addiction is depicted as a monster: "pobre niña, de aquella pobre victima del monstruo insaciable" (Garza 18). The Mexican revolution is also a sleeping monster: "Desde un balcón del Palacio Nacional contemplaban al monstruo dormido" (Garza 114). It is evident that for Garza the ramifications of the Mexican revolution are best presented through the struggles of a woman who confronts her own war on drugs and domestic abuse. What will be seen is that the author is not making a case against or for any specific political ideas of the revolution and she is not exposing a *porfirista* ideology; the author tells Mexico's revolutionary story through the story of the struggles of a woman – Madeleine.

Part of the problem for women writers was that they self-published which in turn mean very limited distribution, which in turn is related to a lack of agency for women writers with regards to publishing and circulation of their works. Could it also be argued that the use of a woman's experience to represent and comment on the Mexican armed conflict also makes a novel like this hard to classify next to the traditional gatekeepers of the novel of the Mexican revolution. Thornton in her work on gender and the novel of the Mexican Revolution highlights this idea:

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<sup>9</sup> Mexico is referred to as *enferma* three times and is said to have *ataques* just as Madeleine has with her withdrawals.

Thus the place within all of it for women differed according to individual leaders, groups, political policies, expediency and needs. In turn, the way women's roles were elaborated within a text depended upon the male writer's own attitudes to women, as well as the way he witnessed or perceived their roles in the conflict and afterwards (60).

Garza does not present mothers and wives waiting on their soldier's return or consoling them after the conflict and she does not narrate about *adelitas* or *soldaderas* assisting their male-counterparts in the revolution.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Garza does not take the historical route by writing from the point of view of a witness to a particular battle or event. The author takes a much more intimate approach by highlighting the societal ailments present in the domestic sphere which she considered symptoms of an ailing post-revolutionary Mexico at the hands of drug abuse and domestic violence: "Violaron e hicieron de la ciudad de México no la de los Palacios que dijere Humboldt, sino la ciudad del terror, del asalto, del atraco y del espanto" (114). The violence and terror described here and experienced by Mexico is experienced by Madeleine throughout the story. To begin with she is forcefully injected by her husband with morphine:

Sonrió en su interior y empezó por inyectar a la enferma dosis pequeñas de morfina que ella no acostumbrada a la droga fatal, absorbía por entero descansando satisfecha de aquellos padecimientos, que tenazas parecían,

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<sup>10</sup> These are considered traditional roles for women to depict in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexican literature:

Women's specific roles in Mexico, even during the era of increased freedom brought about by the Revolution, restricted their participation in what were traditionally considered male pursuits. Their presence on the battle-field was limited to a few exceptional cases and most of the legendary *soldaderas* were confined to accompanying their fighting men from confrontation to another in order to provide them with food and to do their laundry" (Hurley, 11).



clavadas en lo más íntimo de su cuerpo. Era tarde: la morfina había llegado a ser en tanto tiempo de uso una necesidad para su organismo. (84-85)

From inducing drug-addiction to direct physical violence, Madeleine's husband continues to terrorize her: "Y haciendo la luz, sacudió una y más veces aquella pobre flor que cual lirio marchito, parecía deshacerse entre el potente puño, como ante un vendaval" (Garza 88). The protagonist is not the only victim; her nanny, Lola the old Indian woman, is also beaten by the doctor: "El doctor Paul Bourbonnais y colérico se lanzó sobre la pobre sirvienta a quien sacudió con todas sus fuerzas y arrojó muy lejos, yendo la cabeza cana a caer en un ángulo saliente de la habitación, que hirió su frente" (Garza, 64). The terror inflicted onto Madeleine is the terror inflicted on Mexico during its revolution. This terror and physical threat quickly transforms into homicide. The first victim is his and Madeleine's own son:

Los brazos membrudos, asieron fuertemente aquella frágil envoltura de leche y rosas; por el rayo de luz que desparramaba el arco voltaico de la calle, y por la ventana entre abierta, cruzó silbando, como una flecha, el niño dormido, que arrojado por mano criminal, fue azotando por los tejados, desde el cuatro piso, para estrellarse contra las baldosas del pavimento. (197)

His second and last victim is Lola, who is killed while attempting to block the shot he fired at Madeleine at the ceremony honoring her service in the military:

Armado de un revólver, el hombre hizo fuero sobre el francesito, y nadie ha podido explicarse cómo una vieja india que a pesar de sus ricos

vestidos denotaba su clase y su raza, se interpuso a tiempo, y la bala que iba a clavarse en el corazón del aviador, hirió mortalmente a la anciana. (238-239)

The abuse and killing of Lola is also of importance because she is also the embodiment of Mexico in the indigenous sense. Lola is representative of the actual attitudes in 1922 in Mexico about their indigenous ancestry: *indigenismo*. First and foremost, Lola is the constant voice and reminder of a romanticized Mexico:

Si yo no tengo palabras para decirte, cómo se está a gusto en aquellos montes, cómo se canta alegre entre aquellos bosques, cómo se siente, hasta ganas de morir, porque la gloria de México, ¡claro que no es la gloria de aquí! y aquella, ha de ser más resplandeciente, ha de tener ángeles más blancos y músicas más gratas, ha... (63)

Lola, as indigenous woman, is the continuous representation of Mexico through her insistence throughout the novel that Madeleine return to Mexico and her support of traditional Mexican values such as loyalty and servitude. To some extent Lola also represents the preservation of traditional gender roles as she at times encourages Madeleine to accept the abuse and be a “good wife”: “Cumplir con tu deber hija mía...cumplir con tu deber ... ” (67). The positive portrayal of Lola keeps in line with the *indigenista* goal of honoring Mexican indigenous roots but these are honored under the condition that the indigenous assimilate to modern Mexican culture which is also portrayed by Lola: “Cuando yo llegué al lado de tu abuela, no era sino una infeliz india bajada de la sierra; no conocía sino el Dios de la Guerra que aun veneraban mis mayors” (Garza, 201). Therefore, Lola is representative of the respect and admiration of Mexico’s

indigenous past as long as the indigenous assimilate into current Mexican culture. Indigenous heritage is honored just as assimilation is:

Ella, la indomable, la férrea de voluntad la hija de los guerreros que en los campos de la antigua Tenoxtitlán conquistaron cabelleras para su aduar...nunca hubiera de perdonar el hombre que había trocado su muñequita en un harapo, su flor odorante en piltrafa lodosa...pobre Madeleine! Y ardían las endrinas pupilas de la vieja criada cuyos setenta inviernos salvaba la raza de bronce, la raza hercúlea, la carne dura y recia que no se quería vencer. (71)

From these examples one can extrapolate that Madeleine and to some extent Lola are the vehicles through which Garza comments on a post-revolutionary Mexico. That being said, this idea aligns her work within the genre of the Mexican Revolution entitled *narraciones reflexivas* that denote “una novela de profunda *reflexión* sobre el periodo de consolidación del poder corrupto y demagógico que usurpó a la Revolución Mexicana” (Oropeza, 43). These novels are categorized as such due to their reflexive nature and are seen as either placing judgment on the results of the revolution or depicting the aftermath of the war. The bulk of the novel focuses on the women’s point of view, although there are moments that reflect on the country’s status as a whole: “Ya ve usted como mueren en nuestra tierra los maestros, los que hacen hombres para el mañana, los que educan al niño que será el soldado del porvenir, el ciudadano que defiende sus derechos...¡que sarcasmo...qué ironía!” (119). The point of focus and concern, within this general indictment of post-revolutionary Mexico, for María Luisa Garza are the Mexican women who suffer from the spread of drug addiction and domestic abuse both seen as parts of the

aftermath of the Mexican revolution. The progress and modernity promised by the revolution have left women to confront bleak realities in their private and domestic lives.

Having made the case that *La novia de Nervo* speaks from a woman's perspective about the consequences of the revolution, it is imperative to remember that while the male voice-authored texts related to the Mexican revolution that were situated in the public sphere (read male), Garza like other female writers of the Mexican Revolution decidedly created a discourse about the Mexican revolution within and through the private sphere (read female) and, as previously seen, in *La novia de Nervo* the private and domestic sphere of a dysfunctional marriage is where commentary on the revolution comes to life. Lorenzano reiterates the importance space plays in Mexican women's narrative of the twentieth century:

La historia de las mujeres puede ser vista como una lucha constante por redefinir, por sí mismas, los ámbitos en los cuales las ha ubicado la sociedad patriarcal. Lo público y lo privado, lo político y lo doméstico planteados como territorios diferentes y hasta opuestos, son flexibilizados, mezclados, yuxtapuestos, en la escritura femenina. (366)

María Luisa Garza reveals the Mexican post-revolutionary experience from the private domestic sphere where one finds marital violence, infanticide and drug addiction. Unlike her male counterparts whose narratives speak to and about the national and political ramifications of the revolution, Garza takes her readers into the domestic world, where the revolution also left its mark. The use of the private sphere by Garza also reflects the changes that were occurring in a post-revolutionary Mexico. As Stephanie Smith explains, Mexican women were finding themselves navigating newfound liberties

and legal support in the newly modern Mexico but were also still being reminded of not losing all of their traditional values; an example of this would be the topic of divorce as previously discussed: “The rhetoric of liberalized divorce promoted men’s and women’s freedom to leave their marriages, while cultural norms simultaneously stressed a woman’s proper place as a wife within the private sphere of the home” (19-20). As will later be seen, the complexity of women’s existence in a transitioning Mexico is echoed throughout María Luisa Garza’s narrative.

The violence against Madeleine at the hands of her husband does not only function as a metaphor for the results of the Mexican revolution for women; her volatile marriage also comments on other marital struggles of which infidelity plays a role: “Al golpe, el marido infiel dióse cuenta de las circunstancias y lanzándose sobre el cuerpo de su esposa, aconsejó a Jeanet, su cómplice que negara todo lo que Madeleine había visto” (Garza 74). The author takes the affair a step further by revealing the medical consequences of this infidelity: “Madeleine abrió los ojos, sintió miedo y náuseas de aquel rostro donde las huellas del vicio en asqueroso contubernio con la sífilis iban hincando sus garras con fuerza prepotente e invencible” (Garza 80). This demonstrates that the focus is not the typical emotional betrayal of confronting a cheating husband but, instead, the focus is the issue of sexually transmitted diseases possible under these circumstances. From the gruesome descriptions of the abuse done to Madeleine to the narration of their son’s murder to her husband’s betrayal, the author in no way follows a sentimental motif with regards to marital tribulations; instead Garza offers realistic images.

Keeping with the trope of presenting marital conflict in a realistic way, Garza also comments on the limitations placed on women when divorce is not legal or readily viable for women: “Un divorcio, hubiera sido la solución de aquella tragedia, el término de aquella historia; pero Madeleine era madre y por el nombre de su hijo, esperó que la muerte se llevara para siempre su martirio” (92). Here the cultural taboo of divorce is revealed as the protagonist’s role as mother and her son’s reputation are on the line if she seeks a divorce. The cultural implications of divorce and their constraints on women’s ability to be free is the first focus: “Para que el mundo no diga mañana, ‘la madre de Raúl Bourbonnais dejó al marido, para buscar placeres ilícitos,’ he de seguir siempre atada al grillete de mi infortunio” (156). This emphasis on divorce in Madeleine’s story reflects Mexico’s actual national debate between the legal system and cultural norms: “The ambiguity between the concept of divorce to ‘free’ women from the chains of marriage and the revolutionary rhetoric of women’s proper roles as wives and mothers was exposed in several ways” (Smith 116). Garza simultaneously critiques the status of divorce laws and exposes the excessive legal power husbands have over their wives. For Madeleine this develops as her husband forcefully injects her with morphine and in due course places her in an asylum by telling authorities she is insane: “Lloró, protestó, dijo una y otra vez que ella no estaba enferma, que ella nunca había padecido enajenación mental” (159). The author highlights the idea that the husband’s word is placed above the wife’s and this gives him unyielding power over her life: “Sí, señora, derecho. El derecho que da la ley al marido, de regentar los bienes de su mujer, cuando ésta ha perdido la razón” (157). Again, María Luisa Garza is reflecting the legal situation for married women in post-revolutionary Mexico: “An analysis of the number of men and

women who utilized the revolutionary divorce laws over time illustrates how husbands found this measure to be more beneficial for them than to their wives” (Smith 117). In this way, Madeleine as the embodiment of a post-revolutionary Mexico is the voice for the realistic depiction women’s experiences.

*La novia de Nervo* is not only revolutionary because it references the conflict but also because it presents a “revolutionary” portrait of a female character. The most notable moment takes place as Madeleine escapes the asylum her husband has sent her to. This escape is the catalyst for her transformation into a male soldier at the hands of a mental patient who finds Madeleine:

La loca que la conducía, dejola en el suelo y aprovechando un rayo de luz que salía de una cercana taberna, destrenzó los cabellos que eran su obsesión, y con unas tijerillas que imprudentemente le habían dejado colgarse al cinto (pues era su locura pacífica y se ocupaba siempre de estar cortando servilletas de papel, dizque para poner muy linda la mesa donde iba a sentarse el coronel de sus ensueños), fue talando uno por uno aquellas largas guedejas que despedían fulgores cual si fueran de oro purísimo. (165)

Upon waking up and finding her golden locks gone and dressed in an asylum robe, Madeleine is left in a position that leaves her no option but to rob a passed-out drunken soldier and take his clothing: “Por fin elevó una oración a la Madre Santísima y se vió transformada en un muchacho de 20 años” (169). Strategically, Garza portrays Madeleine’s cross-dressing as something brought upon her by the madwoman who cuts her hair and not a decision taken and executed by Madeleine’s own desire. Here the

author is negotiating her creative limits because having a woman actively chose to dress and live as a man would be taboo; the author opts for putting the character in a situation in which this cross-dressing is the best solution. Upon having had her hair cut and acquiring the uniform: “Ella, la mísera, la que llevaba la muerte en el alma, con sus cabellos cortos y su traje de aviador del ejército francés al que ya legítimamente pertenecía bajo el nombre de León Nemour, partió para los frentes franceses ese mismo día” (210). The experiences Madeleine lives as a man allow her to find the courage to ultimately confront her husband. In search of recuperating her son, the protagonist confronts her husband and is transformed from a weak woman unable to fight back into a strong woman willing to face her abusive husband:

El doctor Bourbonnais, se restregaba los ojos una y otra vez, dudando si sería aquella Madeleine que se alzaba soberbia antes sus ojos, la Madeleine que él había visto tres meses apenas atrás, enflaquecida, asquerosa, arrastrándose antes sus plantas por una mísera pastilla de morfina. Era pues, esa mujer iracunda, soberbia, llena de coraje y de fuerza la que siempre había él visto humillada, hecha una idiota, con los ojos nublados como por un velo, con le paso vacilante como el de una ebria, con la boca entreabierta y reseca, llena de una salivación espesa que inspiraba náuseas. (Garza 155)

The protagonist’s experience of cross-dressing is powerful enough to transform her into a new woman<sup>11</sup>. Her cross-dressing also allows for a commentary on what it

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<sup>11</sup> Although this transformation occurs in France, France as a location is not extensively mentioned. On the other hand Mexico is referenced and mentioned repeatedly. This leads one to believe that the driving force for Madeleine’s change is dependent on her cross-dressing experience rather than the location where this take place since it is not depicted as having affected her.



means to be a woman: “Madeleine pensó que era muy bello ser hombre, que no se estaba expuesto de ese modo a cariños interesados ni a violencias, ni a injurias” (Garza 220). María Luisa Garza is exposing the difficulty of womanhood and appears to imply all women are under the constant threat of unsolicited romance and/or violence. The author repeats this sentiment: “Comprendía su juventud, se daba cuenta de su belleza, pero aquellas ropas de hombre en su cuerpo, eran una salvaguardia más. No habría galanes que tentados por el señuelo de sus encantos femeniles ...” (Garza 233). The focus is the safety implied by dressing as a man but again the underlying message is the continual danger women live in on a daily basis. For Madeleine this danger is embodied through her husband: “¿Qué intentaría contra ella? ¿la mataría? He ahí el motivo más poderoso para usar siempre ese traje masculino” (Garza 214). Instead of praising and basking in femininity, María Luisa Garza chooses to demonstrate the struggles associated with being a woman and these struggles are clearer when Madeleine is able to overcome all of them once she begins her journey dressed as a man.

The importance of cross-dressing for Madeleine is evident and it catapults her towards her own liberation from her abusive husband and becoming her own woman: “Madeleine, de pie, erguida, fiera, inmovible, esperó el ataque y se dispuso a repelerlo” (152). The protagonist’s has transformed her into a strong woman who is capable of confronting her abusive spouse and this image is in stark contrast to the woman addicted to morphine and unable to escape the violent marriage.

Interestingly, the following passage seems to take Madeleine’s crossing-dressing and transform it into a new identity for the protagonist: “León Nemour, guardó aquella medalla que le costara tanto duelo y partió para la ciudad de Nueva York, enlutada y

triste, llevando en su semblante cerámico de rara belleza, el sello de lo irreparable, de lo infinitamente doloroso, de lo que nunca ha de volver a sonreír” (240). Despite the quote beginning with a description of Nemour, it continues describing Nemour as a woman and with feminine adjectives without a break of reference to Madeleine. It can be argued that Nemour and Madeleine have been morphed into one and the cross-dressing has become more than a mere means to survival. Not only does cross-dressing provide the road to the protagonist’s liberty but is also a provocative literary tool used by a female author writing during the first half of the twentieth century in Mexico.

It is apparent how significant the idea of cross-dressing is in a novel written by an author within a México de afuera ideology that reiterated normative gender roles. Through cross-dressing Garza reveals the performative aspect of gender. Performative meaning, Garza’s character Madeleine reveals that gender is not biological but socially constructed since she is able to perform as a man and excel. This performativity is explained through Judith Butler’s groundbreaking work in *Gender Trouble*:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an “internal” feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts (xv).

Madeleine successfully performs masculinity to the extent that she excels in the military and wins one of its highest honors. That Madeleine performs masculinity through cross-dressing or drag as Butler refers to it reiterates the performative aspect of gender: “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender

itself – as well as its contingency” (175). Not only does Madeleine demonstrate how maleness can be imitated well enough to function as a male in the world but she also demonstrates its contingency by being able to easily slip back into her female role.

Perhaps because of the power of Madeleine’s cross-dressing does one find it, subsequently down-played by the author through several methods. It appears that Garza navigates and pushes the limits of creating a female character that cross-dresses and while walking this fine line the author seems hesitant to allow Madeleine to fully participate in her cross-dressing. The first evidence of this is when it is made clear that Madeleine serves in the army but does not partake in combat: “Madeleine no hacía la guerra; sus sentimientos de religión repudiaban tales actos. Iba solamente de aquí para allá, donde era más lejano y peligroso el punto, a llevar y a traer correspondencia” (221). There is a limit to Madeleine’s performance as male; her femininity through her religious fervor is reinforced when she finds out about Amado Nervo’s death:

Las manos se crisparon, la cabeza pálida y vencida, dejóse caer sobre el pecho, y los nervios, que últimamente parecían de acero resistiendo invencibles las granadas enemigas que desafiaba con coraje y valentía, volvieron a ser, los nervios de una mujer que ama, de una mujer que ha perdido en un instante, la última esperanza de felicidad aquí en la tierra.  
(Garza, 228)

This image could be interpreted as reiterating the idea that beneath the soldier’s uniform there is still a weak woman who is vulnerable to questions of love. The juxtaposition of her ability to maneuver a plane amidst enemy fire but her inability to deal with the loss of love demonstrates that women are capable of participating in the

public realm of combat while not losing their femininity, which reflects Garza's conservative approach to feminism as previously seen in her *crónicas*. The author stops short of seeking for women to be seen as equal to men and instead develops a strategic and nuanced position which demonstrates women's ability to participate in war while still conserving feminine traits and sensitivities. Therefore, cross-dressing allows Madeleine to gain control of her life but the ultimate goal of cross-dressing is: "Porque cuando la fama llegara, cuando los lauros inmarcesibles se ciñeran a su frente, Madeleine se quitaría la careta y diría al mundo entero: no soy un hombre, soy una débil mujer que ha querido conquistarse un nombre" (Garza 221). This quote highlights that despite cross-dressing and participating in battle, Madeleine remains a "weak" woman and that her only goal is to gain a name for herself. She reveals that her desire to make a name for herself is in order to be worthy of being Amado Nervo's wife. All that the author has built up surrounding Madeleine's journey as a man while participating in war and earning the highest national honors is overshadowed by the idea that it was all for love.

Lastly, it is interesting to explore the idea that upon having her hair forcefully cut off, Madeleine chooses to cross-dress instead of using the new hair-do to live as a different type of woman. Upon seeing her short hair her husband assumes she has decided to become a modern woman: "Esos cabellos cortos, última moda de las canzonetistas y demimondaines, te sientan admirablemente; mis felicitaciones, nueva estrella de 'Moulin

Rouge', mis felicitaciones y..." (192)<sup>12</sup>. This preoccupation with hair occupies the national conversation in Mexico with regards to women and modernity<sup>13</sup>:

During the early 1920s in heated debates (and even incidents of male violence) over the inappropriate behavior of women who daringly refused to wear their hair in conventionally feminine long hairstyles and instead cut their hair short in more modern, masculine "bobs." Revolutionary rhetoric may have warned women of the dangers of becoming too urban, modern, and aggressive, but it also equated femininity with rural, reserved, indigenous women and the traditional (either for good or bad, depending upon the circumstances. (Smith 25)

Garza presents a character that does not move between the virgin/whore dichotomy, instead Madeleine works with alternative modes of survival and redefining what it means to be woman. This can also be seen since Madeleine is compared to the iconic female figure of the Virgin Mary but María Luisa Garza adds another dimension to the protagonist by later describing her as Lucifer, the fallen angel: "Y se arrastraba como una serpiente oscura en la alfombra de color pálido. Su blonda cabellera desordenada y

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<sup>12</sup> In "Flânerie and the Lesbian Gaze: Female Spectatorship in the Work of Toulouse-Lautrec" Bruckbauer argues and presents the historical context of a lesbian presence in the Moulin Rouge.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Rubenstein explores this theme in "The War on 'Las Pleonas': Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924":

The debate over the length of women's hair had escalated to the point where men brawled in the streets and violently attacked women. This was a global conflict, or nearly so. A fashion for short, blunt haircuts ("bobs")...getting such a haircut represented a commitment to "the modern" a break with "tradition" anywhere a woman tried it – though which of the multiple complicated meanings of those terms were intended depended on whose hair was cut. In the English-speaking world, women who made such gesture of affiliation with all that was up-to-date were known as New Women, or flappers, a reference to their loose, relatively short dresses which supposedly flapped in the wind. But in Mexico such women called themselves *las pelonas*, the short-haired women, and that is what their enemies called them too. Their short hair, more than anything else, inspired violence from their male peers. (61-60)

suelta por la espalda, la hacía parecer como el ángel de la gloria perdida, como aquel Luzbel que nunca más había de entrar al cielo” (Garza 89). Consequently, instead of remaining within the dichotomy of the virgin whore duplex, the author depicts Madeleine as a serpent and a fallen angel as if to say that women are more than virginal or prostitutes. Madeleine is not one dimensional; instead she embodies the complexities and arrayed views of womanhood.

As stated before, what the cross-dressing eventually does for Madeleine is an internal transformation of who she is as a woman and it functions as the vehicle for her to find her inner strength as a woman: “Yo iré muy pronto, cuando me haya conquistado un nombre, cuando la gloria de mis hechos sea lo bastante luminosa, para que se borre el estigma de mi pasado. Quiero yo misma, ser otra, olvidar, renacer...” (209). The nuanced manner in which Garza explores gender as performance could seem to not go far enough since the novel reiterates Madeleine’s femininity on several occasions but the innovation is in the presentation of a woman cross-dressing and how this is used to present issues surrounding what it means to be a woman in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Along with a multi-faceted presentation of womanhood, María Luisa Garza’s novel also comments on gender as it relates to class. Frist, as Pimienta, the poor girl from the streets, explains her work as a prostitute to Nervo she quotes her owner: “La vieja me ha dicho que todas lo hacen...las ricas por un automóvil o por un anillote de piedra...las probrecitas...pues, por un pedazo de pan...no va uno a morirse de hambre” (Garza 36-37). This theme is also seen in Garza’s *crónicas*; the author seeks to point out that prostitution is not limited to poverty-stricken women. Pimienta is not the only character to speak about class and prostitution; Madeleine herself contemplates this topic:

Madeleine las vio a las dos...la que se percataba y buscaba en la sombra un cómplice amigo, y la que a la luz de todos ofrecía la mercancía de su cuerpo violado por todas las lascivias y sin parte alguna donde los besos mercenarios no hubieron estampado la baba inmunda de su ponzoña. Le pareció infinitamente más asquerosa aquella mujer enguantada, ya que la cultura se delataba por el nacimiento a que parecía pertenecer. (Garza, 212-213)

Here the author views marriage based on economic gain as similar to prostitution and is able to erase the line drawn to differentiate elite and poverty-stricken women. By showing that elite women are just as guilty of prostitution as women of lower classes, María Luisa Garza is reflecting back onto her elite readers those “sins,” as she calls them, of which both the poor and rich are guilty. She is also able to demonstrate that it is possible to fall into prostitution by no fault of one’s own. The addiction to morphine that Madeleine’s husband has created in her, takes her as far as being willing to prostitute herself to obtain more of the drug:

Y Madeleine, las casta, la buena, la pura...la niña educada entre buenas monjas que le enseñaron el camino del honor, la hija de una madre que sólo supo adorar a Dios, bajó a la calle, a acabarse de enfangar. Al poner el pie en el estribo del automóvil, la india Lola venía de fuera y acercándose a Madeleine, la dijo “traigo una carta” y...fue la frase bendita, fué el ángel guardián que tendió las alas sobre la cabeza doliente porque entonces, la novia de Nervo tornó a subir hacia su hogar. (Garza 96)

Despite Madeleine not actually prostituting herself, the previous lines are important since they demonstrate the possibility of an elite woman falling prey to prostitution. Again, María Luisa Garza is blurring the lines that supposedly distinguish the upper class from the lower classes and demonstrates that one's class can be altered through a series of unfortunate events. It would also stand to argue that Garza is setting up the discourse for empathy from an elite class of Mexicans that tended to judge the poor. This focus on prostitution is an extension of the national development of regulations to control prostitution under the guise of sanitation and moral hygiene:

Stringent laws targeted women of the night” to control the spread of diseases and immorality to families. The same directives defined wives and mothers as weak and in need of protection to keep them safe... In this sense, the regulation of prostitution and morality protected “good” women from “bad” women, or at least distinguished wives and mothers in the domestic space from prostitutes who plied their wares out in public. (Smith 147).

María Luisa Garza then offers a complex view of prostitution in which she crosses class lines by referring to its literal practice or its symbolic incarnation within relationships between elites. When prostitution is placed within the private sphere of marriage, Garza breaks with the public/private dichotomy that dominates the construction of prostitution. For Garza, there are no “bad” or “good” women; there are women who live complex lives with difficult choices to make.

The author through the voice of Amado Nervo also calls upon women of the elite class to take action and to define their own destinies:



Mujeres...figulinas de porcelana, maniqués de escaparate, bellos modelos de las más afamadas casas de París y de Nueva York...abajo esas galas, abajo esas sedas...fundid el oro de vuestras joyas como fundiera doña Isabel la Católica sus alhajas para que Colón conquistara un mundo...conquistad vosotras como el almirante genovés, como aquel Cristóforo Colombo intrépido y denodado. ¿No tenéis valor? Mujeres...lindas muñequitas de aparador...¿de qué os sirven las gemas si bajo vuestros pies el vicio se retuerce en contorsiones funambulescas de dolor? (Garza 37-38)

Interestingly, this quote does not encourage women to follow Isabel's model by supporting and using their "jewels" to support their male companions, instead women are encouraged to follow Christopher Columbus' example (read male) and "conquer the world." The play with the word jewels and its literal significance and metaphoric meaning for one's own abilities both make sense within the context of a novel that deals with interpersonal relationships between men and women and prostitution. Madeleine also reflects on women's class and the ways in which even elite women display poverty in the metamorphic sense:

La fortuna había sido arrebatada. Era pobre, inmensamente pobre, con la pobreza dolorosa de aquellos que han mecido sus cunas en sedas y en nácar, cuando un turbión del destino barre aquel mentiroso oro y quedan las manos inertes, torpes, no hechas para la lucha por la vida. Era pobre Madeleine, con esa miseria espantosa de las mujeres a quienes nunca se les dijo: hay que trabajar, hay que vivir. (185)

Here the author plays with the images of Madeleine's actual monetary poverty and her lack of life skills due to her elite upbringing. The construction of this image allows Garza to comment on the necessity for women to develop the skills necessary for survival whether they are poor or of a higher social class. The underlying theme is the importance of women having the ability to survive on their own.

The solution to the prostitution dilemma is provided as women are called to rise out of poverty through education. Amado Nervo contemplates Pimienta's situation as a child prostitute and begins to address the need for said education: "¿En dónde estaban las escuelas que enseñan? ¿en dónde el saber que dignifica? ¿en dónde la ciencia que alumbra?" (37). The novel demonstrates the difficulty of helping poor children access an education denied them. As Amado Nervo seeks to transform Pimienta's life by enrolling her in a private religious school, he is confronted with an elite class that makes her success hard to attain:

Qué haría ella entre otras niñas, sino escandalizar a los padres que retirarían al momento de la pensión a sus hijas para que no se contaminaran con aquella lepra, con aquel cáncer social, con aquella escoria...Es la ley de la humanidad, madre...al que cae, aplastarle más, al que se abate, rematarle con nuevos golpes, al que se hundo no darle la mano...al que se ahoga, arrojarle más a la corriente...este es el mundo, esta es la sociedad; estos somos los hombres...y hay que inclinarnos resignados ante las leyes suyas, que son dominadoras y potentes. (Garza, 46)

Along with this critique of the elite's treatment of the needy, María Luisa Garza constructs a critique of religious charity. "Dios, bendice una buena acción con más contento que una noche entera de oraciones y un mes de ayunos" (47). Here Nervo is calling into question the idea that prayer alone suffices to be in good graces with God because he is upset at the convent's resistance to accepting Pimienta: "esta monja me inquiete y esta manera de entender la caridad me intranquiliza" (50). This trope is repeated as Nervo critiques the lack of people willing to do the charity work needed to save girls like Pimienta from prostitution. In the following quote it is also clear that the elite are depicted as the sector of the population with the means to support poverty stricken girls: "Pensó en que era muy pobre...en que no tenía una fortuna cuyos dones pudiera derramar sobre tantas y tantas infelices que como María, iban a perderse en el precipicio de la prostitución porque no había manos compasivas que detuvieran el empuje y desafiaran la fatalidad..." (53). Those "manos compasivas" are to come from the elite and the lack of this is questioned by the author through the character of Nervo. This narrative is mirrored in María Luisa Garza's *crónicas* in which the same topic is addressed on several occasions. In the following chapter Garza preoccupation with philanthropy that is sincere and useful will be made even clearer.

Within the same line of critiquing religious charity, religious dogma is also questioned. Divorce is denoted as possible solution to Madeleine's marital problems: "Si llegara por medio del divorcio a ser libre, entonces, correría, sin freno" (Garza, 145). The obstacle to such freedom is denoted as Madeleine's religious fervor: "¿Un divorcio y luego la unión, cuando estuviera regenerada, con el hombre que era todo su pensamiento y todo el motivo de su vida? La religión a que pertenecía le impidiera tal paso" (Garza,

214). Surprisingly, Madeleine once again is constructed as a multi-dimensional character with varied views on a single topic since she is grappling with her devotion to her religious upbringing and the reality of her current situation; she is attempting to reconcile two opposing thoughts. After several of the tragic events of her life have passed, Madeleine begins to question her religious faith: “Soy religiosa y me eduqué en la fé de Cristo; pero he sufrido tanto, que empiezo a dudar si existirá él o será una dulce ilusión que nos hacemos de ese divino padre que tanto ama a sus hijos” (Garza, 200). It is quite revolutionary for Garza to construct a female character that is so multi-faceted and who does not fit neatly into the popular archetypes of the submissive and fervently religious Mexican woman.

Interestingly for María Luisa Garza the gender debate is best won from the United States where women’s rights are deemed to be most protected. This is exemplified several times and through Madeleine’s quest to escape her abusive marriage: “Después, todos viviremos en esa ciudad o en alguna de las de Estados Unidos, donde la mujer es respetada y puede defender sus derechos. Si mi marido me busca en ese país, buen trabajo le costará cometer los crímenes que cometieron en mi patria” (Garza, 234). Departing from the México de Afuera ideology that sees the United States as threat to cultural preservation, all of Garza’s references to the United States in her novel are positive ones:

Si algunos delitos cometiera la nación de Uncle Sam, todos podrían perdonarse, ante la abnegación desplegada en aquel entonces, ante las grandes armadas americanas que protectoras, hendían las aguas y veloces

sobrepujaban a las naves de Guillermo que ya empezaba a ver su estrella palidecer. (Garza, 160)

As the author praises the United States as a safe haven for women and for its contribution to helping the current war, she also demonstrates an admiration for the elite women of the United States. This is in contrast to her harsh words for Mexican elite women who are perceived as judgmental and uninterested in service; American elite woman are depicted as willing to leave their lives of luxury when their country calls:

Las millonarias trocaron las gruesas perlas que pendían de sus orejas en rápidos automóviles blindados que desafiadores de las balas, cruzaban veloces al impulso del motor guiado por mano femenil, suave y acariciadora, los campos de batalla en los frentes franceses, recogiendo heridos y llevando el consuelo y la salud a los mutilados. (Garza, 160)

What this tells us about the author's point of view is that unlike her elite Mexican counterparts who consider United States culture as detrimental to the construction of the new post-revolutionary Mexico citizen, Garza constructs the United States as a model to follow when it comes to women's rights and service.

The last revolutionary aspect of María Luisa Garza's narrative that is noteworthy within the context of this analysis is her conclusion in which she updates readers on Madeleine's current status. Critiquing the usual fate that awaits female characters in the novels of her time, Garza admits to having rejected the possible endings at her disposal, opting to reveal that Madeleine remains single and is dedicated to raising Pimienta:

Yo no me resolvía, como digo al principio, el dar a luz este libro, porque me parecía un final muy inconcluso. Yo aguardaba que la novia de Nervo,

bella, joven, inteligente, mujer, privilegiada por su envoltura y por su alma, fuera digna de mujer suerte, de un hombre – como sucede en todos los libros – que la hiciera con un nuevo amor, la criatura más dichosa del orbe. Pero he ahí, que ni se murió como acostumbran matar de amor los novelistas a sus personajes, ni se casó con otro. (Garza, 236)

If Garza does not provide a man to save Madeleine and does not have her die, what is her fate? María Luisa Garza closes by stating that the protagonist is saved by the love of being a mother: “La pequeña María iba siendo mujer, estaba a su lado, y aquella madre nueva, como bendición del cielo, encontraba aunque tardío un amor salvador, puerto bendito donde se refugiaban sus tristezas en el naufragio de su felicidad” (Garza, 236). Ultimately, Madeleine’s future endeavor will be to open a home for drug-addicted women: “Madeleine fundará una casa de salud, un hospital donde se arranque del vicio a las mujeres minadas por el éter, por la cocaína o por la morfina, que estuvo a punto de acabar con aquella vida” (Garza, 241). In this sense, Garza moves away from traditional endings for women and opts to highlight motherhood and charity work as an alternative happy ending for a female character. This along with the previously expressed points does not allow the novel to neatly fit into the pop-fiction or romance novel categories and instead it becomes clear that *La novia de Nervo* is presenting more than a tormented love story between a husband and wife; it is exposing post-revolutionary realities from the lens of the domestic sphere.

As these reflections have proposed a generic category from which to approach and analyze *La novia de Nervo* they have also added to the discussion about the need to

develop of modes of reading novels by women that honor the private sphere as a space from which to comment about the public and in this case the national:

Interpretative strategies which allow national allegory to be identified in a text and which read the private as commenting on the public sphere are likely to be particularly useful when applied to texts produced by marginalized groups whose access to the public sphere is restricted” (Bowskill, 29).

*La novia de Nervo* reflects upon the aftermath of the Mexican revolution and does so through the story of Madeleine and her servant Lola, both of whom confront violence as Mexico did. Madeleine as a non-traditional female protagonist embodies the Mexican conflict and the problems confronted by Mexican women of post-revolutionary Mexico.

### ***Tentáculos de fuego: Temperance, Naturalism and Gender***

As if taking cue from the most famous naturalist novel of Mexico, *Santa* by Federico Gamboa, María Luisa Garza publishes *Tentáculos de fuego* in 1930 at the request of the Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Alcoholismo (National Committee Against Alcoholism). While the novel displays several of the naturalist literary movement’s characteristics, the significance of the novel can be appreciated through the author’s unique representation of the Mexican temperance movement with regards to gender, race, and class; this is a representation often at odds with the mainstream images of the movement: “In particular, utilizing prejudiced notions of class, ethnicity, and gender, they targeted working-class and indigenous men, who they tried to transform into pacifistic patriarchs, efficient workers, and sober, responsible citizens” (Pierce, 8). The following reflections will make the case for the ways in which *Tentáculos de fuego*

displays Naturalistic tendencies while exploring Garza's particular interpretation of the temperance movement in Mexico. The goal is to deeply delve into the images and discourse present in *Tentáculos de fuego* that move María Luisa Garza away from the traditional message of temperance propaganda in Mexico during the 1930s.

The anti-alcohol and/or temperance movement in Mexico forms part of a post-revolutionary and nationalist agenda focused on modernizing Mexico: "Anti-clerical, and anti-alcohol campaigns were all part of the larger goal of molding New Men, Women, and even Children as being more modern than their predecessors (Pierce, 505). Gretchen Pierce also indicates that the Temperance campaign roughly encompasses the years between 1910 and 1940, during which one can find various government-funded and non-profit organizations focused on temperance, and the Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Alcoholismo that solicited Garza's work was a part of this nationalist effort.

Of the major tenants of the campaign against alcohol consumption, Garza is engaging with gender, class and race for the majority of the novel. She is also balancing her own social and religious beliefs with her naturalistic discourse founded on science and determinism. It would appear that *Tentáculos de fuego* stays on message as a novel requested and published by the Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra el Alcoholismo but, as will be seen, Garza navigates the limits of the Mexican temperance discourse and is able to cleverly insert contesting images and messages that allow alcoholism to be viewed as a more complex problem. This is something the Mexican temperance movement did not do since its sociologists assumed some erroneous ideas about alcoholism: "Factors thought to contribute to alcoholism included climate, economic status, and religious ideology as well as race/ethnicity and culture" (Mitchell, 168). María Luisa Garza's novel



successfully makes the case for anti-alcoholism while simultaneously questioning and reconfiguring some of the stereotyped information being disseminated by the temperance movement in Mexico.

*Tentáculos de fuego* is a tragic tale of a young man, Ernesto, who loses it all and eventually commits suicide due to his alcohol addiction. Guided by his fiancée Diana, his best friend Jacobo and his mother, Ernesto is unable to overcome his alcoholism despite threats, a stint at a clinic in the United States and pleas from his loved ones. The story follows his several attempts to quit and the devastation caused to his loved ones up until his tragic death. Interlaced with his story are the stories of Diana and Jacobo in which the first represents a noble woman seeking to change her fiancée through love and the latter as an orphan and working-class hero who functions as the loyal friend.

As a preliminary introduction to the novel's literary characteristics, it is useful to define the literary movement Naturalism as imported from France into Mexican literature. In defining the aspects of French naturalism found in Mexican literature, Francisco Mena states:

Uno de los aspectos fundamentales del naturalismo es fundir la información realista con el estilo y el mundo de la novela para que éstos sean creíbles. Para conseguir esto, Zola en su *Novela experimental* explica que el novelista debe de empezar observando sus alrededores para presentar esta realidad. Según Zola, el novelista, al crear sus personajes, debe darles un ambiente para moverse basado en la naturaleza misma, sin apartarse de la verdad. (208)

In *Tentáculos de fuego* María Luisa Garza begins with a realistic portrait of the surroundings in which Diana, the protagonist's love interest, finds herself:

Era la estancia pobre e imponía la serpiente disecada que escurriera a lo largo de la pared, gracias a la habilidad del pegamento de la adivinadora. También daba tristeza y hasta pavor al recinto, aquella lechuza de verdad, que con los ojos dilatados por la luz movía silenciosamente su cabeza. Y, para completar el cuadro, un gato negro maulaba en el rincón su misterioso amor, por la hembra ida a quien bien quisiera seguir, pero que le impedía hacerlo, la puerta herméticamente cerrada. (7)

This sort of description is present throughout the narration and plays a key role in Garza's portrayals of the effects of alcoholism. Garza does not shy away from providing her readers with harsh images of what she considers the reality of alcoholism: "Un hombre pasaba cerca de él, vomitando injurias y con un hedor de vino que trascendía a leguas" (25). The detail in describing the smells along with the play of the word *vomit* (literal or metaphoric) falls in line with naturalist tendencies. The trend for the Mexican temperance propaganda called for exaggerated images to relay the dangers of alcoholism: "The evils of alcoholism were often described in exaggerated terms" (Mitchell, 168). On the contrary, María Luisa Garza produces realistic and mundane images for her readers in an attempt to be as accurate about alcoholic's lives. The other important factor, one that is also seen in *La novia de Nervo*, is the portrayal of the negative influence of alcoholism on interpersonal relationships. As was argued for *La novia de Nervo*, this highlights the domestic sphere as the point of departure for the author. The difference in this novel is

the frequent inclusion of commentary on society at large as well as the presentation of the personal as an extension of the national.

A preoccupation with social ailments and injustices is considered another characteristic of Naturalist novels: “Descripciones de un vivísimo realismo; denuncia de injusticias sociales y gubernamentales; exposición de ideas sociales bastantes avanzadas, y aun feministas para la época” (Mena, 48). Garza falls short of presenting any discourse pertaining to a feminist agenda as the previous quotes allude to, but she does clearly provide through the character of Jacobo a critique of the social disparities in her country. Jacobo is portrayed not only as an orphan who was able to overcome the lowly position in life into which he was born but he is also used a heroic symbol for the working class through his activism for laborers and his working-class newspaper: “Levantó la huelga, encendió la antorcha, iluminó con su palabra sabedora de cosas muy altas, aquellos cerebros todavía cegados por el servilismo, uncidos al yugo de los de arriba” (Garza, 32). The idea that alcoholism was another form of exploiting of the working-class by the elite finds its roots in the anti-alcohol ideology in Mexico at the time:

In other words, these temperance advocates had sympathy for the plight of the lower classes: their exploitation by the bourgeoisie, their sub-standard living conditions, and the alcoholism that may have been caused by the above factors. But rather than improving these underlying socio-economic factors, they advocated that the poor change their habits by adopting middle-class principles of thrift, self-help, and morality (Peirece, Sobering, 185).

Jacobo could be considered the antithesis of alcoholic Ernesto: his example demonstrates what is possible even for those born into poverty. He becomes the literal voice of the *pueblo* through his activism and publication of a newspaper for the working class. Yet Ernesto also represents an entire people, as his monster – alcoholism – is the same monster of the Mexican people: “Pulpo gigantesco, titanico que extendía sus infinitos tentáculos de fuego sobre los pueblos, sobre los hombres” (Garza, 33). Within the same trope of social ailments, María Luisa Garza exposes the idea that a solution to this societal problem would be having alcoholics work hard and become educated; the character José Antonio, a labor rights advocate who overcame alcoholism, is used by Garza to deliver a speech that is patriotic and representative of her emphasis on education and work as the keys to winning the war against alcoholism and obtaining progress in Mexico:

Matemos el alcohol, librémonos de sus garras hediondas, y entonces cuando él caiga vencido, las cárceles se verán vacías y la escuela ha de multiplicarse, como aquel pan bendito de la leyenda bíblica. Las ciudades arrojarán a los campos sus parásitos transformándolos en hombres. La simiente fecundora entrará en la tierra que abra el surco, mientras cae el sudor de las frentes santificadas por el esfuerzo. ¡Hagamos patria, no bebamos alcohol! (52)

This point of view with regards to a solution for this social ailment takes a slight departure from what Garza probably saw in mainstream temperance propaganda. At the time the gatekeepers of the temperance movement in Mexico saw the solution to

alcoholism as the assimilation of middle-class values by the working class and indigenous:

In other words, these temperance advocates had sympathy for the plight of the lower classes: their exploitation by the bourgeoisie, their sub-standard living conditions, and the alcoholism that may have been caused by the above factors. But rather than improving these underlying socio-economic factors, they advocated that the poor change their habits by adopting middle-class principles of thrift, self-help, and morality. While this affirmed the reformers' own social status, as they set themselves up for emulation, it did nothing more for the poor than to offer them empty rhetoric that encouraged them to assimilate with the dominant culture. (Pierce,185)

The rhetoric in Garza's novel in part advocates for hard work and education but partially represents the idea of will power of the individual to overcome alcoholism. This argument is demonstrated in Diana's reading of several scientific cases in which an individual effort proved successful: "Había leído varios libros que hablaban sobre el tratamiento del alcohólico y tenía esperanza grandísima en que Ernesto se curare como otros se habían curado con voluntad, más que con medicinas" (Garza, 57). In this sense, Garza navigates between the idea that education will help this societal ailment and that self-will is the answer. Again, the author is developing her own stance on the issue, a stance that does not necessarily support the dominant discourse of the Mexican temperance movement of the moment.

Continuing to comment on naturalism's concern with societal problems, Garza's support and defense of the working class is transmitted not only through the success story of Jacobo or José Antonio but also through Diana's unwillingness to take her inheritance, "¿De qué me sirven los millones, si eran de mis abuelos, si costaron tal vez muchos dolores al paria, al irredento, al obrero de aquel ayer, tan mal retribuido y peor tratado?" (60). Altruistic Diana is the voice of the elite who recognize the cost of their wealth and who seek to do right by the needy of their country. Again, there is recognition on behalf of the elite that their wealth implied other's exploitation and this recognition not only serves the purpose of the Mexican temperance movement but also reinforces the conversation about society and alcoholism, which in turn maintains the discourse within the naturalism paradigm.

An extension about the topic of society and alcoholism, Garza's novel presents the disease not only as a working-class issue but also as one shared by the indigenous of Mexico. Diana is witness to an indigenous woman pleading with her spouse for him to stop drinking and this scene affects Diana in an unexpected way: "Diana se acurrucó en el fondo del carro. Como una visión maldita, se contempló retratada en esa triste mujer del pueblo" (71). Another female character in the novel involved with alcoholism is Andresillo's mother who is a working-class woman: "Pero el vicio, aquella sed inextinguible, la obligaba a huir y prefería la vieja el zaquizamí... ¡Lo importante era el alcohol!" (Garza, 83). These two images appear to demonstrate how the author is reproducing the discourse constructed by the national anti-alcohol movement in which only certain women of certain classes were presented as alcoholics:

They chastised *indias* and *campesinas* for introducing their children to alcohol consumption by giving them pulque to drink. They denigrated *peladas* for working in cantinas and cabarets, and at times, drinking themselves. In the minds of temperance advocates, if these women were not flagrant prostitutes, they at least used their sexuality to encourage men to imbibe. (Pierce, Sobering, 182)

Once again Garza is able to carefully insert in between the lines ideas that are contrary to the popular images propagated by the temperance movement in Mexico. In the scene where Diana observes the indigenous woman, Diana is able to see herself reflected in that woman. The capacity of empathizing on behalf of Diana allows Garza to once again blur class lines and challenge the idea that alcoholism is only present in the indigenous since Diana sees it as a real possibility that she could easily be the indigenous woman addicted to alcohol. The author takes it a step further (further away from the dominant imagery of the anti-alcohol movement) and includes a critique of the ways elite women also participate in the spread of alcoholism: “Los de arriba, envenenados con el dorado “champagne”, los de abajo rodando entre las olas del pulque mal oliente” (Garza, 88). The author exposes that the difference between the women is just the beverage they have chosen to drink, but at the core of these images lies the same alcoholic problem. Stephanie Mitchell reiterates how the use of class and ethnic stereotypes was employed to further anti-alcohol goals:

What was new in the 1930s, however, was the scale of popular mobilization, particularly, of women, in a new national project to

overcome what had been long considered widespread vice of the Mexican lower, especially indigenous, classes. (Mitchell, 168)

Including an indigenous, a working-class and an elite woman reveals Garza's movement against some of the discursive pillars of the Mexican anti-alcohol movement. It becomes evident that María Luisa Garza is directly responding to the propaganda of the Comité Nacional that depicted alcoholism as class- and ethnic-based. Once again as with her textual dialog with the *México de Afuera* ideology in her *crónicas* and with her interpretation of a post-revolutionary Mexico, the author is engaging in a national conversation with which she does not necessarily completely agree. Garza's concern with representing the ways in which the elite are also a part of the national societal ailments of Mexico echoes themes seen in *La novia de Nervo* that sought to bridge the class gap. It could be argued that unlike most anti-alcohol campaigners, Garza exhibits a concern with debunking class and racial hierarchy: "Reformers' ideas about ethnicity, class, and gender were prejudiced, and because they did not really attempt to address the socio-economic causes of alcohol abuse, they merely ended up reinforcing patriarchy, a hierarchical society, and the paternalistic nature of the government" (Peirce Sobering, 52-53). Although Garza does not offer a real proposal for how the elite, working-class and indigenous can overcome alcoholism, her work is important for presenting a more multi-dimensional, complex depiction than did the movement itself.

Up this point Garza's novel has demonstrated the author's alignment with Naturalist characteristics by presenting reality in a scientific manner and by focusing on social justice. Another Naturalist tendency present in this novel is the use of science and nature to explain human behavior:



Según el autor francés, hay determinismo absoluto para todo fenómeno humano. Este determinismo puede ser tanto hereditario como social. Algunas veces el determinismo hereditario y el social se unen e influyen al mismo tiempo en la formación de los personajes. (Mena 212)

This tendency is also present in *Tentáculos de fuego*. One of the first characters to be described in terms of heredity and social upbringing is Andresillo, who is described as follows:

Quería Diana al pobre jibosillo nacido en su casa, de los amores callejeros de una criada borracha, con un rufián. Un golpe de los muchos que propinaba el canalla a la amante, o el alcohol que ésta ingiriera, hicieron sin duda que la criatura, en el vientre aún, se marcara por su vida toda.  
(10)

Here the author makes evident that heredity is a vicious cycle when it comes to alcoholism and that Andresillo's future has been marked by this biological truth. Another character who confronts the idea of heredity is Ernesto who is aware that his alcoholism is something he can pass down to any children he chooses to have: "¿Cómo darte hijos enfermos, acaso con el vicio atávico de su padre? Cómo darte un hijo si estoy maculado, si estoy maldito" (53-54). This recurring theme invades Ernesto's thoughts even when he is apparently cured, "¡Nunca tendría un hijo inoculado del virus temido...Jamás. Y ella, por su instinto sutil de la mujer que adivina un más allá, tan lejano como imposible, miraba, miraba al monstruo, otra vez avanzando, con su paso, dominador y hediondo" (57). Heredity and destiny have joined forces to determine and, in this case, foreshadow how the story will end.

In this case Andresillo's destiny is determined by his surroundings, which are a reflection of the ailments of the lower classes: domestic violence and alcoholism. If Andresillo's destiny is determined by his surroundings, Ernesto's alcoholism is determined by heredity. Throughout the novel Ernesto and his loved ones are seen battling a monster (alcoholism) that is already written into Ernesto's destiny, "¡No tenía remedio! Estaba escrito!" (25). In this sense, it is understood that one cannot change one's destiny.

Like Andresillo, Ernesto's future rests on his predetermined destiny, a destiny not dependent on the environment in which he was brought up but simply predetermined just like death is: "Las cadenas estaban fuertes, eran de acero irrompibles, como la fatalidad" (33). This idea that one's destiny is predetermined is also present for Diana, "Y Diana empezó a crecer empapada de los cariños y de los gustos que presta a los elegidos de la suerte, una fortuna" (37). This sense of the futility of fighting against one's destiny is seen throughout and when Ernesto falls to alcoholism after his stint in the United States, Garza repeats her mantra:

La dicha fué efímera. Se disipó como las lluvias de verano, como el llanto de los niños. Se agostó bajo el rayo de sol abrasador, bajo el ansia de lo implacable y de lo que el destino había escrito con letras de fuego. (72)

For Garza determinism is not only the power that leads men astray or a force of negative influence; it also affects Diana's life. When speaking about her, Ernesto admits that Diana "tiene porvenir para el mañana, tendrá su banquete en el pacer porque la naturaleza le donó muchas virtudes y la suerte la coronó con la fortuna" (53).

Therefore, María Luisa Garza remains true to naturalism's use of determinism to explain human behavior.

The nuance in Garza's brand and use of *Naturalismo* is seen in the imbedded story of José Antonio who overcomes alcoholism on his own through work and education. Here Garza once again promotes the idea that a person can become an alcoholic despite a good upbringing, "Bebió sin descanso y como no estaba familiarizado con el monstruo maldito del alcohol, éste pudo fácilmente tender sus tentáculos de fuego y cual pulpo avernal, acabó con el sentimiento, minó la nobleza de una educación que subsistía sólidamente e hizo del hombre tranquilo una hiena feroz" (45). Additionally, the hereditary argument is questioned: "El, José Antonio, el hijo de un cumplido industrial que murió víctima de su deber que jamás pisó la cantina y que no una...muchas, incontables veces le predicó al hijo los peligros de aquellos centros de prostitución y de crimen" (45). If the hereditary argument holds true, then José Antonio has no predetermined inclination for alcohol. When considering the social atmosphere question, José Antonio was raised in a well-to-do home. For Garza alcohol takes on a life of its own beyond heredity and upbringing, and once a person tries it, they are permanently changed. The novel moves a step beyond naturalism and demonstrates that the social ailment of alcoholism can at times be the result of the power of alcohol as a substance with heredity, social upbringing having no bearing.

In contrast to the Naturalist paradigm that presents fatalism, the Jacobo character is depicted as a person who overcomes determinism. Portrayed as the loyal friend of the alcoholic Ernesto and placed on a pedestal for his kindness, Jacobo provides for the novel an exception to the determinist notions of Naturalism by growing into a honest and good

man despite his upbringing: “El cuerpo de Jacobo, hospiciano, sin el seno materno, sin los cuidados de un hogar, había crecido no obstante aquél abandono” (20). Again, María Luisa Garza seems to propose that one’s lot in life is not directly linked to the social class or circumstances one is born into. Her deviation from the naturalist idea of societal predetermination allows Garza to stamp her own ideological perspective on the novel. This is repeated towards the end of the novel when Ernesto falls back into alcoholism and he himself makes note of his capacity to avoid becoming an alcoholic despite an upbringing that was less than optimal:

Yo un hospiciano, un nadie, un escoria a quien la sociedad echó al cesto de los desperdicios, (como para encubrir una falta de amor) yo...allí voy por la vida, sin padres, sin cariños...porque , dime ¿habrá mujer que quiera unirse a un infeliz como yo, sin nombre? Voy solo, algunas veces he querido beber, olvidar entre los humos del alcohol, mi soledad y mi vergüenza...Pero me quiero mucho a mí mismo, me respeto en grado sumo, para rebajarme a servir de burla a los que me contemplan” (75-76).

María Luisa Garza’s take on *Naturalismo* reveals similarities to that of the most famous female naturalist writer, Pardo Bazán: both women are fervent Catholics. These religious beliefs put both women at odds with positivist and naturalist dogma that sought to discredit religious knowledge through science. Just as her predecessor Pardo Bazán, Garza seeks to provide a *Naturalismo* that does not contradict her Catholic beliefs. Not only does naturalism as a school of thought and literary genre contest religious influence, the temperance movement in Mexico also includes an ideology working against religion:

Politicians also desired that the anti-alcohol campaign would help to reduce the power of Catholicism over Mexicans of all genders, classes, and ethnicities. As heirs of the Liberal tradition, revolutionaries felt that religion in general, or superstition and fanaticism as they called it, kept people from achieving their potential as New Men and Women because it encouraged them to reject science and fear progress. (178)

María Luisa Garza's concern with religion is revealed as she reminds readers that the upper class must treat the working class well, lest they have forgotten Christ's teachings: "Golpeó implacable contra el opresor, maldijo de los que olvidaron las doctrinas de Jesucristo" (32). Her justification for social equality depends on her Catholic beliefs. María Luisa Garza's nuanced stance is that of relying on the scientific aspect of naturalism to speak about alcoholism while asking her fellow believers to help the needy overcome this disease. Additionally, Garza's call for religious values contests the anti-alcohol supporter's view of religion as contributing to the problem.

Although Garza forwards a religious discourse to promote social justice, she simultaneously deems it unfit to confront naturalist determinism. Ernesto's mother's prayers and hope are depicted as simply not enough to undo his predetermined destiny: "¡Cuánto pedía ella en su ingenua fe de mujer creyente, ajena a otra verdad que la de la esperanza. Pedía, pedía con todas sus fuerzas el milagro, el milagro que no llegaba...que tal vez no iba a llegar nunca!" (Garza, 43). Indeed no amount of prayer or belief is enough to redeem and/or save Ernesto from alcoholism: "Pero si Dios Omnipotente y fuerte que desde lo alto mira este sufrir, no puede...¿Quién piensas tú, que obrará el milagro?" (86). María Luisa Garza is attempting to reconcile her uncertainties with

religion while proposing aspects of it that are useful for fighting alcoholism (social justice in Catholic teachings). She develops a refined argument that exposes the utility of religion to fight alcoholism while also demonstrating its shortcomings in this same fight. The author successfully avoids falling into the popular modes of representation of the anti-alcohol movement while keeping the parts of her religious beliefs she considers necessary intemperance advocacy.

Through all these observations that include naturalist description, a focus on social ailments, preoccupation with determinism combined with science and religion, it would be worthwhile to consider the study of *Tentáculos de fuego* alongside the other important Mexican naturalists of the time. At the same time it is imperative to examine further the ways in which Garza moved with and against the literary limitations of writing within this genre. Beyond considerations about literary genre it would also be beneficial to continue the discussion started here about the manner in which the author pushes against and affirms the goals of the temperance movement in Mexico, the movement which sponsored this novel.

*Tentáculos de fuego* does provide material with which to discuss gender even if the novel does not develop any truly innovative images of women. The two main characters represent traditional roles for women: the loving fiancé and the all sacrificing mother. “Diana, la dulce prometida, la madre ... la buena madre que no tenía más en el mundo que el orgullo de aquel hijo ...”(Garza, 19). Despite this, there are moments in which Garza seems to point to the dysfunction of heterosexual relations when at the beginning the gypsy fortune teller laments to Diana, “Porque tus desdichas son como las de todas las mujeres. ¡Siempre por un hombre!” (Garza, 8). This is reminiscent of

Garza's *crónicas* that point towards marriage and relationships between men and woman as always negative for the women involved.<sup>14</sup> The main critique developed alongside the plot is a critique of Diana's innocent idealization of her love saving Ernesto from alcoholism: "Amaba a Ernesto y le sería siempre fiel! Y... ese mismo amor, le ayudaría para librarlo del monstruo que lo tenía bajo su enorme peso" (22). Diana is depicted as a naive dreamer who has to come to terms with a cruel reality: "Remontóse a los cuentos de hadas. Imaginaba ser la princesita oriental a quien los genios hechizaran al amado" (Garza, 9).

It is precisely this fairytale that Garza makes reference to and deconstructs as images that have engulfed women with unrealistic notions about love and relationships. She accomplishes this through the character of Diana's guardian, Isabel de Garcilazo, who is portrayed as an old delusional maid who has fallen prey to the romance novels she fervently consumes, "Como el Caballero de la Triste Figura, atestó su biblioteca de libros de caballería, dando vida y forma en su imaginación a un sueño que tuvo cierta noche, ya grávida la mente de aquellos novelones y ayuna el estómago de alimentos que contrarrestaran los fuegos del cerebro" (38). The direct critique and burlesque tone with regards to the unattainable ideals presented in romance novels is developed through the story of Isabel. She is the novel's comedic relief and often rambles on about her royal ancestry as justification for her waiting on a Spanish knight to come sweep her off her feet: "Lo más triste es que me obliges a mí... toda una Garcilazo de la más rancia nobleza española, venida a México desde los tiempos del Virrey Iturrigaray... el Barón de Casa Fuerte, no ha de tardar en llagar por estos mundos, en busca de mi noble mano..." (61). As a very modern and unexpected gesture for a writer who is Mexican and of the elite

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<sup>14</sup> Needless to say this dysfunction in heterosexual relationships is at the core of *La novia de Nervo*.

class, Garza uses Isabel to speak about older women dating younger men: “Pero qué el amor tiene edad, criatura? Y, no te has fijado tú en que los hombres, gustan más de una mujer madura que de una chiquilla que empieza a vivir, como tú? (67). For the time, this is a very modern and unconventional view of interpersonal relationships.

Within the reference to gender relations and like in *La novia de Nervo*, *Tentáculos de fuego* presents the United States as the place for women’s freedom:

Mira chica, tú no te metas en mis cosas. Deja que yo haga lo que más me acomode...por otra parte, estamos en el país de la libertad. Fíjate...fíjate en este párrafo del periódico: Mr. Adams Evens, de venticinco años acaba de contraer matrimonio con Miss Ruth Norman de cincuenta y cinco.”  
(Garza, 68)

In this case it is not the young woman of the novel that seeks a modern relationship but her older, single aunt. Both Diana as idealistic and Isabel as modern provide a vehicle through which Garza makes a statement about women’s relationships.

In closing, *Tentáculos de fuego* functions as a naturalist novel that is in dialog with the temperance ideology of Mexico in 1930. Despite the novel being published and funded by the Comité Nacional de Lucha contra el Alcoholism, María Luisa Garza finds the discursive space to develop her own particular take on this issue. This committee was short lived, as Mitchell reminds us: “By 1932, the Comité Nacional had disappeared” (168). Furthermore, the positive changes that could have been with regards to women did not necessarily occur: “Although securing an alcohol- and violence-free home would certainly have been a victory for women in the 1930s, this did not involve an overt challenge to patriarchy, at either the public or the private level” (Pierce, 183). What makes



this novel important is not only it's didactic function but the way the author negotiates the literary space provided by naturalism as a genre and by the temperance movement of Mexico.

## **Conclusion**

These two novels play an important role in understanding the ways in which Garza worked with the novel genre and subsequent literary genres: novel of the Mexican revolution and Naturalism. The intent is not to neatly fit both novels into each generic category; instead the goal is to highlight the characteristics that move the novels into those generic categories while making note of how the author manipulates the norms of each. Gerhart outlines this process in general:

Genre does not define the text and therefore should not be treated as a logical category. Instead genre functions as a hypothesis that calls forth rigorous reflection on the complex factors that make individual works successful or not. In this sense, the empirical reality of a particular text exposes that text's many possible relationships to the genre and gender hypotheses we use to organize our response to it. Genre theory forces us to formulate our own notion of the informing principle of texts – texts we might otherwise leave at the level of vague enjoyment or unexamined antipathy. (28)

As with the genre of the *crónica*, Garza reconfigures the novel of the revolution, the naturalist movement and the anti-alcohol movement discourses in order to express her particular view of things. The usefulness of generic classification of these two novels rests on the idea of placing her work in dialog with the other novels by her

contemporaries and allows one to offer alternative readings of the major national moments in Mexican literary history. Lastly, because Garza writes as a woman, this classification becomes all the more important in providing a contrast to movements and genres dominated by men.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**BEYOND THE WRITTEN WORD: MARÍA LUISA GARZA’S SOCIAL**  
**ACTIVIST LEGACY**

Our strategy is how we cope--how we  
measure and weigh what is to be said  
and when, what is to be done and how,  
and to whom and to whom and to whom,  
daily deciding/risking who it is we can  
call an ally, call a friend (whatever that  
person's skin, sex or sexuality). We are  
women without a line. We are women who  
contradict each other.

Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*

**Introduction**

The journalistic work of María Luisa Garza “Loreley” has been recovered alongside many newspaper articles covering her life. Both her own journalistic work and those newspaper reports are windows into the author’s life, especially as regards her social involvement. As a well-known author, Garza’s travels, service to the community and other events she participates in are written about, sometimes in the same newspapers she works for. This recuperated archive of her social activism, along with her *crónicas* and novels, demonstrate her interest in several causes relevant to women and Mexican working-class immigrants. In what follows, some of the more important episodes in Garza’s social activism will be highlighted and commented on while exploring the link

this work had with the literature previously presented and analyzed. In what ways were Garza's narratives an extension of the work she did with philanthropic organizations and on her own? What do the events covered by the press say about Garza's politics and views with regards to issues surrounding gender, immigration, class and other social issues? Her complex relationship with philanthropy, politics, immigrant rights and class issues will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **The Written Word as Weapon: Miguel Cenicerros**

In 1921, a journalist from Zacatecas named Miguel Cenicerros is assassinated by the state's governor. An article entitled "Un periodista fue asesinado en Zacatecas" published July 26, 1921, in Los Angeles' *El Herald de México* notes that his assassination is provoked by his anti-government editorial work in the newspaper he ran, *El piquín*: "El señor Miguel Cenicerros, que es paladín de que se trata, fué el que perdió la vida víctima de su virilidad como oposicionsita al regimen actual" (1). As the months pass and investigations into the event take place, on January 2, 1922, María Luisa Garza writes in the same newspaper "La muerte de Cencierros" as a call to action for her fellow journalists and a critique of their inactivity and silence with regards to their comrade's death: "¿Qué época es ésta, donde se asesina periodistas, sin que sus compañeros clamen venganza y se apresten a unirse, para resguardarse del mismo peligro?" (5) The article makes two important points about gender and social duty. First, María Luisa Garza calls male journalists' manhood into question through her argument that despite being a woman she harbors more anger than her male counterparts: "Soy mujer y la sangre hierve no obstante en mis venas y la rabia incontinida se alza en mi pecho" (5). This is juxtaposed to her male contemporaries who are deemed void of anger or outrage at this

murder. Secondly, she denounces these same men's inaction concerning Ceniceró's death: "Mi alma femenina no quiere sangre. No quiere cobardes que se abatan ante el prócer. Quiere valientes que ensalcen la virtud y que denigren el vicio" (6). Garza depicts herself as having a more virile and masculine response than the male journalists who remain silenced while she carefully notes she was not advocating violence. Not only does Garza critique this silence, she also critiques the journalists' inactivity: "¿De qué han servido, entonces, los Congresos? ¿De qué esas reuniones de hombres como en Torreón, como en Chihuahua, como el que se preparan en Veracruz? ¿Qué fuisteis a hacer ahí, compañeros, si no a solidificaros, a ser uno para todos y todos para uno?" (6). As will be seen in the case of Garza with regards to the Cruz Azul organization and as it was seen in her *crónicas* and novels, María Luisa Garza often focuses her critique on the inactivity of her fellow citizens and, specifically, on the elite class and their philanthropic organizations. As the previous quote demonstrates, the author is frustrated at the futility of journalistic conferences and meetings that do not result in action that can affect current events. What makes this particular news commentary more than just a demonstration of Garza's perspective on the death of Miguel Ceniceró is the turn of events following the publication of this piece in another newspaper: El Paso's *La patria*. On the same page of the previous article is another piece written by Garza about the unintended effects of her piece "La muerte de Ceniceró" in the El Paso newspaper: "He leído en la primera plana de 'La Patria', que se edita en El Paso, Texas, que por un artículo mío 'La muerte de Ceniceró', se amenaza de muerte al director del viril diario regiomontano 'Nueva Patria'" (5). This is a glimpse of real life consequences beyond the discursive practices of María Luisa Garza. The author takes this opportunity to speak about the death threats

and to comment on gender and her own literary clout. The tone is very much arrogant and self-assured as the author claims to laugh off the said threats and explains why

Y, ¿cómo no he de reirme? Soy mujer y me mataría primero, que faltar a una palabra empanada por mí...a pesar de ser mujer, tengo el pudor, que desconocen muchos hombre, el pudor de ser firme, de ser leal y de pensar mucho, lo que voy a firmar eternamente, antes de escribirlo” (5).

Not only does the author claim to laugh-off death threats, she is also questioning, again, the manhood of those men who are not as firm in their beliefs as she is. As the author carefully navigates her gender critique, she follows the previous statement with a reflection on how she “accidentally” began writing about politics despite being a woman: “Cuando me lancé a la dura lucha del periodismo, no pensé jamás que mi pluma fuera a ocuparse de cuestiones de gobierno ni de nombres que fungen en la política como poderosos” (5). The article concludes with Garza highlighting her literary clout and her ability to obtain vengeance but not in the traditional masculine and violent way but through her national and international influence:

Si a González Peña, se le toca un cabello de la cabeza...pobres de los que lo intenten. Revolvería, no solo mi República, sino las Repúblicas todas Sud Americanas, donde mi nombre empieza ya a hacerse conocido. Revolvería el mundo y mi venganza, estaría en el estigma infamante, que había de arrojar para siempre sobre la frente del verdugo. (5)

Like in her *crónica* about María del Pilar who violently avenges her father’s death and like Madeleine who overcomes her abusive husband’s manipulation, Garza is demonstrating that women are capable of being stronger than men. Not only is the author

threatening those who have in turn threatened the life of her journalist colleague but she is also making use of the clout her work has allowed for her. The conclusion of this article takes an interesting militant turn as the author states, “... conmigo todo el batallón de valientes que militan en las filas del periodismo, toda la prensa honrada y viril, escupirá su indignación sobre los sicarios del tirano” (5). Using a military metaphor, she places herself with the very masculine and virile role of condemning not only the assassination of the Miguel Ceniceros but also the death threats received by González Peña<sup>1</sup>. Although the newspaper article she refers to could not be found in the archives, the discourse and her subsequent decision to publicly respond to the death threats is a strong way of positioning herself within (a perhaps even implicitly above) the ranks of male journalists, it truly reveals a daring and self-confident Garza whose tone has surely transformed from the tone seen in her *crónicas* of *El Imparcial de Texas* from 1920 to 1921 during which her discourse fit neatly within feminine characteristics and conservative views. It is even a transformation from her later *crónicas* and the two novels studied here where there is never a true questioning of any male figures manhood as clearly as there is one here.

### **The Death Penalty and a Mexican Immigrant: The Case of Pedro Sánchez**

María Luisa Garza's outrage at inactivity in the face of injustice is not limited to discursive threats and metaphors; her work with the case of Pedro Sánchez exhibits her

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<sup>1</sup> As reported in *La prensa*, González Peña, as director of the Monterrey newspaper *Patria nueva* is assaulted due to his anti-government views:

El diario “Nueva patria”, de esta capital, que ha venido asumiendo una actitud hostil al gobierno de Juan M. García y su partido, impopulares hasta el extremo acaba de ser objeto de ese atentado. Un grupo de diputados ‘confederados’, asalto las oficinas de ese diario, con la intención de asesinar al viril escritor Juan González Peña, que ahí se encontraba, y contra quien se habían venido profiriendo amenazas desde hace tiempo. (“Asaltaron la oficina de “Nueva patria” pretendiendo el asesinato de su director” 4 Apr. 1922: 1 & 6)

ability to affect change beyond the pages of her journalistic work. The case of this man allows Garza to showcase not only her work with the Cruz Azul organization that helps her with this issue but also her diplomatic ability.

Pedro Sánchez is a Mexican immigrant and inmate at a Marlin, Texas jail where he is condemned to death: "... condenado a morir en la horca, es el reo que en compañía de José Flores está acusado de complicidad en la muerte de un carcelero de la prisión" ("Otro Mexicano sentenciado a la horca en Texas" *La Prensa* 14 Jan. 1922: 1). In a series of what appear to be calculated steps, Garza is able to save the life of this inmate. The first of these steps is the granting of the title of "Honorary Member" to the Texas governor Patt M. Neff: "Ayer en la tarde, a las tres y quince minutos, recibió el Gobernador del Estado, Mr. Patt M. Neff el diploma de Socio Honorario de la Cruz Azul Mexicana establecida en los Estados Unidos" ("Reunión de varias Cruces Azules en Austin, Texas", *La Pensa*, Feb. 13 1922: 1). It is in fact Garza who gives the governor the diploma: "...recibió el diploma que le fue entregado por la señora María Luisa Garza, Presidenta de la Brigada Central de esta ciudad" (1). This honor is given to the governor with ulterior motives, clearly exposed at the end of this article: "Por circunstancias especiales, la delegación de San Antonio omitió solicitar la clemencia del Gobernador en favor del mexicano Pedro Sánchez que se encuentra sentenciado a muerte en Marlin, pues esto se hará por escrito y conforme una documentación amplia" (1).

Less than a month later on February 4, 1922, María Luisa Garza begins her efforts to convince Governor Neff to pardon Pedro Sánchez: "Loreley presenta una carta de la Prensa Asociada de los Estados de México al gobernador de Texas, Patt Neff, durante una breve entrevista que le concedió en San Antonio, Texas" ("Loreley trata de salvar a



Pedro Sánchez, *El Herald de México*, 3). Only one day later, *El Herald de México* announces that Sánchez has been saved from being hung: “El mexicano Pedro Sánchez, quien había sido sentenciado a muerte por el tribunal de este Estado de Texas, acaba de ser salvado de la terrible sentencia” (Mar. 5 1922, 7). The credit is given to the Mexican consulate and Garza: “La labor del cónsul obregonista, Cazarín, fué en este caso de una gran efectividad, así como la de la presidente de la ‘Cruz Azul Mexicana’, señora María Luisa Garza” (7). *El Herald de México* also publishes the letter sent to Garza by the governor regarding this situation: “La carta de usted fué gran ayuda para mi, en llegar a la conclusión de este caso” (“El gobernador Neff contesto a Loreley sobre el indulto de Pedro Sánchez”, Mar. 12, 1922: 2). It is clear that María Luisa Garza sees her position as a journalist and her presidency of the Cruz Azul as tools to affect change in people’s lives and the legacy of her work is well documented through *El Herald de México*. Yet, not all her interactions with the Cruz Azul were positive; her time as President is short and polemical.

### **Altruism, Patriotism and La Cruz Azul Mexicana**

María Luisa Garza’s role as President of the Cruz Azul Mexicana forced the author to reflect on the way service was being done in the community. La Cruz Azul Mexican can trace its roots back to nineteenth- century Mexico:

Cruz Azul Mexicana, a charitable organization, was established in 1920 by Mexican-American women in San Antonio to help poor Mexican families. Cruz Azul Mexicana grew out of the mutual-aid societies.... that Texas Mexicans organized beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a means to unite themselves to combat ethnic discrimination and

economic uncertainty. The *mutualistas* themselves originated in Mexico, where several had been organized by 1869 to provide medical and funeral insurance and recreational and educational benefits to the poor and working classes (Acosta, n.p.).

Acosta also notes that the majority of the members of the Cruz Azul Mexicana are elite women who tend to be involved in charitable organizations. One of the key roles of this organization is its medical services: “La Cruz Azul was often the only source of medical attention for the Mexican diaspora throughout the Southwest” (Pérez 97). Eventually, the organization affects San Antonio in a myriad of ways as documented by Acosta and Winegarten in *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History*:

In the 1920s, Cruz Azul contributed to the Tejano community in major ways. With \$4,000 gathered through public fund-raising, the group established a free public clinic in San Antonio. Patients could obtain food at the clinic, and mothers were provided with circulars on infant care. Cruz Azul also established a library...wrote sample contracts to help Tejano workers obtain fair employment, provided a legal defense fund (212).

The first traces of Garza’s involvement with this organization are found in an article published on the seventh of February 1922 in *La Prensa* of San Antonio that announces Garza’s election as president of the central branch of the Cruz Azul: “Señora Luisa Garza (“Loreley”) Presidenta de la Brigada Central” (“Quedó formada la brigada central de la Cruz Azul”). Interestingly, a little less than a month later on March third, the same newspaper announces that Garza has resigned from her position as president:

“La señora Luisa Garza ‘Loreley,’ que figuraba como Presidenta de la institución, por razones enteramente personales, presentó la renuncia del puesto que ocupa” (“Renunció la presidencia de la brigada de la Cruz Azul Mexicana” 3 Mar. 1922, 8). What follows are two articles written by Garza in the Los Angeles newspaper, *El Herald de México*; the first details the author’s reasons for accepting the President position and the second outlining the reasons for her resignation. Both articles reveal the author’s experience working for these organizations and her views on community service as expressed by the Mexican elites.

“Por qué acepté la Presidencia de la Cruz Azul” is the first article that directly responds to the sudden resignation of Garza from her role as President. The first noticeable statement made by Garza in this piece is her rejection of politics into the Cruz Azul Mexicana when an anonymous interlocutor informs her that the organization is propaganda for Álvaro Obregon: “El estar yo al frente de las bigradas de Texas, significa, por lo tanto que en la Cruz Azul Mexicana no hay tal obregonismo. Porque, Obregon hoy, otro ayer y mañana otro más, la Cruz Azul seguirá militando, no bajo el amparo de un gobierno sino como pregón de gloria para México en los Estados Unidos” (26 Mar. 1922: 7). The assessment of the interlocutor is correct with regards to the similarities between the Cruz Azul Mexicana and Obregón’s political goals; while Obregón sought educational and labor reforms along with land redistributions initiatives that favored the poor and working-classes<sup>2</sup>, the Cruz Azul Mexicana also helped workers obtain better

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<sup>2</sup> This is further explained by Paul Hart:

Among the many revolutionaries that had united in the war against the usurper of wealth and prestige compared to Villa and Zapata, Obregón and Carranza were the core of the group calling themselves the Constitutionalists. They positioned themselves as heirs to Madero and offered a similar program, calling for political democracy, Mexican control of its resources, and greater workers’ rights. (21)

pay and rights in the United States while providing basic necessities like medical care and food (Acosta & Winegarten 211-213). In this regard, it would make sense for Garza as an elite to reject such political leanings; she would not want to affiliate with Obregón as a supporter of the revolutionary cause. Yet, the views of elite Mexican's with regards to philanthropic work is part of a more complex system of beliefs, as noted by Richard A. Garcia in *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1914*:

This altruism was not part of a palpable dogma such as the “equality of men” – because the *ricos* understood the Comtian belief that “reason, feeling and activity” can be harmonized and thus living and helping others becomes an individual statement in line with the reality that all people are different and unequal, yet part of the same society and culture (223).

Here Richard A. Garcia questions the altruistic motivation behind the involvement of the elite in organizations like the Cruz Azul Mexicana. This idea seems exemplified in Garza's views as expressed in this article:

Yo no me he rebajado hasta esas clases casi analfabetas...antes bien, las he alzado hasta mí. “Ante Dios somos todos iguales y para México, todos somos sus hijos”, dije en mi discurso. Lo mismo hemos de tender la mano a la diestra empuñada de una aristócrata, que a la burda y tosca manecita de la obrera. “Hacer obra de humanidad y de patria” esa será mi divisa. (7)

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With regards to land: “Importantly, the Constitutionists wrote a new Constitution in 1917. Two articles stand out because they represent some of the core struggles of the Revolution. Article 27 called for a redistribution of land to *pueblos*, the granting of additional land and water as necessary, and the creation of *ejidos*” (Hart 25). Obregón specifically: “gained the support of the remaining *Zapatistas* leadership by promising to carry out the land reform that Madero and Carranza had refused to implement” (Hart 26).

Therefore, it appears that María Luis Garza is working with a conservative view of service as a humanist duty and that there is natural inequality even within the same peoples from the same culture. The author concludes by reiterating that the work of the Cruz Azul should not depend on the politics of Mexico and instead should solely focus on helping their fellow Mexican immigrants and exiles:

La Cruz Azul Mexicana debe estar hecha para proteger al niño huérfano en extraño suelo...al anciano cuyos brazos no puede esgrimir el arma del trabajo...al expatriado que, enfermo y sin recursos, anhela tornar al suelo bendito de Anáhuac. Para exaltar en aquellos valles queridos su último aliento...Eso debe ser la Cruz Azul Mexicana, sin importarnos nunca el nombre del presidente de nuestro país. (7)

While the previous neatly places Garza within a conservative and elitist discourse on service, later Garza develops complex and almost contradictory views about the Cruz Azul Mexicana and the community involvement by the elite, which is what was seen in her *crónicas* and novels. Garza does not appear to ever occupy a comfortable or absolute position about Mexican elites in the United States, womanhood, philanthropy or politics.

After writing the previous article about her acceptance of the Cruz Azul Mexicana presidency, Garza publishes “El por que de mi renuncia” in *El Herald de México* on April 23, 1922. This piece is an in-depth critique and dismantling of the inner workings of the Cruz Azul Mexicana branch in San Antonio combined with a critical look at the elite of San Antonio. The author begins by revealing that the funds raised are not being used for the purpose of helping the less fortunate: “ Mientras el dinero que se recabe se gaste en darnos taco los de arriba para derrochar en automóvil diez dólares y dar a una

familia que se muere de hambre sólo un dólar....LA CRUZ AZUL va al fracaso” (5).

While her article detailing why she joined the Cruz Azul Mexican presents a conservative stance on service, this critique is aimed directly at the mode of operation of philanthropic organizations at the hands of elites who are self-serving. Beyond monetary fraud, Garza also accuses the organization of sending false reports back to Mexico: “El Gobierno de nuestro país está sufriendo un engaño vil. Se le mandan reportazgos informándoles de recepciones y de obras que no existen sino en la imaginación farolona de los que medran a costa de esta institución” (5). María Luisa Garza goes on to claim she was promised liberty upon her acceptance of the President leadership role: “Se me dijo que yo tendría libertad para hacer y deshacer y hartó bien conocida mi manera de ser que siempre va rectamente por los senderos de honor, era inútil que se me llamara para querer después que yo me ajuste a las CONVENIENCIAS sociales” (5). Again, Garza struggles with the norms of the elite class that, according to her view, are more focused on socializing than actually helping the poor and working class communities of Mexicans in the United States. “Yo no sé de sociedad ni sé de intereses. Ni me importa el dinero ni me importa el qué dirán. A mí ni me asustan las amenazas ni me detiene el mañana. Obro sana y justamente, sin medir las consecuencias” (5). Along with this critique, Garza accuses many of the members of the organization of joining with the sole motive of being recognized but not actually doing any work: “Hacer comprender a las socias de la CRUZ AZUL que quien a ella pertenece no debe limitarse a lucir coquetamente un traje blanco con cordones azules, sino a enseñarse a cuidar enfermos – y cuidarlos de hecho – no ponerse trajes como los usan militares de banqueta sólo por sport” (5). Again, the author

is exposing the lack of true altruistic motivation behind some members of this organization and exposing the somewhat superficial nature of the organization.

Continuing the critique, Garza then states that the tradition of hosting parties and such events is ridiculous: “¿Dar bailes y kermeses para recaudar fondos? Esto me parece pierrotesco y ridículo. LA CRUZ AZUL MEXICANA debe respetarse” (5). The use of the adjective *pierrotesco* is referencing the 17th century Italian character performed in theater (Neglia). What is meant is the idea that the raising funds is just an excuse for socializing and play-acting, just as the character Pierrot’s antics were ridiculous in his pursuit of the love of Colombine: “Pierrot, el triste enamorado, es el hombre capaz de cualquier sacrificio por alcanzar su objetivo, el amor de Colombine” (Neglia 552). Furthermore, Pierrot is represented as a clown figure so Garza could be intimating that the elites and their dances are acting as dressed-up clowns in order to secure the funds which ultimately are not even distributed well. All the above critiques point to a common denominator, which is the inner workings Garza considers to be a farce. María Luis Garza’s article is literally unmasking the hypocritical persons or aspects of this “charitable” organization.

The author goes on to detail her efforts to get things done:

Yo propuse que se incorporar la Cruz Azul a la Cámara de Comercio para darle más fuerza. Yo propuse que se pusieran cajitas en todos los teatros y lugares públicos, especias de alcancías para recabar fondos. Que se pusieran a duela los grandes establecimientos para mensualmente tener entradas fijas y disponer brigadas de inspección de sanidad y de enfermería. Nada se esto se atendió...se quiere seguir el método de

andarse exhibiendo en teatros y fiestas. Sociedad e relumbrón que no protege ni ayuda a nadie pues dos veces tuve por mi cuenta que repatriar a compatriotas miserables si contar con ayuda ni apoyo ninguno de nadie.

(5)

She is concerned that the organization is merely comprised of social posturing (theater and parties) instead of actual work to help the masses. Through all these statements about her personal experience, the author is distancing herself from the Cruz Azul Mexicana because of the lack of involvement and actual work done by its members.

What adds another layer of complexity are some of Garza's other complaints about the charity: "No me agradaría ver a una de las socias de la CRUZ AZUL paseando en barrios apartados y a escondidas con su cortejos de bracero. Esto fue uno de los motivos que me impulsaron a desistir de mi esfuerzo que estaba viendo estéril" (5). While she earlier critiques the elite tendency to be more concerned with being social rather than serving their community, a critique through which she distances herself from her own class, here she is making a comment on appropriate womanly behavior and class differences that rings conservative. The quote expresses a conservative view on women's behavior and the negative image of a woman secretly meeting with a lover while at the same time finding inappropriate for an elite woman to date a *bracero* (working-class man). This implies the need to keep the classes separate; this idea reflects an elite and conservative discourse. The concern expressed by Garza that reflects an elitist point of view is her dismay at the type of women leading the organization:

Yo abomino de la separación de clases. Para mí la hija del obrero, cuando se educa, cuando se instruye, es digna de sentarse en un trono. Para



presidentas de la Cruz Azul urgen mujeres instruidas, pero parece que se ha escogido para esto, mujeres que no saben ni siquiera poner su nombre.

¿Cómo puede así progresar una institución? (5)

Whereas it could be read that the author is simply promoting the need for educating the masses, she appears to actually lament that uneducated women are allowed to lead. This lack of respect for the agency of working-class and poor through social engagement reflects in Garza a conservative stance with regards to role of each class.

This contentious relationship that María Luisa Garza has with the Cruz Azul Mexicana reflects both conservative views about womanhood and class and more progressive views and critical views about the way the elite do philanthropic work. Garza is obviously not comfortable with the social aspects of hosting events and posturing for the sake of fundraising. Yet, Garza holds on to conservative notions about class differences and proper behavior for women. It is not only altruism that causes a complex reaction for María Luisa Garza, feminism, as seen in her recuperated work, also provokes a multidimensional response from the writer.

### **Feminism and the Pan American Round Table**

A highly publicized event in María Luisa Garza's life is linked to her involvement with the Pan American Round Table:

The Pan American Round Table was begun by Mrs. Florence Terry Griswold in 1916. Believing that women could develop an understanding that men, with their involvement in commerce and politics, could not, she opened her home to refugees from the

Mexican Revolution, and enlisted friends to aid them as well  
(Frantz n.p.)

This organization and the governor of Nuevo León chose María Luisa Garza as the Nuevo Leon representative at the First National Feminist Congress held in Mexico City organized by the Pan American Round Table: “se presenta como representante de Nuevo León, la apreciable María Luisa Garza, cuyo pseudónimo es ‘Loreley’” (“La distinguida escritora ‘Loreley’ es desairada por las bolsheviques” *El Herald de México* 20 May 1923, 1). According to the historical work by Olcott, Vaughan and Cano, this congress supported several feminist views: “... in 1923 the First National Feminist Congress (Primer Congreso Nacional Feminista) met in Mexico City with 110 delegates and feminist claims: the right to vote, a nondiscriminatory sexual morality, child care, public dining halls, coeducation for young women, and protection for domestic workers” (14-16). What is also important to note is that the demographics demonstrate the coexistence of moderate and radical feminists:

This assembly, one of the most important of this period, developed two clear factions. The radical faction included women who belonged to worker’s organizations, women’s resistance leagues, and delegates from Yucatán. The moderate group included schoolteachers, the delegation of the *Congreso Feminista de México* (Mexican Feminist Congress), the delegation of the Pan American League, the societies of Christian women and the representatives from U.S. associations. (Mitchell & Schell 56-57)

Garza’s participation in the Congress became a bone of contention. Her experience is the best example of how these different factions struggled to share common

ground. Up to now three newspapers published articles with regards to this incident: *El Herald de México*, *La Prensa* y *Feminismo Internacional*. All three sources and each of their articles are dedicated to defending Garza's right to attend the congress and focus on attacking the radical faction of the congress:

En la sesión celebrada el domingo pasado, se acordó que dicha delegada no fuera admitida. Se tienen noticias de que este desaire sufrido por la distinguida escritora, se debe a que no tiene ideas radicalistas, como son las que dominan en la Convención y que, tratando el Congreso de introducir la práctica de ideas consideradas como disolventes, comprendieron que la señora Garza no secundaría los acuerdos que se tomaran en tal sentido y su oposición causaría prejuicio a la convención. ("La distinguida escritora 'Loreley' es desairada por las bolsheviques" *El Herald de México* 20 May 1923, 1)

The fact that María Luisa Garza attempted to attend a congress denominated feminist indicates that, albeit their sometimes conservative structure, Garza had ideas that she herself considered of a feminist nature or at least had a degree of interest in the congress. This also highlights the fact that there was an attempt at uniting and building bridges across different modes of feminism. Another article "Loreley y el congreso de mujeres en México" by Elena Arizmendi<sup>3</sup> found in *Feminismo Internacional* also defends Garza. She begins by informing the audience of the reasons her entry was denied: "Se nos informa que a la distinguida escritora mexicana no la aceptaron sus compatriotas porque es católica y además, porque sabe manifestar sus propias opiniones" (n.p.).

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<sup>3</sup> For a complete study of Arizmendi please see Carolina Villarroel's work, *La mujer Mexicana ante el feminismo: Nación, género, clase y raza en la literatura femenina del destierro (1910-1940)*.

Arizmendi also publishes a portion of a letter written to Garza by the current president, Álvaro Obregón, who apologizes for the display of disrespect. Most importantly, Arizmendi comments on the idea that feminism cannot be taken hostage by one faction: “El caso de Loreley, es una manifestación de los prejuicios que existen en algunas mujeres feministas que se creen las únicas llamadas, y capaces para enaltecer a su sexo, al que en realidad tratan de denigrar y avergonzar públicamente” (n.p.). While Arizmendi positions herself against the radical grain, she goes on to detail the importance of hearing voices that challenge one’s views. This leads her to her conclusion with which she highlights the fact that Garza was open-minded enough to attend a congress where she knew she’d confront a majority of women with diverging views about feminism: “Loreley dió muestras inequívocas de tener valor moral puesto que aceptó asistir a un Congreso a donde sabía perfectamente que casi todas las opiniones iban a ser contrarias a las suyos, y nos complacemos en felicitarla muy sinceramente por su noble actitud” (n.p.).

Although a response to this incident by the author herself has yet to be recovered, this entire episode and the publicity it received speaks volumes about Garza’s character and willingness to work with women of different nationalities as with the Pan American Round Table and with women whose form of feminism was not necessarily similar to her own moderate feminist approach. As will be seen next, her work with the Pan American Round Table brought another important event that was well documented in the press.

### **The Mexican Flag in Baltimore, Maryland**

In early 1922 *El Heraldo de México* announces María Luisa Garza’s upcoming trip to Baltimore, Maryland:

Una carta que tenemos a la vista, nos da la grata noticias de que nuestra colaboradora la inteligente novelista mexicana María Luisa Garza, que en el mundo de las letras es conocida con el seudónimo de Loreley, va a la ciudad de Baltimore, Maryland, como representante del Estado de Tamaulipas, y llevando a la vez la representación de la prensa asociada, al congreso feminista que en aquella ciudad se celebrará. (1)

This caravan of women heading to Baltimore was also the topic of several articles in another San Antonio newspaper, *La Prensa*, through its coverage of the arrival of various delegates and their goals at the conference along with the celebratory events held in the women's honor before their trip ("Llegó ayer de México un grupo de delegadas," 16 Apr. 1922, and "Una recepción a las delegadas mexicanas en el hotel Gunter" 17 Apr. 1922).

Reports surface about a Mexican flag given to the mayor of Philadelphia for display in "Independence Hall" by a delegation of Mexican woman upon the request of the Pan American Round Table president; the flag was subsequently declined ("La bandera Mexicana fue recibida con honores en St. Louis y Baltimore" 29 Apr. 1922). Editorials and reports can be found with wide ranging and differing reactions to the flag being refused by the mayor of Philadelphia. The flag incident gets additional coverage from four newspapers in three different states: *Hispano América* - San Francisco, *El Heraldo de México* - Los Angeles, *La Prensa* - San Antonio and *El Tusconense* - Arizona. One such article declares the rejection of the flag as politically motivated: "La razón que da la autoridad municipal, es que Obregón no ha sido reconocido por los Estados Unidos" ("No aceptaron la bandera Mex. Por venir de Obregón" *El Heraldo de*

*México* 27 Apr. 1922, 1). In San Antonio, *La Prensa* announces a protest by the city's Mexican vendors: "El Departamento de Comercio local...formulara declaraciones que constituyen una franca reprobación al acto del funcionario filadelfense" ("Una protesta por el desprecio a la bandera" 28 Apr. 1922: 1). The next day, *El Heraldo de México* publicizes that the Philadelphia authorities have apologized and the flag will be displayed in Independence Hall ("No se quiso ofender la bandera" 29 Apr. 1922: 1).

As a part of the delegation that traveled to Baltimore and Washington D.C., Garza is interviewed by *La Prensa*. In her interview Garza details the information she acquired about the flag and the congress while visiting Baltimore. In doing so, the author makes mention of her interactions with Lady Astor and with the United States Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes ("La bandera Mexicana fue recibida con honores en St. Louis y Baltimore" 29 Apr. 1922: 1-5). Here Garza's work and activism beyond Mexico and beyond San Antonio is clear; she was more than an author, she was actively engaged with a wide range of high ranking figures in Mexico, the United States and abroad. Beyond her interaction with these figures, the interview also demonstrates Garza's commitment to maintaining the non-political nature of the Pan American Round Table:

Por eso, conociendo yo el medio, yo no obstante que carecía ninguna autoridad sobre la delegación que vino de México, me tomé la libertad de dar a las damas compatriotas un consejo amistoso: "Qué siempre dijéramos en todas partes que veníamos representando a la mujer mexicana que empieza ya a despertar de su letargo, no mencionar para nada ningún personaje político, puesto que nuestra misión no tenía nada que ver con la política" (5).

Her commitment to remain apolitical is further established as she details her decision not to attend a dinner hosted by the First Lady Florence Harding in Washington.

Furthermore, Garza states that the flag was previously very well received in other parts of the United States: “Yo digo que me sorprende la negativa de recibir el pabellón porque durante el camino que emprendió la Delegación mexicana, esa bandera fue la llave de oro que nos abrió el paso y fue por ella por quien recibimos tantos honores” (1). The article ends by saying that the “New Century Cub” in Philadelphia ultimately takes the Mexican flag while the rejection of the flag by the Philadelphia mayor cannot be confirmed by María Luis Garza.

Among the articles and editorials that focus on interpreting the flag incident, an editorial in *El Herald de México* makes the case that no Mexican national should be offended by the rejected flag because it is a sequestered flag representing Carranza and Obregón, who are not true representatives of Mexico:

La que ha sufrido el desaire en Filadelfia , ha sido la bandera carrancista de la simbólica ave de rapiña, que sostiene Obregón...no ha sido, no es, no puede, no debe ser, para México ni para los Buenos mexicanos, sino unica y exclusivamente para la bandera usurpadroa y para los usurpadores carrancistas de ayer y obregonistas de hoy. (“El verdadero aspecto del desaire a ‘la bandera’ en Filadelfia” 9 May 1922: 4)

Here a conservative and anti-revolutionary position is expressed, which is echoed in another anonymous article from the same newspaper that also argues that the rejected flag is not the “true” Mexican flag because it represents a false president. “Obregón no es su representación nacional; de derecho, porque lo es contra nuestra única

Constitución, y de hecho, por su actuación amoral antipatriótica” (“El desaire a la bandera obregonista en Filadelfia, un período literario de Loreley y una profanación a la bandera mexicana” 10 May 1922: 4). This article also accuses María Luisa Garza of incorrectly referring to the rejected flag as the “real” Mexican flag:

La crónica de Loreley, trae los siguientes conceptos, acerca de los cuales hay decir algunas palabras: “...la bandera había sido rechazada...la bandera que codeó orgullosa en las batallas de la heroína de Puebla, había sido insultada...befada, pisoteada...”-- ”La bandera que ostenta al águila caudal, símbolo de la ‘Raza de bronce’ que cantara Amado Nervo, estaba humillada, estaba vencida...estaba hecha girones...” De esos conceptos, se deduce que la bandera donada por la señora María Tapia de Obregón, que tal mala suerte corrió, fue la legítima; pero estamos seguros de que solo se trata de un período literario de Loreley. (4)

In the article written by Garza referenced in the above quote, the author defends the President of the Pan American Round Table Florence Griswold, who requested the flag: “... todos se vuelven contra Mrs. Griswold” (“La Bandera y Mrs. Griswold” *El heraldo de México* 10 May 1922, 4). Garza vehemently rejects the idea that there was a dishonor done to the Mexican flag: “Ni ha habido tal humillación, ni hay que darle tan gigantescos vuelos a lo que no pasa de ser un labor asquerosa de reptil, que ni tiene alas, ni tiene luz, ni tiene grandeza” (4). She reveals that the Philadelphia mayor simply saw it better fit that each flag only be displayed in its home country: “El mayor de Philadelphia dijo esto: ‘La bandera de México...para los mexicanos; la de Estados Unidos...para nosotros’” (4). After this incident and during their visit with the Secretary of State



Hughes in Washington, Mrs. Griswold and Garza bring up the issue with him and he himself states: “Mr. Hughes decía para nosotras estas palabras: ‘Estas son cuestiones de mujeres y no de Estados...arregle usted, Mrs. Griswold, este asunto, entre algún club de señoras y sera mayor para todos’” (4). The interpretation of the mayor and the Secretary of State’s response is that of admiration on behalf of María Luisa Garza for the way both these men allowed the Pan American Round Table to sort out its own situation. Furthermore, Garza sees it necessary to defend the good intentions of both Mrs. Griswold and Mexico’s first lady María Tapia de Obregón. With regards to Mrs. Griswold:

¿qué culpa tuvo Mrs. Griswold en que la bandera no fuera puesta en el ‘Independence Hall’? Ella obró, al pedir esa bandera, en su perfecto derecho de misionera de paz y de bien...En su corazón de mujer, no hubo ni pudo haber jamás, otra idea que la de inefable ternura femenina, la que podía ser quizá una solución al conflicto actual de ambos países” (4).

Garza also defends the first lady: “... yo defenderé siempre a la primera dama de nuestro país...no tuvo ella la culpa...la culpa está, en los cerca de ella, tenían el deber de señalare el peligro y evitarle hacer un presente que sólo había de servir para infligir una humillación a nuestra pobre Nación, de suya destrozada por sus mismos hijos” (4). It appears that Garza is attempting to expose the attempts by both American and Mexican women to create better relationships between the two countries.

Interestingly, although Garza repeatedly exposes the idea that the Pan American Round Table and the events surrounding the flag are apolitical, in reality, the entire trip to Baltimore and the flag incident are very political. Garza is meeting with government officials on her trip with Mrs. Griswold, a very political gift like a flag is in play, and

Garza's article is subtly critiquing the failed diplomacy between both countries at the hands of men. She also demonstrates an admiration for the ways politics work in the United States versus Mexico when speaking about how long it took to see the Secretary of State and his thoughtful idea of letting the flag incident remain within the realm of women's clubs: "Por lo que pude observar, en el país de Lincoln no se sufre mucho para ver a un poderoso...ese hombre que entre su cerebro lleva la malla de toda la política del gran coloso del Norte" (4). Obviously, Garza is making a political statement with regards to an event she is claiming to not hold any political meaning while commenting on the way politics is run in both countries.

A few days later, a more moderate response to the flag incident is published by Julio G. Arce in *Hispano América*. Arce argues that this is an isolated incident that represents the incapacity of one particular mayor: "La bandera mexicana no fue rechazada por el pueblo de los Estados Unidos...no fue la consecuencia del acuerdo de un cuerpo oficial o de una sociedad privada.... El desaire fue enteramente personal. Vino de un funcionario obcecado, incapaz de comprender su situación" ("¿Nuestra bandera desairada? 13 May 1922: 1). The editorial does not deny the gesture being offensive but reinterprets the incident as isolated.

The last word within the recovered archives is Garza's via her article "Por mi patria...siempre!" in *El Tusconense*. This piece reiterates Garza's disillusionment with politics in Mexico and the idea that Mexico as a country is much bigger than the politicians who claim to represent it:

Yo no grité en Baltimore 'Viva Álvaro Obregón'. Claro que no hubiera gritado esto, aun ni por Porfirio Díaz, porque sus hombres, por grandes

que sean, no son del tamaño de mi México querido. Me importan muy poco ellos cuando pienso en México. ¿Qué más da uno que otro? Los de ayer y los de hoy, son los mismos...acaso lo sean los de mañana también. Hombres los mismos...acaso lo sean los según semi-Dios!” (8 Aug. 1922: 5)

For Garza, her patriotism is constructed via her commitment to her country regardless of its leadership. This apolitical view is in stark contrast to the articles reacting to the flag incident with particular political leanings. It is through the diplomatic work of women that the worn-out relationship between the United States and Mexico can be repaired even while these same women deny any political motivations. Discursively, Garza disguises what is true political activism by women as merely “women’s work” and symbolic gatherings among women that hope to bring peace to both the United States and Mexico. Garza reveals that she as a woman is a threat to her male counterparts with regards to the diplomacy needed between the two countries: “Cuando muchos hombres no encuentran el camino recto, ven una débil mujer, voy demasiado derecha. Que se hurgue en mi reputación como periodista y como mujer” (5). The author is well aware that the work being done by the Pan American Round Table with her fellow American and Mexican activists can be the diplomatic key that the male leaders thus far have not found.

## **Conclusion**

Through her work in *La Cruz Azul Mexicana* for Mexican immigrants and with the feminist Congress and the Pan American Round Table, Garza was fully active with issues affecting Mexicans living in the United States. These experiences also shape the

views the author develops about class, patriotism and politics. Within an immigrant community of Mexicans, who likely separated themselves along class and political lines, Garza navigated a space in which as an elite woman she was able to empathize with the working-class and have a critical view of the way her own elite contemporaries responded to them. Similarly, despite Garza claiming on several occasions not being a feminist, her willingness to attend congresses with feminist agendas demonstrates her recognition of the need to work with varying viewpoints for the betterment of women. Lastly, her expressed disillusionment with politics in Mexico, demonstrate that although she at times expressed *porfirista* views, she was capable of realizing that her role in the United States to best help her fellow Mexicans was to support her home country regardless of its leadership. Needless to say, María Luisa Garza truly went beyond the written word and was actively engaged in affecting change in her community.

## Conclusions

The beginning of the twentieth century was a turbulent time for Mexican woman; the Mexican revolution, modernity, suffrage and the many advances in women's lives that ensued. For Mexican women in the United States, the constant negotiation between two cultures often occupied their lives and their discourse. Specifically, intellectual Mexican women with access to newspapers and publishing houses produced a body of work that is still being recovered and studied: "Es así como durante el period comprendido entre 1910y 1940 se produjo un acervo literario femenino que hasta hoy sigue siendo recuperado y documentado" (Villarroel 1). In particular, as an elite woman, the focus of this work, María Luisa Garza, represented a particular sector of Mexican society:

Estas escritoras pertenecían a una clase privilegiada con conexiones intelectuales importantes que les permitieron acceso a la cultura y a escritura. Educadas bajo el gobierno de Porfirio Díaz, eran herederas de una educación decimonónica en una nación abierta al progreso. Por su condición de exiliadas y por ser mujeres, sus escritos en la mayoría de los casos son desconocidos o no han sido estudiados a cabalidad. (Villarroel 2)

As exiled Mexican women writing from within the United States, their place within a particular field of study was complex. As products of the *porfiriato* yet living in the United States during such a progressive time, women like María Luisa Garza grappled with both their conservative up-brining, their conservative Mexican male cohorts in the United States and the liberal discourse being developed in the United States at the hands of suffragists and flappers.

As postulated in chapter one, along with being classified as figures relevant to U.S. Hispanic literature, these Mexican exiled writers also have a place within Chicana feminist studies. The case study for this type of connection is the work done by Emma Pérez in which she connected the experiences of women of El Yucatán in early twentieth century Mexico and Chicana feminist discourse:

Chicanas are marked by a unique diasporic configuration. The Mexican Revolution was a historical moment that introduced a population to a region formerly Spanish and Mexican. Thousands of Mexicans migrated to the United States as a diaspora. New types of Chicana identities formed out of new mergings: Chicanas born in the United States, many with generations in the region, merged with Mexicanas from Mexico. As a historian trained in U.S. history, I chose to research Mexican woman on both sides of the border, recognizing differences; yet language, culture, race, class, and gender evoked parallels rooted in centuries of common history...From the earliest historiographic essays to more current ones, scholars have consistently argued for a conceptual framework that addresses transgressive Chicano and Mexicano experiences in which culture is understood globally. (Pérez, XVIII)

This global understanding of culture when applied to Mexican women's role within Chicana feminist studies is possible through the redefinition of terms like: history, Chicana and feminism. As seen in chapter one crossing temporal lines allowed Pérez to place Mexican women from Yucatán in conversation with Chicanas and could potentially transform the recovery work for women like: Elena Arizmendi, Leonor Villegas de

Magnón, and other women like María Luis Garza. Additionally, this would entail recognizing the existence of working-class and elite discourses by women; these discourses were confronting, albeit not necessarily in the same way, similar topics. Lastly, even if these recuperated voices did not readily use the term feminist, it is possible to recognize in their work strains of what can be characterized as feminist. This idea is explored by Emily Hind in *Femmenism and the Mexican Woman Intellectual from Sor Juana to Poniatowska: Boob Lit*:

In the same way that an authoritative psychoanalyst decides when a patient means “yes” when she literally says “no,” in the pages that follow I exercise supreme power of interpretation and talk for the ghosts. Hence, I can label the women (or men) of my choosing as feminist, even if they claimed not to be a feminist or claimed not to know what feminism is or claimed total disinterest in politics. Hence, some of the most interesting feminists in my book only became so in the afterlife of my criticism, which in Derridean inspiration constitutes a conjuration that calls forth precisely the problems with gender that it wishes to exorcize. (14)

The important link Pérez makes between Mexican and Chicana women relies on analyzing the ways both groups of women existed within and responded to the male dominated nationalist agendas at play: “I am concerned with tracking discursive formations of feminism during a nationalist moment” (32). In particular, the author compares and contrasts Chicana’s work within the Chicano movement’s nationalist discourse with the Yucatán women’s work within the Mexican revolutionary nationalist paradigm of the twentieth century.

In the same way, women like María Luisa Garza confronted nationalist discourses, for example, the Mexican revolution, the México de afuera ideology and the Temperance movement. With the case of Garza, she negotiated and developed her own strategy for writing and existing within and against all of these paradigms:

Historical events such as the Mexican Revolution show that women's politics may have been subordinated under a nationalist paradigm, but women as agents have always constructed their own spaces interstitially, within nationalisms, nationalisms that often miss women's subtle interventions. (Pérez 33)

María Luis Garza exposed these discursive negotiations through her journalism and the publications of her novels. Specifically, Garza's *crónicas* published in *El Heraldo de México* and *La Época* were studied for two reasons: 1) her earliest work has already been studied by Gabriela Baeza Ventura and 2) the fact that this work is published after the already studied work, prompts considerations about the ways her discourse transformed or not across time.

In her *crónicas* Garza navigated the edges of conservative and progressive thought as she faced feminist, social and class issues. While *cronistas* like Ulica used harsh humor to castigate those working-class Mexicans who embarrassed Mexican identity by losing their language and culture through Americanization, Garza's texts approached class by advocating the need for more community involvement on behalf of her fellow elite members. Through this encouragement the author also took the opportunity to critique the structure of charitable organizations. María Luisa Garza also discursively identified with the plight of the working-class and encouraged upward



mobility through education. Her journalistic work that covered the Mexican revolution revealed her affinity for peace, a concern for the worsen situation of the working-class combined with a subtle admiration for the stability under Porfirio Díaz. It is evident that Garza grappled with her elite roots and her philanthropic inclinations. Lastly, womanhood also occupied the pages of Garza's *crónicas* and revealed the author's negative views on beauty, marriage and other traditionally feminine topics. Although embedded within traditional notions on womanhood that could lead one to consider Garza as contradicting herself, the theoretical idea of "flashes of dissent" developed by Genra Padilla when approaching Hispanic women's autobiographies in nineteenth century Southwest is useful:

...we must search for those moments where dissent discloses itself in even the most acquiescent discourse. We must look therefore for momentary struggles in the narrative, revealed perhaps in only in whispers of resistance, quelled immediately but signaling like a flash through the dense texture of language.... (44)

Therefore, Garza's discourse is no necessarily contradictory; instead, it can be studied within its appropriate socio-historical context while recognizing the power of domination present for a Mexican woman in the United States that was represented by the Mexican men who were gatekeepers of the Mexican diaspora and by the dominant culture of the United States.

Beyond her work in the two newspapers previously mentioned, the two novels explored in chapter three also exposed the author's ambiguous relationship with conservative Mexican ideology through the nationalist discourse of the Mexican

revolution and the Temperance movement. *La novia de Nervo* was the vehicle through which Garza was able to embody the Mexican conflict through the domestic trials and tribulations of a young woman named Madeleine. This allows one to contrast this depiction of the conflict with the Mexican male's interpretation of it through the categories of public and private:

....woman-authored novels are often criticized for their 'unusual' or 'insignificant' content and highlights the fact that such readings are a product of dominant interpretive strategies which insist on evaluating literature according to whether or not it contributes to the public sphere, where issues of contemporary national importance are presented and discussed. (Bowskill 8)

Additionally, Madeleine's story allowed Garza to comment on the political ramifications of a male-dominated society in which women's rights were often overlooked; this was portrayed through discussions of divorce laws and domestic violence with regards to Madeleine's marriage. One of the more innovative aspects of the novel developed through Madelein's cross-dressing which functioned a sounding board for Garza to deconstruct gender. Finally, the novel's ending and the author's open discussion about the ending in the last pages gave the author a space to critique the traditional endings for female characters.

The second novel discussed, *Tentáculos de fuegos*, provided Garza the forum from which to engage with the nationalist ideology of the Temperance movement in Mexico. Through the literary tools afforded to María Luisa Garza by the Naturalist movement, the author provided a counter-discourse to a movement that depicted

alcoholism as class and racially motivated. The author defended the working class and suggested that the rich had their own particular struggles with alcohol. She also grappled with the role religion played with predetermined biological destiny and this was clearly difficult since the Mexican community was very much Catholic. Interestingly, she was able to include commentary on womanhood through the women in her novel who seemed doomed by their beauty, personal relationship and fairytale images of marriage. Her novels allowed her a discursive liberty not viable in her journalist work and this is evident in the more obvious and explicit ways in which she critiqued patriarchal structures like marriage, love, motherhood, war, etc.

Lastly, María Luisa Garza's social activism and involvement in important events for the Mexican community in Texas and involvement with organizations dealing directly with class, nationalism, immigration and women's issues demonstrated her ability to translate her writing into her activist practice. Garza's activism was in the company of other women's work at the time; for example, Gabriela Gonzalez' recovery work of two Mexican women activists in San Antonio from two opposite spectrums of politics:

Chicana community politics in Depression-era San Antonio reflected a diversity of ideas and strategies. Responses to the challenges of racial discrimination and severe poverty in the city's West Side barrio, the historic Mexican American neighborhood, ran the gamut from the conservative politics of benevolence as expressed by Carolina Munguía's passionate summons to Mexican-origin women to work for *la Raza* in their capacity as "women, wives, and Mexicans," doing it "all for country and home," to Emma Tenayuca's radical reform politics as reflected in her

equally compelling revelation on how Communism served as a means to  
“organize labor, organize the unemployed so they would have rights.

(202)

As the social activism of other women who worked within the same community as Garza is recovered, important connections can be had and the story of these women can be completed. In Garza’s texts ideas deconstructing the notion that womanhood was weak and fragile were present; in her own personal practice Garza participated in feminist work with congresses in the United States and Mexico and even questioned her community members’ manhood with regards to censorship and violence against fellow journalists. Despite belonging to the elite class of the Mexican exiled community, Garza was capable of critiquing those practices she found problematic when participating in them. Her clout took as far as being able to help save the life of an imprisoned Mexican immigrant. María Luisa Garza was able to translate into her own life the very topics that occupied her published works.

Like the María Luisa Garza’s female contemporaries that have been and are being studied, the body of work studied here did not present a one-dimensional view of the salient issues of their time. What was clear was the constant negotiation with the discursive space at her disposal; this negotiation is present in texts that seem to contradict themselves and ideas that exist in an interstitial space. Perhaps, this was the greatest discursive strategy used by Mexican women in the United States like Garza: “This process of taking and using whatever is necessary and available in order to negotiate, confront or speak to power – and then moving on to new forms, expressions, and ethos when necessary – is a method for survival” (Sandoval 29). This is also present in the

discourse of Chicanas as they navigated a Chicano movement with its misogynist discourse: “Chicana history, or Chicana studies, constructed, theorized, enunciated, and redirected the questions asked by Chicano/a historians in the 1970s and 1980s.” (Pérez 22) Both these constituencies faced a discourse that dominated them and with which they were not comfortable, discourses with similar cultural references. It is with the hope that more recovery work is developed and exposed that this work seeks to provide a possible interpretive for other Mexican woman exiled in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. These women existed and wrote in a liminal space and their literary classification could reflect that by exploring the ways their voices are relevant to both U.S. Hispanic literature and Chicana feminist studies.

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