Hermeneutics of written texts: religious discourse in Mexican literature

by

Catherine Lynne Caufield

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of the Centre for the Study of Religion
University of Toronto

© Catherine Lynne Caufield 2000
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-49989-8
Hermeneutics of written texts: religious discourse in Mexican literature

Catherine Lynne Caufield
Doctor of Philosophy, 2000

Centre for the Study of Religion
University of Toronto

Abstract

One of the central questions of this thesis may be recognized in Castellanos' statement that "la novela se ha concebido en México de manera igual a como lo hizo Thomas Mann: como una aspiración al conocimiento lúcido" ("Novela" 114). The aspiration of this thesis is towards a lucid understanding of the relationship between religious discourse and action in contemporary México. This question is approached through the study of the contemporary Mexican novel. However, in order to confront the arguments of art for art's sake, or of literature as a celebration of the enclosed world of language, it was necessary to integrate a theoretical discussion of the relationship between the written text and the world of action along with the exploration of the above-mentioned theme. The central problematic of the thesis was thus undertaken in two directions: I. through an examination of the act of inscribing the world of action as written text, and II. through analysis of the related issue of the referentiality of the written text to the world of action.

The thesis is organized consistent with Ricoeur's conceptualization of the interpretation of texts as a three-fold mimesis; or, in Valdés' terms, with the three areas of engagement of the literary critic. Valdés' four stages of operation of literary criticism are integrated with these three areas, for these stages clearly serve to actualize Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics. This present work is thus divided into three major sections through which four sub-sections are interwoven.

The first major section, "Prefiguration", provides the prefigurative basis for the work, briefly reviewing the philosophical tradition on which this thesis develops its innovations. These innovations are suggested with respect to the importance of
ostensive references in inscribing the world of action, along with discussion pertinent to religious discourse and action as expressed in a selection of contemporary Mexican novels.

The second major section, "Configuration", examines the act of inscribing the world of action. In this section, the phenomenon under study is religious discourse in the world of action of contemporary México. Drawing examples from one of the texts analyzed in the third major section, the formal sub-section explores some of the linguistic and structural strategies that may used to create a text with the capacity to project a world that is consistent enough and perceptive enough to provoke a redescription of the world of action. The corresponding historical sub-section reflects on the activity of inscribing what the text speaks about, attempting to gain consciousness of the act of narrating through a discussion of Ricoeur's theory of action.

The third major section, "Refiguration", explores the manner in which the text, once written, refers to a world of action. In this section the phenomenon under study is no longer the world of action itself, but rather the written document. The phenomenological sub-section analyzes three contemporary Mexican novels as a means of exposing what text of the world of action says that is common to the reading experience of others with respect to the relationship between religious discourse and action. The hermeneutical sub-section explores the way in which the appropriation of the world projected by the text changes the world of the reader through elaborating a theoretical reflection on the way that such written texts, whether testimonial or fiction, refer to the world of action.

The work is concluded with a short section entitled "Return to the prefigurative". This section serves to provide a review and summary of the main arguments of the thesis. It also reflects the circular movement of open hermeneutic commentary, for such reflections are both grounded in tradition and return to it, enhancing the prefigurative matrix and offering possibilities for further innovation.
Acknowledgements

In emerging from a four-year period of intense work, which culminated with this thesis project, my deepest gratitude is extended to Dr. Mario J. Valdés, whose depth and breadth of knowledge was a refreshing source of stimulation for me and whose rigorous scholarship continues to inspire me. I am very grateful for the skill and understanding of Dr. Luz Aurora Pimentel, whose insight enriched my thesis and whose penetrating questions have kept me thinking.

I would like to express many thanks to Dr. C. Thomas McIntire for his support of my graduate work and for his administrative guidance.

I am most appreciative of the time that both Dr. Edward Chamberlin and Dr. Lee Cormie spent with me in discussing various aspects of my thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Rosa Sarabia for her careful reading of this text.

I wish to acknowledge my parents, Betty Saville and Ron Caufield, for their economic and logistic support.

I am very grateful for the contributions of all of these people to my project, without them it would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to complete. In addition to the indispensible human intellectual resources which make possible informed reflection on the global world in which we live, there is also a substantial economic commitment involved in a project such as this. Last, but most certainly not least, I would like to thank both the Government of México for the scholarship awarded to me through the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Ontario for the scholarship awarded through the Ministry of Training, Universities, and Colleges.
Hermeneutics of written texts: religious discourse in Mexican literature

Table of Contents

I. Prefiguration ................................................................. 1
   An overview of the philosophical tradition on which this thesis bases its innovation.

II. Configuration
   A. Formal/semiiotics: How does the text function? ................. 28
      Written inscription with the capacity to project a world.
   B. Historical/semantics: What does the text speak about? .......... 52
      A hermeneutical approach to the validity and process of inscribing the world of action in narrative form.

III. Refiguration
   A. Phenomenology: What does text say that is common to the reading experience of others?
      Commentary on religious discourse in contemporary México in three narrative inscriptions of the world of action.
   B. Hermeneutics: How has my world changed after reading the text? 179
      A hermeneutical approach to the relationship between the written text and the world of action.

Return to prefigurative ..................................................... 209
A review and summary of the main arguments of this thesis.

Works cited ................................................................. 225

Works consulted .......................................................... 237
Hermeneutics of written texts: religious discourse in Mexican literature

I. Prefiguration: situate research within the discussion of current and previous scholarship

Theory and the phenomena of the world of action are closely and dialectally linked, for theory serves to provide the means by which to articulate the experience of phenomena, whether this phenomena is a work of art or a religious ritual. The theoretical tradition of phenomenological/philosophical hermeneutics provides particularly fruitful access to the relationship between the phenomena of narrative and the world of action. Gadamer proposes in *Truth and Method* (1960) that tradition is composed of both sedimentation and innovation. In acknowledgment of this proposition, a synopsis of hermeneutic sedimentation will be given before proceeding to the more recent innovations contributed by Paul Ricoeur. This synopsis will focus particularly on the conceptualization of understanding, explanation and interpretation, key hermeneutic terms which change their signification depending on where they are located within the tradition.

Friederich Schleiermacher is recognized as the founder of the modern discipline known as hermeneutics, a term which specifically applies to the practice of the analysis of texts. Textual studies preceding Schleiermacher were relegated to the two distinct disciplines of classical philology and theological exegesis. Schleiermacher however, proposes that understanding a text in a foreign language coming from a past age is not fundamentally more
problematical than any other kind of understanding; he thus undertakes the project of isolating a common procedure of understanding (*Truth* 185). The work of Schleiermacher then is fundamental for the tradition of hermeneutics as it moved the practice of the explanation of texts from regional hermeneutics to a general hermeneutics. According to Gadamer, this movement served to free understanding and interpretation from all dogmatic interest (*Truth* 197).

For Schleiermacher, "interpretation and understanding are closely interwoven, like the outer and the inner word, and every problem of interpretation is, in fact, a problem of understanding" (*Truth* 184). He comments that "interpretation differs from understanding only as speaking aloud from speaking silently to oneself" (*Truth* 184). Setting the groundwork for the hermeneutical circle, this statement indicates that understanding is more profoundly personal while interpretation is the part that is shared. Gadamer observes that because Schleiermacher works from the assumption of misunderstanding, the pedagogical function of interpretation is a method for avoiding the misunderstanding of texts (*Truth* 185). Schleiermacher posits that misunderstanding is an issue because of the obscurity of the Thou, the author whose life is embedded in the text (191). It follows from Schleiermacher's theoretical assumptions then that the aim of understanding is the psychological task of reaching the subjectivity of the one who is speaking, and to ultimately understand the author better than she understood herself. It is this appeal to a relationship with the process of creation by an individual artistic genius that identifies this kind of hermeneutics as "romantic". Gadamer points out that
romantic hermeneutics seeks understanding between two subjectivities: it is a "congenial understanding that can be achieved in the relation between I and Thou [for] the author's meaning can be divined directly from his text [and] the interpreter is absolutely contemporaneous with his author" (Truth 240). In a similar process of interpretation and understanding, Schleiermacher also proposes attaining an understanding of the original reader as a means of "objectively determining the meaning of a text" (Truth 395).

The work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Schleiermacher's biographer, is marked by the neo-Kantianism and positivism of the late nineteenth century in which he was situated. The philosophy of life propagated by neo-Kantian thought added to the Diltheyian theoretical framework the idea that the ultimate presupposition for knowledge of the historical world is experience. Dilthey's response to positivism is clearly notable in his desire to "endow the human sciences with a methodology and epistemology which would be as respectable as those of the sciences of nature" ("Task" 49). The specific methodology and epistemology to which Dilthey turned was based on the historical consciousness of the empirically grounded German historical school, represented by historians such as Heinrich Ranke and Johann Gustav Droysen. The presuppositions of this historical school led Dilthey to make a distinction between Schleiermacher's terms "interpretation" and "understanding". In Dilthey's terms, "explanation" denotes the application of positivist methodologies from the natural sciences to the analysis of a written text, while "interpretation" becomes a kind of
understanding that differentiates the human sciences from the natural sciences ("What" 150).

The historical overcoming of metaphysics is related to the interpretation of text for Dilthey (Truth 230) and so he utilizes romantic hermeneutics as a means of integrating human sciences with the natural sciences (Truth 240). Dilthey accepts Schleiermacher's aim of interpreting a text as the comprehension the person who wrote the text, rather than as the comprehension of what is written in the text itself. It is this framing of the task of hermeneutics in psychological terms that keeps Dilthey under the umbrella of romantic hermeneutics. However, Dilthey expands the psychological approach of romantic hermeneutics to understanding a text from the revelation of the genius of the author to achieving this aim through a reconstruction of the author's historical context. This reconstruction of an alien historical individual as the focus of textual understanding is possible because universal history, which subsumes everything into itself, renders human life homogeneous (Truth 232) hence "I and Thou are of the same life" (Truth 199).

The name of Edmund Husserl is associated with transcendental phenomenology, an important element in the sedimentation of hermeneutics because of Husserl's intellectual association with Dilthey and Heidegger (Truth xxv), because of Husserl's "critique of objectivist psychology and of the pseudo-Platonism of previous philosophy of consciousness" (Truth 244), and because the conscientiousness of Husserl's phenomenological description which "must now always be taken into consideration" (Truth xxv). Gadamer observes that
transcendental phenomenology attempts to be Hegelian correlation research, which means that the relationship between the parts and the whole is of primary importance: "the 'poles' into which [subjectivity] unfolds itself are contained within it, just as what is alive contains all its expressions of life in the unity of its organic being" (Truth 249). Husserl posits that the mode of being is grasped in the flow of experience and hence phenomenological work is involved with the elaboration of the constitution of time consciousness. Although he considered himself in opposition to metaphysics (Truth 256), the eidetic method is based on the assumption that by bracketing out existence the interpreter can analyze essence.¹

The term phenomenology refers to the study of things as they appear, as they are given. Husserl argues that human subjectivity possesses "being-value" and can therefore be considered as a phenomenon (Truth 244). As a phenomenon, human subjectivity is amenable to the eidetic method; that is, it can be explored in its various modes of givenness. Husserl uses several other terms alongside the "eidetic" mentioned above to elaborate his phenomenology. Noetic refers to the essential meaning or pure consciousness, the residue left after the examination of given things. Another key Husserlian term utilized by others influenced by him is that of "life-world". Life-world refers to "the world in which we are immersed in the natural attitude that never becomes an object as such for us, but that represents the pre-given basis of all experience" (Truth 246-7). In other words, this term implies a going back behind the objectivity of

¹ Gadamer comments that eidetic phenomenology is based on a distinction between fact and
science *(Truth 254).* Finally, it is Husserl who proposes the concept of "horizon" to refer to "the way all limited intentionality of meaning merges into fundamental continuity with the whole" *(Truth 245)*, where "intentionality" refers to the intending of an identifiable meaning.

Husserl conceptualizes the Thou as an alter ego. This Thou is first perceived as an object and, as with Dilthey, it is through empathy that the alien object becomes "Thou" *(Truth 250).* However, for Husserl understanding the phenomenon of the written text is not the immediate empathetic participation in the psyche of the author, but rather is the result of an elaboration of the intentionality of the noematic contents which will then serve to elucidate the Eidos of the text.

During the period of his academic formation, Heidegger worked as a teaching assistant for Husserl. Heidegger's teacher initially responded to his work by subsuming it into his own, proposing that the meaning of facticity is itself an Eidos and therefore belongs to the eidetic sphere of the "universality of essence" *(Truth 255).* Thus, at first, the idea of a fundamental ontology and the analysis of Dasein\(^2\) was responded to as identifying a new dimension within transcendental phenomenology *(Truth 255).* But despite this initial reaction to fundamental ontology, Heidegger's existential starting point was taken seriously by Gadamer and lead to a major shift in the area of hermeneutics.

---

\(^2\) Dasein is the foundation of fundamental ontology. The term Dasein, literally translated from the German, means "being-there" (that we are) and in general terms refers to human existence. Dasein is distinguished from all other beings by its understanding of being *(Truth 257).*
Gadamer proposes that it is not Dilthey and Husserl who are the true predecessors of Heidegger, but rather Nietzsche. In the modern period it is Nietzsche who raised the question of being, an idea which ran counter to the established direction of Western metaphysics (Truth 257). In Gadamer's summary of the aims implicit in Being and Time, he notes that Heidegger wished to confront Western metaphysics on its own level and raise Nietzsche's radical critique of "Platonism" to the level of the Western tradition he is criticizing. Heidegger also sought to recognize transcendental inquiry both as stemming from modern subjectivism and as a step in moving beyond it (Truth 257).

Heidegger viewed his work as a necessary return to the roots of Western philosophy, to the original logos. It was this particular perspective which lead him to criticize subjectivism and to explore the idea of being. The importance of Heidegger for hermeneutics is that he influences the discussion to look beneath the problem of method and to consider the problem of being in which method is situated. This shifts the primary hermeneutical question from a scientific epistemological inquiry: "how is it that the knowing subject knows what she knows?" into a philosophical question: "what is the mode of being of that being who exists only in understanding?" ("Task" 54). For Heidegger the concept of being-with another and of duplicating their subjectivity implies inauthenticity. In contrast to the idea of being-with, the concept of being-in-the-world posited by Heidegger, focuses the central issue for understanding on the world and thus serves to de-psychologize understanding ("Task" 56). However, more
consistent with closed hermeneutics and the general hermeneutical approach begun by Schleiermacher, Gadamer expresses a preoccupation similar to the romantic pre-supposition that interpretation is directed at avoiding misunderstanding; that is, he is concerned with the alienness of the text to be interpreted and with the locatedness of approaches to narrowing the gap created by this alterity between the text and the interpreter. Gadamer’s response to this otherness is belonging, on which he comments that it is a “condition of [the] original meaning of historical interest because belonging to traditions belongs just as originally and essentially to the historical finitude of Dasein as does its projectedness toward future possibilities of itself” (Truth 262). Thus Gadamer adds to Heidegger’s reflections on the problem of being in which method is situated that not only does Dasein project its ownmost possibilities as a means of enhancing self-understanding, but it does so from its historical existence as part of one tradition or another.

In his 1982 debate with Ricoeur, Gadamer refers to Nietzsche’s assertion “I do not know moral phenomena: I know only moral interpretation of phenomena,” as a succinct summary of the kind of shift made in the approach to textual interpretation early in the twentieth century (“Conflict” 216). Gadamer points out that, consistent with Nietzsche’s approach, Heideggerian interpretation is not simply the philological skill required to clarify and articulate the meaning of a text, it is most centrally the unmasking of the pretended meaning and signification (“Conflict” 217). Such unmasking does not reveal the thing-in-itself however, but is rather only commentaries about it. Gadamer
argues therefore, in contrast to Heidegger's position on Dasein's exclusive claim to life (Truth 263), that Nietzsche postulated the other, including oneself, as more unknown to oneself than any natural phenomenon (Truth 257).

Heideggerian interpretation is not the imposition of a method on a pre-established context of meaning in order to definitively decipher it and possess it; rather, interpretation is embedded in the process of life ("Conflict" 222). Heidegger posited the assumption that in the process of life there is always something left behind and something expressly intended. Therefore, for Heidegger, interpretation is both the opening of a horizon and the concealing of something ("Conflict" 222). This opening of a horizon is articulated as explanation, which leads to the development of an understanding which "does not transform it [the text] into something else, but makes it becomes itself" ("Task" 57).

Hearing, for Heidegger, is the basic relation of speech to the opening towards a world and towards others. Consistent with this presupposition, understanding in Heideggerian terms means hearing the text. One hears the text by unfolding it, following the possibility of being indicated by the text itself. The interpreter follows the projection of the text from within her particular situation of thrownness and thus becomes oriented in a situation. Understanding for Heidegger then is not the grasping of a fact, but rather the apprehension of a possibility of being ("Task" 56).

Ricoeur points out that in going back to the Greek roots of Western philosophy in order to ground his fundamental ontology, Heidegger located his
existentiai philosophy outside the "properly epistemological question of the status of the human sciences."³ The result of this lead to a philosophy that, unable to dialogue with the sciences, was no longer addressed to anything but itself ("Task" 59). It is Gadamer who begins to reopen dialogue on the methodological questions. As Gadamer comments himself, he is never at the zero-point. He is never starting out new, he is rather always already *en route* ("Conflict" 220). Thus in Truth he approaches the problems of the tradition in which he participates through an examination of the concerns of romantic hermeneutics, transcendental phenomenology and fundamental ontology, highlighting their relationship and their differences in an open hermeneutics that focuses on language as the universal medium in which understanding occurs (Truth 389).

The intellectual context of positivism and neo-Kantianism, in which romantic hermeneutics was developed, caused those working in this area to accept as valid the presupposition that the elimination of all subjectivity was possible and that the certainty resulting from this elimination would guarantee truth. As discussed above, hermeneuts throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries searched for ways to integrate methods imported from the natural sciences into the human sciences. In Truth Gadamer responds to the hermeneutical heritage by deconstructing principally Dilthey, and by integrating

³ Ricoeur comments that Heidegger's lack of interest in the properly methodological aspects of the hermeneutic circle is unfortunate as "it is on the return route [from the structure of anticipation which constitutes us] that hermeneutics is likely to encounter critique, in particular the critique of ideology" ("Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology" 70).
some innovative approaches to textual interpretation into the hermeneutical tradition.

Gadamer refutes the historical consciousness of Dilthey, which seeks to understand the text as a historical phenomenon that can be understood solely in terms of its own time (Truth 290), in favour of a historically effected consciousness which seeks to understand the work itself (Truth 341). This latter kind of consciousness, open to tradition, is the hermeneutical experience. Gadamer draws a parallel to this phenomenon in I's experience of Thou, noting that in human relationships the important thing is to experience Thou truly as a Thou; in other words, rather than overlooking the other's claim, one permits her to really say something to us (Truth 361). It is evident from this hermeneutical position of letting the text speak that charges to the effect that Gadamer is laying the foundations for a kind of radical subjectivism in which the interpreter projects her own horizon into the text simply reflect a superficial reading of Gadamer's work.

In Truth and Method, Gadamer comments that it is because Dilthey started from an awareness of discrete "experiences" that he was unable to build a bridge to historical realities. Dilthey's starting points of self-reflection and autobiography are not an adequate basis for hermeneutics because they make history private. The aim of historical consciousness is to know the classical model as a historical phenomenon that can be understood solely in terms of its own time.
As discussed above, Dilthey faced this theoretical impasse because he could not break free of a Cartesian framework that looked to positivist methods to provide a means of eliminating all doubt. Thus Gadamer states that Dilthey could not integrate the historical realities of society into his historicist approach to texts because he could not posit that these realities always have a predeterminate influence on any “experience”. Gadamer posits that understanding a classical text will always involve more than simply historically reconstructing the past world to which the work belongs, arguing that our understanding will always retain the consciousness that we also belong to that world -- as the work also belongs to our world. Gadamer then, reversing the Diltheyian conceptualization, observes that “history does not belong to us; we belong to it” (Truth 276). Gadamer also rejected Dilthey’s distinction between interpretation and understanding, taking a position closer to Schleiermacher’s conflation of them (Truth 184, fn. 15, 388, 399). Gadamer differs from Schleiermacher however, in that for him understanding is less a subjective act than the participation in an event of tradition wherein the past and the present are constantly mediated. It is this event, states Gadamer, that must be validated by a hermeneutic theory which is currently far too dominated by the idea of a procedure and a method (Truth 290).

In his philosophical hermeneutics Gadamer posits that writing, as a kind of alienated speech, refers to a world that is not immediately there between interlocutors. He comments that “even the pure signs of an inscription can be seen properly and articulated correctly only if the text can be transformed back
to language” (*Truth* 390-1) and meaning (*Truth* 393). As alienated speech, what
is written in the text is detached from the writer. The meaning of the text
therefore, is not found behind the text as the presumed author, but rather in the
subject matter of what the text itself says (*Truth* 392). It is in the movement
made by the historically situated interpreter from the written text back to
language that, through this process of interpretation, the object of hermeneutical
understanding is revealed.

In his reflective hermeneutics Gadamer introduces the idea of “putting into
play” as the activity that moves the interpreter from the world projected by the
text and from her own life-world towards understanding. It is at the intersection
of these two horizons that the text acquires meaning (“Ricoeur” 276). Play is
“first and foremost” self-presentation (*Truth* 108): it is the subject of aesthetic
experience. “We have seen that it is not aesthetic consciousness but the
experience of art and thus the question of the mode of being of the work of art
that must be the object of our examination” (*Truth* 102). The in-itself of putting
in play (“Introduction” 26), is that play plays something (*Truth* 107). What play is
playing is not determined exclusively by the consciousness that plays, but
rather by what takes place in the activity of play (“Ricoeur” 276). Play has no
specific teleological function (*Truth* 103) and fulfills its purpose only if the player
loses herself in playing (*Truth* 102). What takes place in play, the way of being
of play, is implicit in the to-and-fro movement made by the interpreter between
the whole of her understanding and the part that the text is contributing to her
horizon. “The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an
experience that changes the person who experiences it" (Truth 102). Thus, ultimately, putting a text into play is not a matter of integrating one's subjectivity into it, but is rather an experience of the whole of the work itself which transforms the person participating in it (Truth 102).

Gadamer states that a hermeneutical approach to the world assumes that there is meaning in the world and this assumption is a precondition for the efforts of interpreters to understand ("Conflict" 233). He notes that since the publication of the work of Nietzsche and Husserl the term horizon has been used philosophically to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy and to the way one's range of vision may be gradually expanded; however, as one never reaches the horizon, so one's vision is never complete (Truth 302). In other words, if an onion represented the world, the interpreter can never reach the position which would allow her to demonstrate what the kernel of the onion is ("Conflict" 233).

The fusion of horizons in historical knowledge means that beyond my situation as reader and beyond the author's situation, "I offer myself to the possible ways of being-in-the-world which the text opens up and discovers for me" (Ricoeur "Metaphor" 314). Gadamer observes that one must always already have a horizon in order to be able to transpose oneself into a situation (Truth 305). Therefore, historically effective consciousness is aware of its own otherness and foregrounds the horizon of the past from its own (Truth 306). However, Gadamer notes that even the idea of a situation implies that one is not standing outside it, that one is rather immersed in it – and such immersion
negates any claims to objective knowledge of the situation (Truth 301). Gadamer integrates the concept of horizon into the first stages of understanding stating that "working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (Truth 302).

Throughout Truth Gadamer reinforces his argument for the importance of both historicity and of permitting the voice of the Thou to emerge in interpreting a text which is necessarily alien to the interpreting subject. Gadamer not only responds to the problems and issues of the tradition to which he belongs, but in integrating Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian ontology into hermeneutics, proposes a new way of perceiving the explanation of texts. "We emphasized that the experience of meaning that takes place in understanding always includes application [to ourselves]. Now we are to note that this whole process is verbal" (Truth 384). This is the key to Gadamer's contribution to self-reflexive hermeneutical discourse.⁴

Gadamer understands that one lives in language (Truth 385). He observes that it is not learning the signs of a foreign language that permit the broadening of the learner's horizon, but that it is the living in the language, of speaking it with others in conversation or of reading it in literature, that transforms the person (Truth 441-2). The concept of prejudices, which

⁴ Hermeneutics is reflexive in that as it discloses the text it also reveals the interpretive standpoints of the inquirer (Valdés Hermeneutics 148). In phenomenological hermeneutics these interpretive standpoints are unavoidably part of the interpreter's prefigurative matrix, whereas in romantic hermeneutics the interpreter attempts to rule them out in order to achieve an objective reading of the text.
Gadamer elaborates in II.II.1. of *Truth*, are inherent in the language that is handed down to each individual. Gadamer observes that the interpreter is not aware that she is bringing her own horizon into the interpretation because the verbal formulation is so much a part of the interpreter’s mind that she is not aware of it as an object. Gadamer posits that this aspect of hermeneutics has been completely ignored (*Truth* 403). This is a great oversight, he argues, because language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs (*Truth* 389), although he strongly refutes any claims that this means that language may be reduced to a tool used for the unique purpose of expressing understanding.

For Gadamer, interpretation consists of elaborating our experience in life as a legitimate way to develop self-understanding (“Conflict” 221). Understanding is always the fusion of two horizons, horizons that are supposedly existing by themselves (*Truth* 306). Conceptualized in this way, self-understanding arises out of the interplay between two persons: both expose themselves to one another with the expectation that each tries in her own way to find the common points between herself and her interlocutor. When there is no common point, the words spoken are nothing more than *wir reden an einander vorbei* — sounds that go by the ear — as opposed to a subject who states and fixes the objective content of utterance and is able to argue this fixed idea as a whole point (“Conflict” 222). Schleiermacher postulated that there is hermeneutics where there is the possibility of misunderstanding. This position assumes that there is an understanding which both precedes and includes
misunderstanding and which has the capacity to reintegrate misunderstanding into itself. Gadamer moves methodologically further, considering that this reintegration is made through the dialectic movement of question and answer ("Hermeneutics" 83).

Dialogue is an appropriate model for the process of overcoming the structure of two opposing positions. It represents the ongoing effort to bridge any form of alienation and bring people together so that no-one stays rigidly where she started, but rather each integrates and appropriates at least some of what is other. Through dialogue both partners change and move, eventually finding some small ground of solidarity ("Conflict" 222-3). Gadamer adds, in his 1982 debate with Ricoeur, that every form of critique "should be and needs to be reintegrated [into social life]." Thus hermeneutics, in proposing the finding of a "small ground of solidarity," opens the possibility within itself of a satisfactory approach to the conflict of interpretations ("Conflict" 223).

The layer of phenomenological/philosophical sedimentation that Gadamer contributed to hermeneutical heritage has of course in turn lead to further innovation in the tradition. This innovation has taken several directions⁵ and,  

---

⁵ The concepts of the reader-reception theory, developed at the University of Constance in Germany by students of Gadamer, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, mark one of the directions of innovation which grounds its assumptions in the thought of Gadamer. (See Ricoeur's study of reader-reception theory in "Between the Text and its Reader" [1985] in A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination, 1991.) Another student of Gadamer took a different innovative direction from Constance. In 1967 Jurgen Habermas entered the arena of the conflict of interpretations taking a position that diverged somewhat from that of his teacher. Gadamer observes that in this debate each philosopher speaks from a radically different place (Gadamer from Romanticism, Habermas from Aufklärung (Enlightenment) – which is itself a tradition). Habermas' position is elaborated in Knowledge and Human Interests, 1972 [1968]; Gadamer responded with Hermeneutik und ideologiekritik, 1971. Habermas focuses on II.II.1 and II.II.3 of Truth (prejudice, authority, tradition and historically effected consciousness). He criticizes Gadamer's "ontologization" of hermeneutics; that is, Gadamer's position that understanding is
consistent with hermeneutical theory, the result of this dialectic exchange between sedimentation and innovation in each case is neither a sophistic declaration of correctness nor a Hegelian sublimation of the other into the upward movement of the hermeneutical whole. Rather, it is a process of finding a common language which leads to an expansion of the interpreter’s horizon while at the same time solidifying her position. The participation of Paul Ricoeur in the hermeneutical dialogue is of particular interest for he has brought together both explanatory analyses and reflective interpretation and applied them not only to the written text but to the world of action itself and to the relationship between the world of action and the written text.

The basic issue for Ricoeur is how to free the concept of the subject from the subject-object dichotomy in which it has been trapped for more than half a century of interpretation theory. In addressing this problem he follows the directions laid out by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and by Gadamer in *Truth*. It

the ground of misunderstanding and that this ground may be reached through the question and answer of dialogue. Instead of a prior ground of understanding as the frame of reference for self-reflection, Habermas posits the possibility of a future emancipation which may be reached through revealing the hidden exercise of force and the subsequent systematic distortion of communication. In a 1973 essay Ricoeur joins this discussion commenting that this debate raises the question of the fundamental gesture of philosophy: 1. Is this gesture an avowal of the historical conditions to which all human understanding is subsumed under the reign of finitude? or 2. Is it a critical gesture, relentlessly repeated and indefinitely turned against “false consciousness” and against the distortions of human communication, which conceals the permanent exercise of domination and violence? (“Hermeneutics” 63). Ricoeur poses a central question from hermeneutics that ends in a challenge directly to Habermas (note that Ricoeur changes from the third to the second voice): “granted that ideology today consists in disguising the difference between the normative order of communicative action and bureaucratic conditioning, hence in dissolving the sphere of interaction mediated by language into the structures of instrumental action, how can the interest in emancipation remain anything other than a pious vow, save by embodying it in the reawakening of communicative action itself? And upon what will you concretely support the reawakening of communicative action, if not upon the creative renewal of cultural heritage?” (“Hermeneutics” 99). Ricoeur again addresses some of these issues in his 1975 lectures at the University of Chicago. (See chapters 13 and 14, "Habermas" in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, 1986.)
is Heidegger's positing that Dasein "is there" before the subject can assert its presence along with Gadamer's exemplification of the text-reader relation as one of playing a game that form the basis of Ricoeur's contributions to the hermeneutic tradition. Ricoeur, as Gadamer, refutes the determination author's psychology as the authoritative criteria for the definitive interpretation of the text. However, he acknowledges the utility of the semiotic analyses developed particularly in France and then goes beyond this explanatory framework to develop a post-structuralist approach to understanding. This theoretical approach evolves from the union and conflict of two very different sets of concepts: one searching for adequate objective analysis, the other searching beneath the surface meaning for a more fundamental meaning ("Introduction" 21).

The school of structuralist thought gained immense popularity during the 1960's and 1970's as an approach which could obtain the objective analysis of phenomenon. French structuralism challenged Gadamer's elaboration of a historically situated and linguistically mediated hermeneutical understanding as being radically subjective. Ricoeur responded extensively to this challenge in his writings and the evolution of his philosophy is deeply marked by this dialogue. It is a challenge that lead, through Ricoeur, to a response both to Dilthey's quest for a verifiable schema for the understanding of texts comparable to that of the natural sciences and to Gadamer's concern that this schema not require the application of methods that were not specifically
developed for the purpose of understanding the phenomenon of the human sciences.

Structuralism posits that the surface structures of the text are an epiphenomenon of its deep structure. The epistemology of structural analysis is based on the assumption that messages are only instantiations of codes, hence texts are conceptualized as "semiotic machines in regards to which all question about their meaning and their reference is irrelevant" ("Conflict" 226). In this semiotic inquiry one disregards the particular way that the text unfolds itself as a whole and focuses instead on specifically defining categories, principles, and rules that facilitate understanding the deep structure of the text. The binary pairing of morphemes and phonemes then reveals the fundamental human existential issues such as birth, death, love, and hatred referred to in the text. Since the evolution of structuralist approaches, the interpretation of texts no longer requires borrowing methods from positivist schools of thought; rather, it involves the application of the systematic methods of linguistic models, which originate within the discipline of the humanities itself, as the heuristic device for organizing and beginning to interpret the text. However, what is missing from this kind of inquiry is reflection on the function of the structural explanation of the parts and their relationship to the understanding of the whole the work.

In their 1982 debate Gadamer and Ricoeur agree that structuralism is an instance of explanation without understanding, a situation that is the complete reverse of the seeking of immediate "soul-to-soul" contact between reader and author of romantic hermeneutical understanding without explanation ("Conflict"
According to Ricoeur, explanatory analyses are those which clarify the formal or objective internal operations of texts, providing a solid foundation from which to articulate an interpretation. These analytic procedures in themselves however, answer neither questions related to an intended or unintended ideological bias or promotion of ideas, nor questions related to the reception of the text in differing contexts by an unknown reading audience. Reflective interpretative approaches focus on the intentional unity of a text as a work and uncover important elements of signification. However, subjective understanding does not take into account the factual distinctions of temporality and intentionality between dialogue and reading, and thus risks falling into the traps of anti-rational psychologism or subjectivism ("Introduction" 23-4). Thus in their 1982 debate Gadamer and Ricoeur concur that there must be a reintegration of an explanation with an understanding and that semiotic analysis, as the analysis of the structure of the discrete elements of the text into a schematic framework, is one explicative approach that can be reintegrated in a second, learned reading ("Conflict" 238).

Ricoeur's dialogue with French structuralism leads him to recognize the text as a formal sequence established from its inscribed context and to therefore acknowledge the utility of the application of structuralist methods in order to bring out these internal relations of dependence within the structure of

---

6 In their 1982 debate Gadamer challenges Ricoeur by pointing out to him that there are other kinds of analytical procedures for the interpretation of texts besides structuralism. Ricoeur, always searching for mediation before proposing his response, concurs by giving the example of psychoanalytic procedures of interpretation. He stresses however, that some method must be applied to the formal structures of the text as a basis from which to articulate an understanding, to which Gadamer concurs ("Conflict" 236-9).
the text. Thus, as Gadamer responded to historicism’s fragmentation of interpretation and understanding by proposing their integration in a manner similar to that of Schleiermacher, so Ricoeur responded to structuralism by proposing a reintegration of explanation within understanding. To this end, Ricoeur proposes that understanding which is based on analytic explanation is most effective in revealing the reiteration of cultural ideological constructs and in provoking a broadening of the interpreter’s horizon. Thus Ricoeur’s elaboration of the explicative aspects of the text is based on the acknowledged incorporation of semiotics as a starting point in the hermeneutical arc of interpretative operations that extends from naïve to critical interpretation. In addition, the incorporation of semiotics as a heuristic device into the phenomenological hermeneutical approach, which both acknowledges an assumption that absolute truth is an illusion and posits that texts are indeterminate and inexhaustible works, provides a response to the criticisms levelled against this theory of interpretation that given these assumptions, textual commentary is therefore inconsequential. Hermeneutical explanation at this point has thus evolved and radically changed from Dilthey’s conceptualization of it as a reconstruction of the genius of the author to it being directed towards the analytic structure of the text — a structure which includes an understanding of the historical context of the text itself.

The fundamental post-structuralist issue has been identified as the meaning of meaning ("Introduction" 23). In their 1982 debate Gadamer and Ricoeur concur that the epistemological conflict between understanding and
explanation may be seen in terms of two extreme modes of interpreting meaning: recapitulation in a Hegelian sense, and archaeology of a deconstruction in a Nietzschean sense ("Conflict" 224). In textual interpretation, romantic hermeneuts, French semioticians and Russian formalists may be considered closer to the Hegelian mode of interpreting meaning. Romantic hermeneuts examine the text with the objective of recapitualing the intentions of the author; in this sense, the signification of the text may be considered to be located behind the written words. French semioticians and Russian formalists seek the organization of signs within a text, as the deep structure of the text is reflective of the meaning of the work; thus the signification of the text is located in the structure of the text itself. In contrast, phenomenological hermeneuts are closer to the Nietzschean mode of interpreting meaning, examine the world projected by the text; thus, the mode of interpreting meaning is located in front of the text, at the intersection of the world projected by the text and the life-world of the reader. Valdés argues from within the phenomenological tradition, that the only kind of truth we have is self-truth on an intersubjective level ("Introduction" 29). In this sense, meaning is the truth of the intersubjective redescription of the world opened up by the text.

Ricoeur, also within the philosophical phenomenological tradition, argues that understanding means to follow the path opened up by the text itself, from the perspective of the reader's present; in other words, he posits, the reader is to "place [herself] en route towards the orient of the text" ("What" 162). Consistent with Gadamer's recognition that the text acquires meaning only as
the interpreter brings it back into language, the orient of the text is captured as
the reader who, projecting her ownmost possibilities into the world⁷ projected by
the text itself, completes the work in her experience of reading it. Understanding
thus emerges in the dialectic movement between the intentionality of the text
and the reader's sense-making appropriation of its truth-claims. Although
Ricoeur initially considered hermeneutical interpretation as the examination of
the meaning hidden behind symbols, for the later Ricoeur hermeneutics is
marked by an elaboration of the indirect references of the text and an
understanding of it that anchors the hermeneutical arc of explanation-
interpretation-appropriation in the ground of lived experience.

In his conceptualization of interpretation and understanding, Ricoeur
proposes a mediation between Gadamer's acceptance of the melding of these
concepts as initially posited by Schleiermacher and between Dilthey's
subsequent rejection of this fusion and counter assumption of the dichotomous
nature of interpretation and understanding. Gadamerian foregrounding, or what
is brought to interpretation through the historicity of the interpreter as
embedded in her language, is brought to consciousness in Ricoeurian terms in
his recognition of a prefigurative matrix from which each interpreter reads a
text. Interpretation is the configuration⁸ of the text, which corresponds to

⁷ Ricoeur uses the term "world" in the same sense as Heidegger in his 1935 lecture "The Origin
of the Work of Art" published in his 1971 collection of essays Poetry, Language, Thought (see
"Model" 207-8); that is, Ricoeur's use of the word "world" refers to the Greek ontological sense
of a human projection (as opposed to the physical "earth").

⁸ Configuration may be conceptualized as interpretation in that in following a narrative the reader
interprets the text; however, hermeneutical understanding -- which Ricoeur also terms
"interpretation" in “Mimesis and Representation” (1980) -- goes beyond this understanding of
interpretation with the concept of refiguration.
Gadamer's conceptualization of interpretation as bringing the marks on the page back to language (Truth 387). Everyone who reads a text configures it in order to follow its sense; as Gadamer notes, "reading fundamentally involves interpretation" (Truth 399), which in turn involves highlighting certain aspects of the text (Truth 386). For Ricoeur, it is refiguration, the putting into play of the interpreter's configuration, that leads to understanding. Refiguration involves the dialectic movement between the parts, the analytic explanation of the formal aspects of the text, and the whole of the interpreter's understanding of the world projected by the work. Phenomenological hermeneutics after Ricoeur may be most succinctly expressed as "the theory of productive engagement between text and reader as a process of redescribing a world, my world first, and others' worlds subsequently" ("Ricoeur" 267).

It is this aspect of hermeneutics, this process of redescribing a world, that is of central interest to post-structuralist theories of interpretation. Phenomenological hermeneutics acknowledges the possibility of deepened self-understanding² in the interpreter as a result of struggling with the horizon of a text that is necessarily distanciated and then appropriating even some aspect of it into one's own horizon. As Gadamer comments, "if, by entering foreign language-world [the text], we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our previous experience of the world, this does not mean that we negate and leave

---
² This movement between text-understanding and self-understanding is an adaptation of the Heideggerian hermeneutical circle between the subject knowing the object before she is conscious of it and needing to interpret the object in order to understand it. Ricoeur also comments of this circle that one needs to believe in order to understand and to understand in order to believe (From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language" ).
our own world. Like travellers we return home with new experiences” (Truth 448). Phenomenological hermeneutics after Ricoeur no longer stops at this point of enhanced self-understanding, but posits that the completion of refiguration is the sharing of one’s understanding with others. This sharing of one’s understanding with others is established on the common experience of having read the same text. In their 1982 debate Gadamer and Ricoeur pose a basic hermeneutical question: how to enlarge the sphere of communication and thereby enrich the structure of historicity. They propose a dialogic model as the paradigmatic structure not only for the I-Thou relationship, but as a means of reintegrating any single explanatory point of view into the interpretive process (“Conflict” 239). Ricoeur argues that the whole process of objectification of language, human action, and symbolic systems makes procedures of explanation possible. He postulates however, that the problem of self-alienation must be grafted onto the process of objectification in order for self-alienation to be understood. Self-alienation, Ricoeur proposes, left unconnected with processes of objectification becomes “absolutely cryptic and impenetrable” and hence not amenable to mediation through dialogue (“Conflict” 232).

Hermeneutics is not intended to prescribe action; rather, it serves to reduce cultural distance and historical alienation by broadening the horizons of the reader and increasing her awareness of both the similarities and the differences between her self and the other through dialogue. In the phenomenological hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of texts there is always the hope of a positive connection between thought and action. Ricoeur
comments: "it is the task of hermeneutics . . . to reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering, to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their acting" (Temps et récit in "Introduction" 19). Nevertheless, the central point of interest is that those involved in hermeneutical dialogue not only articulate their understanding of the reading experience, but that through dialogue they seek not only to recognize that there are differences in individual understandings, but to articulate the reasons for these disparities. As Ricoeur notes during his 1982 debate with Gadamer, perhaps one is unable to incorporate others’ interpretations into her own view, but she can, by a kind of imaginary sympathy, make room for them and expand her own horizon while continuing to maintain her own position (Truth 241). It is clear then that there are now two points in phenomenological hermeneutics in which the interpreter has the opportunity to broaden her horizon: in the I-Thou encounter with the text, and in the dialogical encounter with the horizons of others who have read the same text. As the truth that emerges from this dialogical encounter acknowledges the intersubjectivity of finite beings, it also “denies that truth can appear in any instance where a hegemonic repression of plurality and alterity governs thinking and acting” (Hermeneutics 151). This observation points to the great achievement of literature, which is its capacity to redescribe value paradigms that shape the narrative identity that constitutes us.
II. Configuration/explanation: discourse/text

A. Formal/semiotics: How does the text function?

This thesis is grounded in the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of Paul Ricoeur and Mario Valdés. In attempting to actualize this theoretical grounding in an examination of the relationship between religious discourse and action in contemporary México as revealed through a selection of national literature, the first major section of this thesis explored the hermeneutic tradition as the prefigurative repertory which underlies and informs this work. This present section (II), the second of the three major sections of the thesis, will focus on the configuration element identified in the work of Ricoeur and Valdés.

Configuration refers to the logical structure, or the mediation, of the meaning of events in the realm of the world of the work itself. It is through the act of reading that one participates in this world. An examination of configuration then, is an inquiry into the composition and the organization of a world that is distanciated from the reader. A text is distanciated from the reader in that it is alien to the reader's prefigurative knowledge base. However, in the act of reading, the reader appropriates the world projected through the concrete

---

10 See Valdés "Paul Ricoeur and Literary Theory" in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995 (259-280) and Ricoeur's reply to Valdés in the same volume (281-84). Ricoeur posits that a text is distanciated simply because it is meaning fixed through the sense afforded by the use of language. This fixating causes the text to be freed from the intention of its author, from the sociocultural conditions of its production, and from its original audience, thus creating a semantically autonomous object. It is because of this distanciation therefore, argues Ricoeur, that at its most primary level, a text is the objectification of human action. It is this objectification which permits the possibility of explanation through the empirical analytical paradigms of the human sciences (see "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text" [1971]. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. 197-221).
seriologic structures of the text. A sophisticated appropriation of the text, one that goes beyond the ability to read and configure the development of the plot, is achieved by means of a dialectic movement between the explanation of the formal aspects of the text and the articulation of the understanding which evolves through the elaboration of this explanation.

The refiguration of a text then is based not only on the individual reading experience, but is also determined by the formal characteristics of the text itself. As acknowledged by Gadamer, textual commentary unavoidably contains a subjective element. Although this inherent subjectivity reminds the reader of the infinite polysemia of language and the impossibility of arriving at a definitive interpretation, it does not mean that a particular text may be read in an infinite number of ways. This is because the subjective element in the refiguration of a text is always limited, or guided, by the text itself.

Configuration is the link between the prefigurative repertory that one brings to a text and the refiguration that emerges from the appropriation of the world projected by the text. In Valdés' stages of the operation of literary criticism the actualization of the configuring mimesis of Ricoeur's philosophy focuses on both the formal and the historical aspects of the text. What the text speaks about, or the historical relationship between the world of action and its inscription in written form, will be explored in part IIB of this section. This current part (part IIA) will examine some of the linguistic and structural strategies that may used to create a text with the capacity to project a world that is consistent enough and perceptive enough to provoke a redescription of the world of
action. As creating a diegetic world necessarily involves the use of a system of signs, it is important to examine the semiotics of a text in order to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of the way in which a work functions. It is through these formal components, which comprise the sense of a text, by which meaning is configured. The narratological framework developed by Luz Aurora Pimentel will provide the theoretical basis for this examination.

The following elaboration of some of the narrative strategies which may be employed to adequately construct a text with the capacity to project a world serves within the whole of this thesis to provide an explicative basis of how a narrative text functions. It is in the first part of the third section of this work (III A) that three hermeneutic analyses are provided which explore the way in which three Mexican authors have responded to and mediated the world of action through the use of linguistic and structural techniques. The similarities and differences in their configurations create an intersubjective dialogue. I respond to this dialogue in the final part of this thesis (III B) with my own refiguration of the way in which literary texts refer to the world of action to permit a more lucid understanding of relationship between religious discourse and action.

*Oficio de tinieblas* by Rosario Castellanos is one of the three texts studied in part III A. It will be used in this present part (I A) as the model by which to illustrate the way in which the characters of the diegetic world, the temporal dimension of this world, and the form of enunciation used to narrate it function to inscribe a particular ideological context. It is through the use of such literary
techniques that a “configurer” of the world of action may create a physical object with the capacity of evoke a world.

There is little description in *Oficio de tinieblas* and little elaboration of the space in which the action takes place. What is important to this narrative are the characters, for the story emerges from their interaction and from their personal responses to this interaction. Pimentel posits that a character is an “efecto de sentido logrado por medio de estrategias discursivas y narrativas” (59). One of the narrative strategies that may be used to create this sense effect is to delineate individual characters with their own identities. *Oficio de tinieblas* is significant on this point as it breaks with the stereotypes of the *novelas indigenistas* of the 1930’s in individualizing both mestizo and indigenous characters. As part of this exploration of the formal aspects of a text, several of the characters of *Oficio de tinieblas* will be explored as they compose a significant aspect of the way this text functions.

In this story the characters are not isolated entities but are part of a community which is isolated from the larger country. Their interdependence is inscribed through the movement of the narrative focus from the perspective of one social group to another, while continuing to deepen and advance the story:

Así como hay un ir y venir constante entre los dos lugares centrales y un proceso de entrelazamiento decisivo entre los dos grupos, así también la estructura causal de los acontecimientos narrados dicta que los argumentos secundarios se entremezclen. De modo que, a fin de cuentas, la secuencia de acontecimientos es la misma para indios y ladinos. Aunque las relaciones sociales

son ciertamente asimétricas, al mismo tiempo son también interdependientes (Sommers "Forma" 82).

Pimentel observes that this "efecto de sentido [es el] punto de partida para discusiones sobre las diversas formas de articulación ideológica que se llevan a cabo en un relato, con el personaje como gozne de esa vinculación" (63). As the discussion of the narrative strategies related to characterization proceeds, the sense of the characters will begin to reveal the way in which these internal textual relations are part of a structural system which functions to project meaning.

As with all of the characters in Oficio de tinieblas, the portrait of Leonardo Cifuentes is constructed throughout the text from the comments of the narrator, from the actions and comments of other characters with respect to him, and from his own comments and actions. The first piece of information about Leonardo is given to the reader by the narrator when doña Mercedes pushes Marcela into a room where "un hombre de compleción robusta, de mediana edad, sacaba brillo al cañón de una pistola con un retazo de gamuza" (20). This introduction to Leonardo begins to create a concept of strength: he has a "robust" complexion, he is middle-aged and thus perhaps at a fruitful point in his life, and he is polishing a gun, a phallic symbol of power. The narrator points out some of the things that have gone well for Leonardo, commenting that:

Tal cúmulo de coincidencias fortaleció poco a poco en Leonardo la certidumbre de la incontrastabilidad de su potencia y de la lícitdad de sus caprichos, certidumbre que aceptaba sin examen e imponía sin consideración. Ningún temor religioso, ninguna idea
Clearly, the sense of the character of Leonardo is that of an astute man who has made the most of the opportunities for advancement in prestige and wealth that have been presented to him, despite the dubious ethical nature of the means of securing them. “Pero, otra vez la suerte, nadie se atrevió a acusarlo” (68). In fact, the reader learns first from doña Mercedes that don Leonardo Cifuentes is “una de las varas altas de Ciudad Real, un señor tan bien visto y tan aseado” (20).

The sense of the character doña Mercedes emerges as a response to the circumstances of her life, an effect that is consistent in characterization throughout the text. It is through the technique of an interior monologue that it is communicated to the reader that this woman is poor and that her association with Leonardo keeps her from surviving through begging or prostitution. She has accepted the store that Leonardo has set up for her, the store which provides him with a space outside of his home and a woman --“¡como si yo no conociera bien mi oficio!”-- who knows that he “es un codicioso de indias” (20).

The character of Leonardo, or the sense effect that his personage adds to the story unfolding in the hills of Chiapas, is that of a caudillo. Leonardo in some sense then is an actant, he fills the role of the land-owning man who unremittingly seeks his own gain and his own pleasure regardless of the cost to others, all freely and with impunity. The narrator does not choose to complicate this character with any gentle or vulnerable aspects. It is more important to the
story to show not only how the interactions of the characters lead to its climax, but also to indicate why it is that they act the way that they do. It is through the use of various narrative techniques therefore, that the necessary background information is provided to the reader. Through dialogue, for example, the reader learns something of the past circumstances of the life of the strong man named Leonardo:

—... Isidoro, mi marido, ño sé, mi marido, no lo que tú fuiste después para mí, era más que tu amigo, era tu hermano. ¿Quién, sino él, te recogió y obligó a sus padres a que te dieran asilo en su casa, porque tú no eras más que un huérfano y las monjas te maltrataban y te dejaban sin comer...? (69-70).

Here, early in the text, the reader is given insight into the relentless drive of this character to move ahead in life. Later, what has been alluded to or suggested in the text through the comments of others and through the actions of Leonardo himself is confirmed by the narrator: there really are no limits for Leonardo in attaining and maintaining what it is that he wants: "¿Quién era este advenedizo? El asesino de Isidoro, el amante de Julia, el traidor que pactaría con los extranjeros las condiciones de rendición de Ciudad Real" (335-6).

Leonardo is interested in self-preservation, in preserving the lifestyle that he so astutely manoeuvred to obtain and has fully enjoyed for some years. As noted, it is through doña Mercedes that the reader learns that he “es un codicioso de indias”. From his narrated actions the reader easily configures that he acquires and dispenses of them as though they were disposable dishcloths. Through the narrative strategy of direct discourse it is made evident that when there is a perceived threat to Leonardo's lifestyle, he turns his force against that
threat: "... con los indios hay que acabar... Sí, la muerte de ellos, la de sus familiares, el arrasamiento de sus parajes y de sus pueblos. Y después hay que echar sal en sus sementeras para que nunca vuelva a darse una semilla" (340-1). The sense of this character, combined with the development of the plot, carries with it the ideological implications regarding the effectiveness of the caudillo system, for in the end it is Leonardo who maintains a more than comfortable lifestyle with few limitations for obtaining the things that he wants.

All of the characters are developed at the psychological level. This development serves as a strategy to explain why the events occur in the story as they occur. All of the characters come into the present drama with particular experience and particular desires that influence their action within it. This is especially notable in the character of Catalina. It is her action in proclaiming that the ancestral gods had returned to liberate the community of San Juan from their difficulties is the catalytic event which unleashes the action of the text. The narrator informs the reader of the psychological functioning underlying what might otherwise be configured as an illogical act.

... en su interior no resonaba más que una pregunta: ¿por qué me abandonaron? Los suyos, su pueblo... Abandonada. Como el enfermo vuelve, toca, punza, su punto neurálgico, Catalina regresaba a la sensación de su aislamiento, de su superfundido. ... Nada era suyo. Pedro siempre fue otro y no el que Catalina amaba, el que Catalina necesitaba. No pudo tenerlo dentro de sí ni siquiera como se tiene a un hijo. Un hijo. Éste era el nombre de su soledad, de su desvalimiento, de su fracaso (315-6).

Catalina's failure to conceive a child (which may in fact be Pedro's failure) completely distorts her understanding of her self. Her experience of
sterility causes her to feel a need to appease the gods for whatever it is that they are punishing her for (12) and to find a role which would make her a fully accepted member of her community (250). Catalina is not lacking in intelligence or astuteness, as indicated by her perception of Marcela's situation and her taking advantage of this opportunity to obtain someone to care for her retarded brother. She explains to Pedro that Marcela will stay with them because "un cañlán abusó de ella".

Pero ante los ojos de Winiktón la frase relumbró de muy otra manera. Como si los años no hubiesen transcurrido y él, adolescente aún y desde la impotencia de su edad, estuviera contemplando una imagen atroz: su hermana más pequeña, con el pie traspasado por el clavo con que un cañlán la sujetó al suelo para consumar su abuso. Pedro, al mirar la sangre que manaba (lenta, espesa, negra) gritó con un alarido salvaje y golpeó furiosamente la tierra. A espaldas suyas, entre los murmullos desaprobatorios, se desenvainó un relámpago: la palabra justicia. ¿Quién la pronunció? Su fuego no había solamado ninguna de las bocas imposibles. Pedro interrogaba, uno por uno, a los varones de consejo, a los ancianos de mucha edad. Nadie respondía (29-30).

The non-acquiescent spirit of Pedro offers a rational possibility of emancipation from the cyclical situation of abuse, repression, and sublevation experienced by the Indians living in the region of Ciudad Real. This possibility is augmented when circumstances lead Pedro to work on the estate of Adolfo Homel. On this estate there is a school for the workers, making it a model for the implementation of the ideals of Cardenism. While working there Pedro meets the President of the Republic and hears him utter the word justice. There he also learns that white women are not made of some mythical substance that differs from his own. He returns home with a different perspective of things and
speaks of the words of the President to the authorities of San Juan. But “los viejos se retiraron de allí embargados por una cólera sin nombre y sin salida”.

The narrator analyzes this anger:

¿Acaso su condición era, pues, circunstancia azarosa y remediable? No, era destino, mandato de las potencias oscuras, voluntad de dioses crueles. ¡Qué burla a sus creencias, qué mofa a su vida, a sus virtudes humildes, a la sumisión que ahora despojaban de sus méritos si Pedro hubiera dicho la verdad! (63)

It is not therefore, that there are not indigenous characters with the intelligence and capacity to understand the situation in the hills of Chiapas in a rational way. It is rather that, as a microcosm of the interpersonal dynamics of the text, the community of San Juan is, as is that of Ciudad Real, comprised of a group of individuals with their own experiences and interests to the extent that it inhibits an examination of their living circumstances. Although Pedro encounters apathy amongst the people of San Juan, he finds in Fernando Ulloa a possible resource and offers to be Fernando’s guide and interpreter for his work in surveying the land of San Juan. Fernando’s interest in the land claims is rooted in his own experience, as the narrator explains:

---

12 One of the criticisms of *Oficio de tinieblas* is that it is paternalistic and pessimistic regarding the situation in Chiapas. It is felt to be paternalistic as it does not present an Indian who is conscious of the situation and who leads a successful emancipation of the indigenous people from within their own community. However, one of the characteristics of the novel is the creation of a foggy, obscure ambience: *no one*, regardless of ethnic origin, is “capable of understanding their past and analyzing their present” (Sommers 88). The participation of the mestizo Fernando in the violence which followed the death of Domingo was an act of desperation as erroneous as the Indian Catalina’s resurrection of the “ancestral” gods. The novel is felt to be pessimistic as there is no change in the social structure of the community. However, almost forty years after the publication of *Oficio de tinieblas* it would still appear that falta mucho tiempo para que amaneciera. See Lavou, Victorien. “El juego de los programas narrativos en *Oficio de tinieblas* de Rosario Castellanos”. *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*. 19.37 (1993): 319-32; Smotherman, Teresa. “La filosofía de la liberación en la nueva novela indigenista”. *Cuadernos Americanos*. 6.35 (1992): 145-57; Sommers, Joseph. “Forma e ideología en *Oficio de tinieblas*”. *Revista Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*. 5:10 (1979): 9-36.
Fernando Ulloa no era únicamente el empleado de mediana edad, que tiene un sueldo que no ajusta para sus necesidades y que ha alcanzado menos de lo que se propuso. Era también el huérfano del campesino que desafió a sus amos y que siguió a Emiliano Zapata por las montañas del sur en las que resonaba un grito libertario. Era el hijo de la viuda desamparada a quien el hambre empujó hasta la ciudad. Era el niño que, en los años en que los otros juegan, trabajaba en oficios viles para ganar unos cuantos centavos. Era el solicitante de becas miserables. Era el alumno interno que nunca comió lo suficiente y que jamás tuvo otros libros que los que le prestaban sus compañeros. Era el estudiante aprovechado, el que lograba las más altas calificaciones y uno de los que escogieron los profesores para hacer por Europa un breve recorrido de aprendizaje y perfeccionamiento. Y también, más tarde, el hombre que sin saber cómo se enredó con Julia y que, para sostenerla, abandonó la carrera, no obtuvo el título por el que su madre y él hicieron tantos sacrificios (155-6).

The insight that the narrator provides into the psyche of Fernando is a strategy that functions not only to locate him as a genuine ally of Pedro, but also reveals the way in which his experiences have informed his interest. It is from this web of interests, arising from the experience of the individual characters, that the plot of the story builds to the final catharsis.

The characters, these effects of sense, act within the diegetic space of San Juan Chamula, its barrio Tzajal-hemel, and Ciudad Real. Although the indigenous characters generally live in the area of San Juan and the mestizo characters in Ciudad Real, this geographical separation belies the actual interrelatedness of the people in these locations. The social web of the characters is communicated through the narrative structure of the text. For example, the characters are narrated in diegetic spaces where they are not part of the action that is taking place. This technique is used early in the text when
Isabel, the wife of Leonardo, appears at her window as Marcela runs from the store after being raped by Isabel’s husband. The narrator observes that Isabel “vio la india despavorida; vio la encubridora furiosa y no necesitó más para entender lo que no era la primera vez que presenciaba. No pudo evitar un gesto de asco. Vivamente se retiró de la ventana” (22). Isabel does not participate in the violent scene between her husband and the young girl, but she physically witnesses the state of the girl running from doña Mercedes’ store and she knows what has happened. She does not act on the repugnance stirred in her by the actions of the man whose house she shares, but seeks instead the obscurity of the room where her daughter has isolated herself.

A short time later the Bishop and Manuel Mandujano pass Marcela sitting on the curb with her head on her knees. They try to give her a coin, which she lets fall to the ground. Neither of the two men speak Tzotzil, although the Bishop has lived in Ciudad Real “más años de los que [Manuel] cuentas” (26). Thus, characters that are superfluous to the central action of a particular space and time nevertheless appear in some small way. These brief appearances serve to structurally link the characters together, reinforcing their interrelatedness; at the same time, they also reveal a lack of communication. This lack of communication occurs within ethnic groups as well, for example between Catalina and Pedro or between Fernando and Julia, but it is particularly evident between the clergy and the young girl for they do not even share the same spoken language.
The use of physical objects, such as the silk shawl that Julia accepts from doña Mercedes "únicamente en consideración a la amistad que [el señor Cifuentes] demuestra a mi esposo" (66) is another of the narrative strategies employed to weave together the characters of this text. Julia looks hopelessly for the shawl as Leonardo asks why she does not wear it. It is not until much later in the text however, that the narrator informs the reader that the shawl was stolen by César as a gift to the worshippers of the idols in the cave (306). Here again the characters come into contact without being directly involved in the immediate event. César did not know that the shawl was given to his boss' wife by her lover, Leonardo and Julia, in turn, refuses to read the newspapers for they implicate her with the Indians of Tzajal-hemel (336).

Another object which serves this same role of linking characters together while at the same time articulating the lack of communication are the first few pages of Leonardo's *Military Orders*, salvaged from the ruins of San Juan.

The temporal dimension of the diegetic world is a narratological aspect of particular interest in *Oficio de tinieblas* as, as has been frequently noted by commentators, there are two distinct concepts of time operating within the text: the mythical and the historical. Some commentators suggest that the historical sense of time belongs to the "ladino" characters while mythical sense of time belongs to the Indian (see Sommers "Oficio" 15). An examination of the

---

narrative strategies employed in the text shows that these two understandings of time are embedded in the whole of the story. There is within the text a sequence of events that are causally linked, thus moving the story forward in a linear historical sense. This forward movement however, does not lead to any radical change in the conditions that motivated the chain of events in the first place. It is this immobility and repetition which gives the text its ahistorical sense of time.

Oficio de tinieblas begins with the narrator relating the story of the origins of the social order in the Chamula valley. The reader has the sensation that it is the beginning of a play: the theatre is dark and the curtain is down and the voice of the narrator fills the space. S/he speaks in a language and rhythm reminiscent of a child’s story, telling of how San Juan Fiador changed the sheep in the Chamula valley to white stones with the expectation that the people of the valley would use them to construct a church in his honour. The narrator explains the arrival of men who “llevaban el sol en la cara y hablaban lengua alta, lengua que sobrecoge el corazón de quien escucha” (9), telling the listeners that they came because the people in the valley did not know what to do with the white stones. Then, as from one child to another, the narrator assures the reader that “así como se cuentan sucedieron las cosas desde sus orígenes. No es mentira. Hay testimonios. Se leen en los tres arcos de la puerta de entrada del templo” (10).

This story serves to explain the origins of the subordination of the first inhabitants of the valley to the men who “llevaban el sol en la cara”. There is a
parallel between the metaphor that the narrator uses to describe the appearance of the newcomers to the valley and the concept of the sun as the supreme deity in establishing this subordination. The narrator observes that “el hombre que sirve de dechado a los demás debe prosternarse ante su padre, el sol” (11). Thus the men with the bright faces were not only supposed to take a leadership role in constructing a church to San Juan Fiador, but there is the suggestion of a relationship between those who carry the sun in their face and a supreme being.

However, the narrator also recounts that the men who spoke the “lengua que sobrecoge el corazón de quien escucha” did not know how to deal with the white rocks either and that “San Juan Fiador tuvo que venir, en persona, empujando él mismo las piedras” (10). The insertion of this information into the story explaining the division between the original inhabitants of the Chamula valley and the men who came later is not an unambiguous one in which the newcomers are clearly superior to those already established there. The story indicates that the men with light-coloured faces and a harsh language came to the valley for a useful purpose: to show the people what to do with the white stones in order that San Juan Fiador could be worshipped as he wished. However, they clearly were no more competent for this purpose than those already there for San Juan had to come to move the stones himself. Thus the sense of the mythological explanation of the social order in the Chamula valley functions within the text as a whole to show that this order is as it should be.
Yet, it contains the ambiguous element of the incapacity of the newcomers, indicating that maybe this order could be different.

After explaining the cargo system, the narrator speaks in a transition paragraph that begins "amanecer tarde en Chamula . . . " (11). As this paragraph unfolds the reader imagines that the curtain is being raised and that the action of the story begins with Pedro González Winiktón and Catalina Díaz Puiljá in their hut, the cold night fog dissipating with the early morning light.

Every story operates on a double system of temporality: the diegetic time that is imaginatively constructed by the reader as the events of the text unfold, and the time indicated by the narration of events in language. The events in Oficio de tinieblas are ordered chronologically in that the discursive time advances consistent with the sequence of events as they occur. The first six chapters focus on events that principally involve the main characters from San Juan: the assault on the Indian women going to Ciudad Real to sell their clay jars, the rape of Marcela, the birth of Domingo. Already however, foreshadowed in this sequence of events, is the interrelationship of the characters of two communities and two social classes. It is Leonardo, the man who will be responsible for the dispersion of the Indian community, who rapes Marcela and it is Manuel, the priest who will destroy the idol in the cave, who at the Bishop’s request tries to compensate Marcela’s suffering with a coin.

Although action narrated in the order that it occurs, the narrator makes frequent use of the technique of the flashback to provide information about events that preceded those unfolding in the diegetic present. This technique is
used in the first chapter when the narrator observes that, although he holds the
prestigious cargo of judge, has a wife who loves him, a nice hut, and a cornfield
that promises a good harvest, Pedro does not have a smile on his face. The
reason for this, "porque no tenia hijos" provides the opportunity for a brief
digression to explain how it was that Catalina came to be the ilol that she is in
the diegetic present. It is through this same technique that the reader is given
access to the backgrounds of Leonardo, Idolina, Manuel, Julia, Teresa,
Fernando, and César. As discussed above, these background stories are
important to the events unfolding in the diegetic present for they serve as an
explicative basis as to why the characters act as they do. That these
background histories are provided for minor characters such as Teresa and
César further stresses the interdependence of all of the characters. It was, after
all, César who put into Fernando’s mind, before Good Friday, the idea of
leading a sublevation from San Juan.

The final scene in the text is Teresa Entzin López telling a story to the
child that she has in her charge. The story is a condensed and mythologized
version of the plot that has unfolded in the diegetic world. It is included in the
whole work at the end of a series of chronological events, albeit narrated with
the interjection of flashbacks and foreshadowing. Its position in the structure of
the text serves to link the end of the narrative with its beginning. This structure
reflects the repetitive, ahistorical quality of the linear events that have just
transpired.
However, it is because the text begins with a legend set in San Juan Chamula and ends with an Indian nanny repeating the events of the diegetic world as a bedtime tale, that commentators have associated ahistorical time with only the indigenous elements in the text. But it is rather that the entire region under the administrative centre of Ciudad Real is paralysed in a mythical time where it is easier for the characters to close their eyes than to consciously examine the factors that inhibit their community from moving along a positive historical trajectory.

The defining characteristic of narrative utilized in this work is that narrative is someone relating a series of events to someone. This means not only that narrative is a verbal means of communication, but also that the narrator is a necessary and constitutive part of it; s/he is the enunciator through whom the diegetic world is made known.

The narrator of *Oficio de tinieblas* chose the enunciative form of the third person voice.¹⁴ The third person voice offers the opportunity to adopt the perspective of an observer who is not implicated in the events of the diegetic world. This apparent absence permits the narrator the ability to ostensibly reduce any bias towards the concerns of any one group of characters. In fact Sommers notes that, “un cincuenta por ciento de los capítulos son narrados desde un punto de vista indígena mientras la otra mitad se concentra en la experiencia ladina” ("Oficio" 15). As will become clear below, in neither fifty

---

¹⁴ As Pimentel observes however, all narratives are really told in the first person, as indicated by the fact that the narrator may assert her presence by interjecting in the first person voice into the story at any time (135).
percent does the narrator set up a system in which one group is responsible for the tragic events at the end of the story. Rather, the formal movement of the narrative focus between the Indian and mestizo groups serves again to create the sense of the interrelationship of the two groups and their shared involvement in the unfolding of the events in the diegetic world.

As a traditional narrator speaking in the impersonal third voice, the narrator of Oficio de tinieblas is located in an unknown present space and time and retrospectively relating events as they once unfolded in the diegetic world. Although the use of verbs in the past tense throughout the text indicates that the narrator is telling the story from a time posterior to the events, these events are nevertheless configured by the reader as though they are occurring in present time (Pimentel 158). This conflation of time is particularly evident in Oficio de tinieblas for, although it is set in Chiapas of the 1930’s, the story that the narrator relates is based on events that occurred in the same space, but occurred in the 1860’s.

Mediation is a determining characteristic of verbal narration, and the narrator may control this mediation to a greater or lesser extent. That is, the narrator may be the sole source of the information for the story, or s/he may relinquish some of this control to perhaps have the characters provide information. The narrator of Oficio de tinieblas decided to transmit the story from a position of omniscience, but s/he declines the privilege of entering the consciousness of any of the characters, choosing instead an external
focalisation from which s/he may analyze the motives behind the actions of the characters.

Porque Marcela no guardaba sino una imagen confusa de la violencia que había sufrido. Detrás de los gestos autoritarios y voraces de Cifuentes (a los que se resistió como lo hacen las bestias, por instinto; y se resistió de manera salvaje, a mordiscos, a arañazos) Marcela vislumbró algo. No lo que tantas mujeres de su condición: el orgullo de ser preferidas por un caxlán. No lo que otras hembras: el peligroso deleite de suscitar un deseo brutal. No, Marcela había adivinado un paraíso: la suprema abolición de su conciencia (24).

The narrator narrates from the perspective of omniscient observer, commenting that the character herself has only a foggy recollection of Leonardo’s treatment of her. The narrator is able to articulate what it is that Marcela did not feel to specifically state that Marcela responded to the incident by repressing her feelings and thoughts, and to offer the opinion that this repression provided reprieve for Marcela.

Although the narrator of Oficio de tinieblas appears to fulfil a purely vocal function, s/he is not entirely absent from the story being related. In the excerpt cited above it is clear that s/he does not refrain from analyzing the psyche of the characters. This analysis permits the narrator to indirectly indicate an ideological position that may influence the reader’s configuration of the text.

Underlying the narration of the events of San Juan Chamula and Ciudad Real is the presence of fog and obscurity. These nebulous elements are included in the story beginning with the title of the novel and ending with the last line in the text: “faltaba mucho tiempo para que amaneciera”. Sometimes the characters intentionally block out light by closing their eyes: “Winiktón
fingía, haciendo lo que algunos animales cuando el peligro mayor los amenaza; cerrar los ojos, paralizarse, imitar la muerte" (33).

The narrator tends to utilize the phenomenon of darkness, fog, and closed eyes to indicate a condition of unawareness. Catalina, the astute woman who took Marcela in as a wife for her retarded brother and the ilol who led the community to the ancestral gods, also seeks the same paradise of unawareness that Marcela has found: "Catalina cerró los ojos. ¿Hasta cuándo caería en el pozo de la inconsciencia? Porque no era posible que se prolongara más el sufrimiento" (314).

Significantly, it is not only the Indians who live in a fog of unconsciousness. The wife of the government employee who aspired to membership in the landowning class of Ciudad Real seeks this paradise. She tries not to acknowledge that her lover is speaking to her by hypnotically repeating disordered and senseless fragments from folk songs, or church creeds, or childhood games until "la conciencia de Julia empezaba a adormecerse" (199). The highest authority of the Catholic Church in Ciudad Real, Bishop Alfonso Cañaveral, asks from his bed where he has taken refuge after the repression of the sublevation,

--Antes de irse, señor Gobernador, quiero suplicarle que deje cerradas las cortinas. No soporto la luz [. . .]
--¡Ah, por fin! ¡Otra vez la oscuridad! (361)

Allusions to darkness and fog are not used with respect to either Leonardo or Fernando, and there are no associations between these characters and unconsciousness until near the end of the story. In the end it is
Fernando, the believer in the law and in the ideals of Cardenism, who succumbs to the lure of the irrational:

"Y asistió hasta el fin de la ceremonia mudo y paralizado. Se dejó llevar por el mismo impulso que arrastraba a los demás contra sus opresores. Pero después, cuando tuvo plena conciencia de que ese impulso era la sangre de una víctima, se horrorizó" (347).

Fernando ultimately pays for his unconsciousness of the social dynamic of Ciudad Real and San Juan Chamula with his life. Leonardo is the character who constantly remains conscious and who, despite his murder of Isidoro, his infidelity to his wife, his manipulation of the Ciudad Realenses fear of an Indian subleviation and his orchestration of the Military Orders, is not associated with the nebulous image of fog or obscurity. Thus the narrator does not utilize the image of fogginess and lack of light to refer to the doers of conventional evil deeds, but to the evil of unconsciousness as one of the precipitating factors that logically leads to the climax of the story being told. That the Indians, the government, and the Church have some allusion made to an obscured understanding is consistent with the outcome of the story: the landowners win and the status quo is maintained.

As discussed above, one of the narrative techniques used in Oficio de tinieblas is the creation of individualized characters. Each character is defined not so much physically, but rather in terms of the series of circumstances and psychological responses to them. This is important to the plot of the story as it is this combination of circumstances and personal responses that leads the
characters inevitably to the murder of Domingo and to the destruction of the indigenous community.

"El valle de Chamula –de niebla, de regatos– ahora es el valle de las humaredas" (362) observes the narrator in the last pages of the text. The fog of unawareness is now further made opaque by the smoke of recent events. There is indication that the smoke will clear again in the future and that the Indians will continue, as in the past, but there is little indication that the fog will disperse.

No existe ni antes ni hoy. Es siempre. Siempre la derrota y la persecución. Siempre el amo que no se aplaca con la obediencia más abyecta ni con la humildad más servil. Siempre el látigo cayendo sobre la espalda sumisa. Siempre el cuchillo cercenando el ademán de insurrección.

En esta eternidad se cumple el destino de la tribu. Porque es voluntad de los dioses que los tzotziles permanezcan (362-3).

It is Idolina, the child of Isidoro and Isabel, who experiences a brief period of awareness of the people around her and of the timelessness of their situation: "Idolina escucha un instante, sobrecogida de terror". Her faithful nanny "la acoge en su regazo y acaricia su cabeza y le cuenta un cuento para calmarla, para dormirla" (366). This paradise, found again behind closed eyes, refuses awareness of the relevance of the legend of the nameless ilol who gave birth to a stone child.

In summary, this section focused on configuration, the second of the three areas of engagement of a reader responding to a text. It examined the composition and organization of a world that is distanciated from the reader. The characters of the diegetic world of Oficio de tinieblas, the temporal
dimension of this world, and the form of enunciation used to narrate it provided examples of linguistic and structural strategies that operate to make the text function. A narrative text that functions well is able to project a world that has the capacity to redescribe the world of action. It remains however, that the key aspect of this second area of engagement, regardless of the degree of narrative mastery, is that “la realidad de la literatura está en su lectura; no hay obra, y por lo tanto no hay significación, sin la lectura. Leer es participar en la construcción del texto y del mundo porque la literatura, y en especial la narrativa, es parte del mundo de la acción sólo cuando es leída” (Pimentel 163).
B. **Historical/semantics:** What does the text speak about?

In articulating the movement from the world of action to narrative, Ricoeur observes that a life which is not interpreted is nothing more than a biological phenomenon ("Life" 432). In support of this observation, he cites Socrates' position that the unexamined life is not worth living ("Life" 425). He rearticulates this shared perspective on the value of interpreting human life, proposing that "a life examined, in the sense borrowed from Socrates, is a life narrated" ("Life" 435), for it is through narration that one examines one's life and the lives of others. Ricoeur summarizes this argumentation in positing that life cannot be understood other than through the stories we tell about it ("Life" 435).

Narrative is defined by Pimentel, based on Ricoeur, as "the progressive construction, through the mediation of a narrator, of a world of human action and interaction, whose referent may be either real or fictional" (*Relato* 10). This construction is not a series of isolated events, but rather "the representation of at least two real or fictional events or situations in a temporal sequence" (*Relato* 8). Such texts are "strategies of communication that [are] subjected to a process of exteriorization, using a collective, multifaceted, polysemic, and highly valorized system of cultural signs ("Introduction" 24). Texts are works; that is, they are unified creations, meaningful totals, or wholes ("Conflict" 217). Such discourse produced as a work is made up of a series of truth-claims.\(^{15}\) It is

\(^{15}\) As Valdés elaborates in his 1992 *World-making: Literary Truth-claim and the Interpretation of Texts*, truth-claims are verisimilar propositions or statements put forward for consideration as though they were true. These truth-claims fall into two general areas, those that are verifiable and those that are not. In the area of verifiable truth-claims are empirical truth-claims (verified
in questioning and responding to these truth-claims that the text provokes a reconsideration of an area of human experience. Thus the object of textual interpretation is any social discourse that has the capacity to provoke new understanding or a redescription of an area of human experience through reflection on its truth-claims. The ontic grounding of this reconsideration and reflection points to an ontology in which hermeneutical truth is ultimately disclosive of Being (Hermeneutics 126). It is this reflection that offers the potential for provoking a redescription of the world, thereby enlarging the reader's understanding.

In the preface to his text The Content of the Form (1987) Hayden White observes that there is an increased interest in narrative across many disciplines. He cites, for example, that philosophers are articulating justification for narrative as a mode of explanation different from (but not less important than) the nomological-deductive methods used in the physical sciences. Narrative approaches the object of study in the world of action obliquely, evoking the reader/narrator's experience of it and acknowledging that the reader of the written text too will participate in the construction of the world from which meaningful action will emerge.

White posits that narrative is the most appropriate form of discourse for the representation of the experience of Heideggerian historicality in a way that

---

through examination of the physical setting that is purportedly described with accuracy) and historical truth-claims (verified through comparison of the historical record and the purported event that has been made part of the textual configuration). In the area of non-verifiable truth-claims are contextual truth-claims (related to the sense of the text), and those claims related to values or beliefs (ways in which the text puts into question who and what the reader is; that is, her own sense of place, purpose and value).
is both literal and figurative. In his essay "Metaphysics and Narrativity" White discusses Ricoeur's work, concurring that historical being-in-time is best grasped in all its complexity and multi-layeredness not in terms of pure reason or science, but in symbolic thought. In other words, it is in a metaphoric way that one can most appropriately approach and signify the world of action. In "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator" (1987) Ricoeur himself focuses his interest on *phronesis*, positing that narrative serves to develop a kind of intelligence which is closer to practical wisdom and moral judgment than to science empirical experimentation. Hermeneutic literary criticism supports these observations regarding the kind of knowledge that narrative accesses, and makes it clear that narrative is not random, undisciplined inscription. Indeed it is through the disciplined use of the rules beneath poetic activity that narrative has the technical capacity to provide more than a didactic overview of meaningful action. In addition, the literary format of narrative does not close the text as though what the reader of the text of the world of action has written marks the arrival at the horizon which she seeks to approach.

Professor Edward Chamberlin writes that he responds to queries regarding what exactly his job is by saying that he tells stories ("Telling" 12). Such stories are parts of the world of action that bring to language experiences lived within the whole of the world of action. Telling these stories requires a

---

16 White uses the terms "literal" and "figurative" in a way that is reminiscent of the dichotomy between denotative and connotative; Ricoeur eliminates this dichotomy in proposing that the second level of reference (the metaphorical or, in referring to the intersubjective truth about the redescription of the world, the meaning) is dependent on (not distinct from) the first level of reference (the literal, or, referring to the intersubjective exchange itself: the event). In other words, that one arrives at the secondary signification by means of the primary signification.
dialectic movement between experiences of the world of action and the language chosen to articulate them. These linguistic articulations necessarily objectify the inscribed experience, but it is through this objectification that explanation is possible. And it is because of this process of objectification, Ricoeur observes in a 1982 debate with Gadamer, that linguistic communication is possible ("Conflict" 225). In the humanities, writing is the process of objectification that continues to be most commonly utilized by researchers to communicate their observations and reflections on the world of action.

The postmodern era however, has ushered in an intense period of methodological self-reflection which has deeply questioned the process of writing culture. As noted above, the act of narrating serves the heuristic function of giving sense — form and order — to a chaotic immediacy. Clearly this process necessarily involves imposing "arbitrary" criteria regarding for example, the kind of language that will be used to describe the phenomena, what is to be included and what is to be excluded, and how this selected material is to be organized. Reflecting on this process, some critics have argued that the resulting narration is a fiction that says more about the person constructing it than about the immediacy it purports to elucidate.

At its extreme, this line of commentary careens into a wall, a wall of the futility of any attempt to capture the essence of the other through writing, and reducing explanation to play without rules. This desolate situation pronounces the absolute isolation and alienation of individuals across cultures, races,
religions – in any circumstance where there is difference, which of course ultimately there always is, even within groups. This position precludes any linguistic efforts towards communication and shared understanding, the precursors of reconciliation. It also calls into question the whole project of the humanities and the social sciences and the genuine interest that many individuals within them have in each other.

Concurring with Ricoeur and the Socratic maxim that the unexamined life is not worth living, one could respond to the validity of the observations of postmodernists such as Clifford and Marcus (*Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, 1986*) and produce incomprehensible, albeit less accomplished, Derridian documents in an attempt to overcome the tyranny of the written word, the vehicle of one’s reflection. Or one could acknowledge the incredible capacity of the written word which, through human creative imagination, has the power to narrate different lives lived, making them available to others and thus providing an opportunity to provoke a redescription of the reader’s own world.

Ricoeur argues that the world of action can be approached through hermeneutics as if the action were a text. In the early 1970’s he proposes that it is the meaning of action that can be fixed. In relevant essays from the late 1970’s onward Ricoeur expands this conceptualization to acknowledge that the world of action can in itself be evoked through narrative. Ricoeur’s analyses regarding the relationship between the world of action and narrative will be explored below to articulate a theoretical approach that both validates the use
of narrative as a means of explaining the world of action and provides a guide through which to explore the process of inscribing the world of action through writing.

In his 1971 essay "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text" Ricoeur's main argument is to show that the principles of the linguistics of semantics as they are applied to spoken and written discourse may also be applied to human action: human action may be conceptualized as having the four traits of discourse and, as the noema of the speech-event is fixed in writing for unknown readers, so the meaning of an action will be "inscribed" in history to be interpreted by unknown others. Ricoeur's argument will be discussed to the extent that it validates the use of narrative as a means of explaining the world of action.

As the sentence is the basic unit of discourse, Ricoeur begins his argument by positing four traits of discourse drawn from the linguistics of the sentence: 1) discourse is always realized temporally in the present; 2) discourse refers back to its speaker by means of a complex set of indicators.

---

17 Ricoeur's 1971 essay is a precursor to his 1976 text *Interpretation Theory* in which he elaborates on his examination of language as discourse and on the similarities and differences between written and spoken discourse. In a continuation of his interest in the indefinite reference of metaphor, in his 1976 monograph Ricoeur also examines plurivocity in poems and essays and outlines his theory of textual interpretation as a dialectic of explanation and understanding. See also Valdés "Introduction" *Ricoeur 3-12*.

18 As a result of his dialogue with structuralism during the 1970's, Ricoeur accepts that formal analysis has a necessary role in the interpretation of written texts. In basing his conceptualization of human action as text on traits of discourse that apply to both spoken and written discourse however, Ricoeur is refuting the traditional structuralist position that there is discontinuity between non-poetic and poetic discourse. In positing that the world of action may be considered as text, and thus amenable to hermeneutic analysis, he is articulating his position that ordinary language is not a distinct kind of utterance, but rather a particular use of language that, like a theme with variations, shares the basic linguistic features of literature (see Pratt, Mary Louise. *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*. Bloomington: Indiana
such as personal pronouns; 3) discourse is always about something; 4) it is in discourse that all messages are exchanged, therefore discourse always has an interlocutor to whom it is addressed.

Discourse "says something to someone about something" (Valdés "Hermenéutica" 2). Ricoeur observes that this intentional exteriorization, this intention of saying something to someone, is the aim of discourse. He proposes that in this intentional exteriorization the fleeing event of saying is surpassed by the durable and persisting patterns of the said of speaking, arguing that it is this detachment of the meaning of what is said from the event of saying that makes fixation by writing possible. It is thus the noema of the event of speaking (or acting), rather than the event as event itself, that is inscribed by the reader/narrator of the world of action.

In support of his argument that it is only meaningful action that can be fixed as text, Ricoeur recalls that the sentence is the basic unit of discourse and proposes four traits of a text based on those of the linguistics of the sentence noted above: 1) the fixation of meaning; 2) the dissociation between the intention of the author and the meaning of the text; 3) the emergence of non-ostensive references; 4) the universal range of addressees. He posits that these four traits constitute the "objectivity" of the text and give rise to the possibility of explanation. As this possibility of explanation draws on semantics, Ricoeur points out that "it is within the same sphere of signs that the process of objectification takes place and gives rise to explanatory procedures" ("Model" University Press, 1977).
This statement responds directly to the position of Dilthey and the romantic hermeneuts that procedures of explanation must be drawn from other, particularly scientific, fields of knowledge in order to be valid.

Ricoeur then explores how the four traits differ between spoken and written discourse. Regarding the first semantic trait, the fixation of meaning characteristic of written discourse, Ricoeur observes that spoken discourse is always realized temporally and in the present. He then discusses techniques for fixing the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of the event of saying. These techniques will be elaborated on below in the discussion of the configuration of the world of action in literary form. It is of note here however, that Ricoeur's discussion pertains only to the fixing of the ostensive references of the speech act in the world of action.

Regarding the second trait drawn from the linguistics of the sentence, the dissociation between the intention of the author and the meaning of the text, Ricoeur observes that verbal discourse refers back to its speaker through the use of linguistic signs such as personal pronouns. This quality of the speech event changes when the discourse is inscribed, for the speaker is no longer present. Ricoeur observes that in written discourse, the author's intention and what the text says do not necessarily coincide: "what the text says now matters more than what the author meant to say" ("Model" 201). This dissociation between the intention of the author and the meaning of the written text is attributed to the fact that the writer is not physically present to respond directly to a reader's queries to ensure that she is formulating the meaning of the
discourse exactly as the speaker intends. Ricoeur adds that, "every exegesis unfolds its procedures within the circumference of a meaning that has broken its mooring to the psychology of its author" ("Model" 201). Evidently the signs on each page were selected by a person who organized and expressed them in a particular way but, as Ricoeur insists, whatever ends the author had in mind while writing them may or may not be the ends that the text as a whole itself attains.¹⁹

Ricoeur posits the "external reference" of a text as its intentional direction towards a world that is projected through the act of reading the signs inscribed on its pages. At this point in 1971, for Ricoeur this world projected by the text, this external reference, does not have any connection with the world of action in itself. However, as Gadamer acknowledges in his 1960 Truth and Method, a text refers to a speaker at the same time that it refers to a world. This "self-reference" of the text refers to the way in which the structure of the discourse identifies the horizon of a speaker. Although in the speech act linguistic signs such as personal pronouns clearly refer back to the speaker, once the event is inscribed in text this self-reference may or may not be overtly discernable. Many "objective" descriptions of the world of action for example, attempt either to hide this self-reference or to make it so grossly apparent that it limits the text.²⁰ Such purportedly objective descriptions encounter difficulties in

¹⁹ The use of texts inscribed by Nietzsche during the Nazi regime is perhaps an example of this, although it is questionable whether the particular ideological understanding of these works was actually en route to the orient of the texts in-themselves.
²⁰ I am here referring to the trend of spending a chapter or two detailing and apologizing for one's racial and economic position before ignoring it and going on to describe the other. The hermeneutic concept of a world arising at the intersection of two distinct historicities averts this
theoretically acknowledging that the reader/narrator is the deixis of reference, the point of articulation between the projected world and the ideological-cultural systems of signification in the world of action being inscribed (Relato 41). In permitting the Thou, in Gadamerian terms, to speak for itself the narrator clearly does not project her own subjectivity on the text of the world of action. Rather it is the experience of the world of action which changes the person who experiences it. Thus the reader/narrator strives to appropriate the world that is projected by the Thou in her interaction with it and to elucidate this articulation. This fusion of horizons, this examination of human life, does not transform it into something else, but makes the text of the world of action become itself.

The world projected by the text signifies the intersection of the two historicities of the world of action and of reader of the world of action (the two distinct horizons of text and reader). Once the world of action is fixed in a text by a reader/narrator, it is then interpreted through the inscribed signs from the historical horizon of the person who is reading the written text. It is because the objective meaning of the text is something other than the subjective intention of the author that the possibility of multiple interpretations then arises. This does not mean that any interpretation is valid for, as the reader places herself en route to the orient of the text, all interpretation must necessarily be closely mediated by the explanation provided by the text itself. Therefore, if the reader/narrator has faithfully and competently placed herself en route towards situation.
the *orient* of the text of the world of action, then the written text itself will have the capacity to project the historicity that it purports to narrate.

The emergence of non-ostensive references, the third trait of discourse drawn from the semantics of the sentence, responds to the acknowledgment that discourse is always about something. As noted, the world of action is a place where speaker and interlocutor share a common situation and can dialogue directly to elaborate or clarify meaning. This clarification is made through the use of ostensive, or situational, references. Ricoeur posits that in the world of action verbal discourse projects a world, adding that this world pertains only to the meaning, the said, of the event. When a speech event is fixed as written text it is the *Welt* (world) that it projects which is inscribed. In this reflection on the movement from the world of action to narrative the events of the world of action are emancipated from their situational context (*Umwelt*). Ricoeur is arguing that historically situated human action can be inscribed because it has meaning outside of its determinate context, in the same way that words used in a metaphorical sense surpass their literal reference. Consider however, the following description:

My mother starts to clean the images with a wool cloth. She takes off the sheet that covers one of them and a long-suffering Christ appears. He hangs from the cross, with broken joints. His bones are almost breaking through his yellow skin and blood flows abundantly from his hands, from the open wound in his ribs, from his pierced feet. His head falls inert on his chest and the crown of thorns opens, there also, uncountable wells of blood (*Balún 42*).

This description of a particular crucifix imaginatively transports the reader to Comitán, Chiapas, or at least to some place in Latin America where such
crucifixes abound. What has been evoked in this phrase is not the event itself (the Christ does not appear before us when the text is read), but neither is it the meaning of the event. What is inscribed is a description with the capacity to evoke the experience of seeing the image of such a suffering Christ, which may be shared with either anyone who has had the experience of the event in the world of action or anyone who has had the experience of reading the descriptive text. These descriptive passages contribute to the sense of the text and hence to evoking the world projected by it, from which its meaning is then refigured. However, at this point in the early 1970's for Ricoeur it is only the non-ostensive references, the noema, or the said of speech, which can be fixed in writing. As will be discussed below, this conceptualization broadens by the late 1970's to acknowledge the narrativity inherent in the ostensive references themselves.

The fourth trait of discourse is that there is an interlocutor to whom it is addressed. Ricoeur notes that a written text is addressed to anyone who can read the language in which it is inscribed, hence the readers of an author's text are unknown. Ricoeur observes that in the world of action, the speaker speaks in the second person, addressing a known audience. He postulates therefore that it can only be the meaning of the speech act that is fixed and available to a universal range of addressees who are not necessarily familiar with the Umwelt in which it is grounded. Again, at this point he does not acknowledge the capacity of the inscribed ostensive references themselves to project a Welt.
Ricoeur’s initial interest was focused on the hidden meaning in metaphor. This initial interest broadened in his later works to include the indeterminate reference of all textual phenomenon. He comments that “it is the synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor” ("Introduction" 18).

At the point of his 1971 essay, Ricoeur is somewhat bounded by his use of his own theory of the split reference of metaphor. This is because he conceptualizes the world of action as text only to the extent that the meaning of the action, as the persisting pattern of a metaphorical second reference, eclipses the first literal level of reference of fleeing social time. At this point he has left aside the dependence of the metaphorical reference on its literal reference.

In Métaphore vive (1975) Ricoeur most fully elaborates his conceptualization of the split reference of metaphor. In this conceptualization Ricoeur proposes that a semantic impertinence is created between the first or literal level of reference and the second or metaphorical level of reference. This surplus of meaning is what permits the expansion of understanding. Ricoeur argues that a word that creates a metaphor only gains this metaphorical meaning in a sentence. A word that is not contextualized in a sentence (such as a word in a dictionary) cannot function as a metaphor. Consider, for example, this phrase from Carpentier “here and there stood pieces of the wall like thick broken letters” (Reino 87). When consulting a dictionary none of these words individually evokes the melancholy image that comes to mind when they

---

21 See Ricoeur’s response to John B. Thompson’s “Introduction” to his collection of Ricoeur’s
are linked together in the particular context of this sentence by the adverb “like”. This simile structure creates a semantic impertinence, for walls are not constructed of letters. Yet when the words are put together in the sentence they are able to eclipse their literal reference, permitting the metaphorical meaning to emerge from the sentence. In this case, the image of the wall as a once integrated, organized, readable text which has been reduced to a fragmented and scattered bunch of letters serves to evoke the impact of the way the hacienda was before and after the Haitian sublevation. The concept of the split reference of the metaphor thus forms the model for the polysemy implicit in words strung together in a sentence. This polysemy not only makes the text an inexhaustible source for interpretation, but it is also the metaphorical meaning arising from this polysemy which creates a world which may then be appropriated by a reader and thus provoke a redescription of her world and an enhanced understanding of it.

Ricoeur draws on the theoretical conceptualization of metaphor to posit that the interpretation of metaphor serves as a template for understanding texts in that “the case of the metaphor is only a particular case for a general theory of hermeneutics” ("Model" 211). In this usage, the dynamic of the split reference is located at the hermeneutic level of the work. In the work, as in metaphor, there is a “literal level which is restricted to the established value of words in the lexicon and a metaphorical level resulting from innovation thrust on us by these essays pertinent to the human sciences in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, 1981.

words in order to make sense in terms of the whole work" ("Ricoeur" 269). Thus in the hermeneutics of the work, as in the semantics of metaphor, the first level of reference of the text is eclipsed by the second level of reference. As with the model of the split reference of metaphor within the context of a sentence, so too there emerges a gain in meaning from the work as a whole.

In his initial examination of the process of interpreting the world of action as text, Ricoeur does not fully apply his theory of the split reference of metaphor to the text of action as he proposes. He argues that it is the inscribed meaning that projects a world, rather than that it is the inscribed ostensive references which function as a first level of reference with the capacity to reveal a world that is to be interpreted by an unknown reader in an unknown situation. It is this line of reasoning which prohibits him at this point from acknowledging the historicity of the text, whether verbal or written.

Ricoeur is arguing in 1971 that what the reader will interpret of the world of action is not the Umwelt, or the situation, but rather the Welt, or the meaning opened up through the creation of non-ostensive references. He acknowledges however that it is in enlarging of her own Umwelt, through applying herself to understanding the Welt projected by the text, that the reader confronts new ways of being-in-the-world ("Model" 202). At this point Ricoeur does recognize that "a work does not only mirror its time [but it opens up a world which it bears within itself]" ("Model" 208, emphasis mine) and that "if you suppress this referential function [of the relation of humans to the world], only an absurd game of errant signifiers remains" ("Model" 202), yet he does not write
particularly from this understanding of the dialectic relationship between the historical context of a text and the text itself until the late 1970's.

By the late 1970's Ricoeur expands his theory of the text to acknowledge fully that not only does the written document project a Welt that is refigured by its unknown readers, but that this world maintains ties to the world of action. Fiction and reality do not exclude one another. Fiction and historical action share a common narrative structure and both serve to describe and redescribe the human historical condition and its meaning ("Narrative" 274). Both fiction and history point to the same fundamental feature of individual and social existence, that of historicity. Ricoeur observes that "we make history . . . we are immersed in history . . . we are historical beings" ("Narrative" 274). Historical and fictional texts constitute a paradigm of distanciation in communication, for they both demonstrate the fundamental characteristic of historicity: communication in and through distance ("Introduction" 17). “[Fiction] therefore is about reality and truth, and [the reader/narrator’s] function is to comment on the shared meaning, the intersubjective truth of the redescription of the world that is based on the reading experience” ("Ricoeur" 265); however, the difference between didactic history texts and fiction is that "by opening us to what is different, history opens us to the possible, whereas fiction, by opening us to the unreal, leads us to what is essential in reality” ("Narrative" 296).

---

23 In his essay "Thick description" written for his collection of essays The Interpretation of Cultures (1973) Geertz points out that the term fictio refers to something which is made or fashioned (not something that is false or untrue).
The dialectic between sense and reference represents the relationship between language and the ontological condition of being-in-the-world. Sense is what is said, while reference is about what something is said ("Metaphor" 306). Sense is the immanent context of the text ("Existentialism" 90); therefore, as it refers to a network of internal relations, sense is the abolition of reference ("Naming" 220). Yet the text receives its structure through meaning as sense (Interpretation Theory 20). In the Valdésian approach to interpretation there is a dialectic tension between the distanciation of the text and the appropriation of the reader. This dialectic is expressed through the movement between explanation and understanding, which objectifies meaning (" Appropriation" 89). Explanation is descriptive textual analysis, while understanding is the movement between this sense of the distanciated text and its reference. It is these movements, which are dialectic rather than linear in nature, that lead to the gradual appropriation of the text – the text of the world of action.

Ricoeur observes that not only can life not be understood other than through the stories we tell about it, but fiction itself cannot be completed other than in life – through its appropriation by the reader ("Life" 435). As the world of

24 In "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" (1975) Ricoeur posits four characteristics of distanciation: 1) the event of saying is surpassed by the meaning of what is said (in "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" [92] Ricoeur notes that he is here following Hegel in the Phenomenology of Mind); 2) what the text says means more than what the author meant it to say; 3) the text is directed towards an unknown reading audience; and 4) the Umwelt of the ostensive reference (what can be shown, pointed at) is eclipsed by the Welt of the non-ostensive references. (See also John Thompson, "Paul Ricoeur and Hermeneutic Phenomenology" Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jurgen Habermas, 1981). Ricoeur defines distanciation in interpretation as any alienating, distanciating analysis of the text. In his "Reply" to Valdés' essay "Paul Ricoeur and Literary Theory", published in Hahn's collection of commentaries The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (1995), Ricoeur observes that Valdés conceptualizes distanciation as situated in the text and appropriation as situated in the domain of the reader.
action is configured in the narrative, human action is enacted figuratively as part of the process of “making the text”; thus fixing the world of action particularly through the use of a narrative literary form offers an alternative to the traditional didactic document and some of its limitations, without negating the value of the written word itself.

The four stages of operation for literary criticism developed by Mario Valdés is an innovation to phenomenological/philosophical hermeneutics that is firmly rooted in the hermeneutic tradition. These stages, solidly supported by Ricoeur’s philosophy, serve to elucidate the shared experience of reading a text rather than as a means to determine its definitive meaning (“Introduction” 29). This approach is already in place in Valdés’ 1982 monograph Shadows in the Cave. In this text he outlines a method of enquiry that is entered by four questions: What does the text say? How does the text speak? (formal dimension); What does the text speak about? (historical dimension); and How have I read the text? (hermeneutical dimension). These four questions have evolved slightly in his 1995 essay “Paul Ricoeur and Literary Theory”. Structurally and theoretically, this thesis utilizes this more recent version.

The conceptual basis for the four stages of operation for literary criticism begins with a dialectic between two discourses: the historicity of the author’s text and the historicity of the reader approaching a text which is distant to her -- in this case the text of the world of action. In configuring and completing the text through the act of reading, the reader appropriates the world projected by the text. In this process there is a fusion between the horizon of the world opened
up by the text and the horizon of the reader. Ricoeur observes that at this point in the interpretation of written texts the reader belongs both imaginatively to the world projected by the text and concretely to her world of action ("Life" 431). Thus at this point in the interpretation of the text of the world of action the reader/narrator belongs both to the world projected by this living text and to her own world. As Gadamer comments, "if, by entering foreign language-world [the text], we overcome the prejudices and limitations of our previous experience of the world, this does not mean that we negate and leave our own world. Like travellers we return home with new experiences" (Truth 448). The critical reader/narrator then responds to this world opened up by the text, stepping back and reflecting on her configuration of it. It is her shared commentary regarding this redescription of the world projected by the text and her increased self-understanding which completes refiguration.

In the definitions of "text" cited above, narrative in particular is recognized as a series of related temporal events, unified as a work, which are mediated by a narrator who is using a collective, multifaceted, polysemic, and highly valorized system of cultural signs to exteriorize this discourse. Consistent with this conceptualization of text, the world of action may be explained in narrative form. Ricoeur posits that human action can be narrated because it is articulated by signs, norms and rules; that is, it is symbolically mediated and thus it can be recounted ("Life" 433). As with metaphor, narrative synthesizes heterogeneous events; it is a form of explanation – although the referent narration is never the raw or immediate reality, it is action which has been symbolized and
resymbolized ("Creativity" 469). The events of the referent narration of the world of action are interrelated and the writer serves the function of mediating this interrelationship, configuring and explaining it, by means of seeking the horizon of the other. What is inscribed then is the world that is projected at the intersection of the two historical horizons of the world of action and the reader/narrator. As Gadamer observes in his postulation of the concept of horizon, the fusion of horizons permits one's range of vision to be gradually expanded although, as one never reaches the horizon, so one's vision is never complete ( Truth 302). However, the resulting narrative does put forth a series of truth-claims for the consideration of anyone who reads the system of signs in which they are inscribed. The reader then joins those from the world of action and the reader/narrator in the activity of world-making, thus adding further sediment to her prefigurative matrix of knowledge.

Ricoeur postulates that hermeneutics captures the hinge between the (internal) configuration of a work and the (external) refiguration of a life ("Life" 432), proposing that the task of hermeneutics is to reconstruct the whole arc of operations that moves practical experience to works, authors and readers ("Mimesis" 140). Thus in the process of inscribing the world of action in narrative form, the reader/narrator focuses her activity in three areas of engagement ("Introduction" 28). These areas reflect Ricoeur's three kinds of mimesis, or poesis, of action. Together, they serve to elaborate the process by which hermeneutics acts as a hinge between the configuration of a work and the refiguration of a life. It is thus this three-fold mimesis, carefully elaborated
within the hermeneutical tradition, which provides a solid theoretical approach by which the process itself of fixing the world of action through the written text may be examined in a conscious, reflective manner.

The first element to consider in the dialectic movement from the world of action to the written text is that of mimesis, or prefiguration. The prefigurative is not a static entity, but rather a matrix which one draws from and adds to. This kind of poesis refers to cultural participation through language and it is the necessary basis for textuality. It is the repertory that the narrator brings to the significance of the text, that the author brings to the writing of the text and that, ultimately, the reader brings to the reading of the text. Valdés notes that in order to articulate an understanding of the prefigurative matrix from which the text is constructed, one must examine the way subjects share their world through world-making as the social prefiguration of narrativity ("Ricoeur" 260).

In considering the world of action as a text that will be transformed into another kind of text through writing, and following the hermeneutic model described above, it is clear that the world of action projects a world, a world which is constructed by the reader/narrator in close dialectic interaction with the actors in the world of action itself. In this model, the reader/narrator is not an unbiased outsider objectively recording a world of action that is other to her. Rather, all subjects share their world through participating in the activity of world-making. It is this social activity which forms the prefigurative basis of the written narrative.

Mimesis, or configuration, is the poesis of the text itself. Configuration is the explanation of the world of action. It is this stage which corresponds to
Diltheyian textual interpretation or exegesis for it is the interpretation of the way in which the text, the world of action, is read by a particular reader/narrator. Ricoeur points out that, "[hermeneutics] wants to characterize mimesis by its mediating function. What is at stake, therefore, is the concrete process by which the textual configuration [mimesis] mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work. It will appear as a corollary . . . that the reader is that operator par excellence who takes up through doing something – the act of reading – the unity of the traversal from mimesis, to mimesis by way of mimesis." ("Introduction" 20). In the act of configuring the world of action in narrative form then, the reader/narrator is first the reader reading and interpreting, configuring the narrative acted out before her.

Inscribing the world of action requires an ability to use words to communicate the experience of reading this text. It requires the ability to capture the essence of the world projected by the world of action, as opposed to simply collecting data and describing the world of action as though it were an inanimate museum piece. The resulting written discourse then signifies a dialectic between the event and its meaning ("Ricoeur" 262), as mediated by the reader/narrator. To clarify the process of inscribing the world of action, Ricoeur discusses three acts of speaking: the locutionary or propositional act, the illocutionary act or force, and the perlocutionary act ("Model" 199). He notes that the locutionary act of saying exteriorizes itself in the sentence and that the sentence is an utterance which can be identified and reidentified as being the
same sentence. The illocutionary act, that which we do in saying, exteriorizes itself through grammatical signifiers such as the indicative, the imperative or the subjunctive. Other signifiers however, may also be used to indicate that which we do in saying, such as elipses, exclamation marks or commas. Ricoeur states that the perlocutionary act, that which we do by saying, is the most difficult to fix in writing for it is discourse as stimulus and acts directly on the affect. Ricoeur here does not acknowledge that through the use of literary tropes such as metaphor, personification or metonymia, a well-constructed narrative has a tremendous capacity to inscribe the perlocutionary acts of the world of action. It is precisely this polysemy, this flexibility of language, that through human creative imagination can open up for the reader in a very powerful way worlds that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Mimesis, or refiguration, is the actualization of the text by a critical reader. It implies the understanding or comprehension of the text. It uses the language of dialogue and intersubjectivity. When the world of action has been configured through the use of a literary form the resulting text is not a closed document that purports to didactically lay out the way that world is, but is rather an open, plurivalent text requires that its readers in turn implicate themselves in responding to the world that it projects.

In studying the world of action, the reader/narrator regards speech and action as distanciated text. Hermeneutics understands that it is at the intersection of the world projected by the other and the life-world of the reader/narrator that a unified work acquires meaning. It is in the dialectic
relationship between the world of action and the reader/narrator, as between the text and the reader, that the intentionality of discourse is revealed: its intention to project a world. When the reader/narrator projects her ownmost possibilities into the world projected by the text of the world of action, she joins her horizon with the horizon of action that is distanciated from her. The reader/narrator, in recording the distanciated world of action, is inscribing her explanation of the text of the human action. In documenting this fusion of horizons in literary form the reader/narrator creates a configuration or interpretation of the world projected by the world of action.

The meaning of the action may then be appropriated by other readers who propose refigurations of the world projected by the inscribed world of action. As the written commentary produced by the reader/narrator is a text available to anyone who can read, this work leads not only to the expansion of the reader/narrator's self-understanding, but also to the self-understanding of those readers who in turn project their own ownmost possibilities into the written narrative. As the unknown reader configures the reader/narrator's written text, she evokes the projection of the world that emerged from the intersection of the horizons of the speaker (the world of action) and the hearer (the reader/narrator). The reader's refiguration of the written text will, as was the written text itself, be constructed in a way that reflects back to the orient of the intersection between the historical horizon of the text of world of action and the historical horizon of the reader/narrator, as it was inscribed by the reader/narrator.
A hermeneutical approach therefore, does not claim to inscribe the world of action in-itself but rather, following the well-established approach to textual interpretation, claims to inscribe the world that is projected through the dialogue between the historicity of the reader/narrator and the historicity of the world of action. It is in appropriating and responding to the truth-claims which emerge from this fusion of horizons that the life-worlds of both those in the world of action and the reader/narrator are broadened, deepening the self-understanding of each of the participants in this dialogue. Inconsequential, irrelevant commentary is avoided through insuring that what is written about the text maintains coherence with its own stated principles, is able to meet its stated aims, is of consequence to its readers, and is written as intelligible narrative ("Ricoeur" 279).

In summary, Ricoeur's analysis from the early 1970's outlined the traits of discourse as drawn from the linguistics of the sentence and applied them to the world of action. In this analysis Ricoeur argued that, as with the metaphorical level of reference, the said surpasses the event of saying and thus it is only the meaning, the Welt or noema, of the speech-event which is fixed in written text. The polysemy of language however, gives it a tremendous capacity to evoke the world of action. It was pointed out that ostensive references thus also have a narrative quality and that descriptions of the Umwelt contribute to the sense of the text. It is from the sense of the text that the Welt is projected and hence its meaning is refigured. Ricoeur himself develops this perspective in his essays from the late 1970's onwards, arguing that it is indeed possible to evoke the
world of action through narrative and further, that it is through narrative that we come to understand the world of action. Through Valdés' elaboration of four stages of operation for literary criticism, the process of textual interpretation is clarified. Drawing on this framework, Ricoeur's triple mimesis then may be applied to provide a basis for examining the process itself of inscribing the text of the world of action. It is in this movement from the world of action to the written text that the narrated life surpasses mere biological existence to produce an examined life which, so examined, is thus worth living.
III. Refiguration/understanding: my response to the truth claims of the discourse/text

A. Phenomenology: What does the text say that is common to the reading experience of others?


Elite conceptualizations of God and Satan have tended to exclude perspectives of others outside the Church or outside theoretical circles. Nietzsche wrote in the late 1800's that “there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’ be” (*Genealogy of Morals* III 12). There is a contemporary trend towards a Nietzschean plurality of voices that seeks not to establish a single, closed, all-encompassing system, but rather to recognize complexity and create an open and heterogeneous discourse. The protagonist of *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* adds another voice to the continuous discourse on the alterable and renewable phenomena signified as "God" and "Satan." Recognizing that partiality is unavoidable and objectivity unattainable, the ideology presented through Jesusa's narrative provokes an imaginative reconstruction of her perspective that effectively contributes to this contemporary polyphonic dialogue.

*Hasta no verte Jesús mío* is a testimonial novel (Saltz 232), and as a testimonial novel the text has the power to evoke a vivid imaginative
configuration of the subject that didactic texts are not able to do. Hasta no verte Jesús mío is a symbolic presentation that not only expands the biography of Josefina Bórquez through the fictional character of Jesusa Palancares, but it also provokes a vivid imaginative configuration about a particular historical context in México from 1900 to 1964. Jesusa Palancares recounts her experience within a situated reality: she is grounded within a specific language and culture at a specific time. This external referentiality is evident in her language, in her reference to real places in México, and to real people in Mexican history. It is because Hasta no verte Jesús mío never loses its grounding in the external reality from which it is drawn that it refers to ideologies found within its historical context and which are expressed through the particular character of Jesusa.

Several commentaries explore the narrow relationship between Jesusa and her historical referent, Josefina Bórquez. Lucille Kerr for example, provides an expanded discussion on the literary and the testimonial aspects of the testimonial novel which both distance it from the real yet cause it to have a verisimilar effect. Another example is Beverley’s more general discussion (“Introducción”) of the issue of representativeness in relation to the problem of the truth of testimonial literature. In her essay “El testimonio creativo de Hasta no verte Jesús mío,” María Inés Lagos-Pope posits that Poniatowska intentionally utilized the historical referent of Josefina Bórquez as a strategy to augment the authority of the text and the social critique contained in it.

The arcaicisms, popular sayings, and vocabulary typical of the capital situate the narrative. Poniatowska comments that “algunas de sus palabras tuve que buscarlas en el diccionario de mexicanismos, otras se remontaban al español más antiguo” (“Hasta” 9). The vernacular of Hasta no verte Jesús mío is the representation that mediates between the experiences of the character and the reader’s understanding of the concrete, actual world to which they refer. Jesusa’s language serves to construct a character located within a very specific culture, creating a strong referential tie to the context of a poor woman in Mexico City in the early twentieth century. It is through the use of this language that Jesusa, largely unconsciously, transmits her beliefs, value judgments, prejudices and inherited taboos.

As the first person narrative voice is the subject in Hasta no verte Jesús mío, the narrative voice characterizes her own past self through her present memory. The “I” of the narrative voice that constructs the character controls the narrative to the extent that even the fragments of dialogue included in the text are controlled by the narrator; thus the reader understands Jesusa’s altercations clearly, but only, from her point of view. This lack of the presence of other voices, as is possible with a third person narrative voice or with a “testimonio polifónico” (Beverley “Anatomía” 161) causes the character of Jesusa to be unstable, for it is difficult to test
This section will elaborate on how *Hasta no verte Jesús mio* provides the means for an imaginative exploration of the relationship between the self and the Other in which the Other functions to allow Jesusa to gain consciousness of her self. God, Satan, her three protectors, and dead persons are part of an essential conjunction of self and Other which serves to mediate between Jesusa’s immediate knowledge, bounded as it is by her earthly reality, and her articulation of that knowledge in terms of the Other in which she understands her reality to be grounded. It is because these metaphorical references, utilized by Jesusa to articulate an elusive literal reference, are consistent with contextually available metaphorical references — references which are not neutral in terms of their ethical value — that this consciousness of self as necessarily mediated through the Other is permeated by the language habitat through which it is articulated.

Elena Poniatowska is the *gestor* (Barnet 140) who compiled the fragments of the life of Josefina Bórez as Josefina chose to relate them to her. The protagonist’s reality is situated within an inherited cultural context which is shared in part by the younger implied narrator, and Poniatowska has drawn on this shared prefigurative space.29 Poniatowska acknowledges, her observations and conclusions for reliability and validity.

29 In “Paul Ricoeur and Literary Theory” Mario Valdés notes that “prefiguration is the area of cultural participation through language and as such is the precondition for textuality” (278). The reader not only draws from the prefigurative matrix but, following the configuration of a text, also adds to it. The process of bringing preconfigurative knowledge to the configuration of a text and refiguring it through dialogue is a dynamic one that leads to an increased prefigurative base in the reader. To capture the use of language discussed above (see n. 1) for example, the reader brings to the text a prefigurative that includes at least a partially shared language habitat and some knowledge of the values and ways of seeing the world that are implicit in that language. Each configuration of *Hasta no verte Jesús mio* introduces the reader to a cycle which deepens
however, that if Josefina had been the editor of the text, it would have been entirely about the Obra Espiritual and about the terrible, deteriorating living conditions in México. But she adds that she eliminated much of Josefina's testimony about the Obra Espiritual and her complaints about living conditions in order to create a more readable novel (Steele "Entrevista" 94-95).

Poniatowska explains that "la primera escena no es propiamente el espiritualismo, es un sueño. La empecé así porque pensaba que era un poco una síntesis de su vida; su vida espiritual, porque creía ella en la reencarnación, su pobreza y su formación religiosa, en el sentido de creer que había regresado a la tierra a pagar lo que debía" (Steele "Entrevista" 93). In this opening chapter, Jesusa discusses the Obra Espiritual, setting the entire text within its framework. She describes El Ojo Avisor in its divine triangle as the all powerful eye of the Creador, whom she alternately refers to as the Ser Supremo, the Ser Espiritual, Señor, Jehovah (296), or Padre Eterno. Representative comments such as "la hoja del árbol jamás es movida sin la voluntad de Dios" (20), "Dios sabe por qué hace las cosas" (117), and "mi marido decía que no me iba a dejar sobre la tierra viva, pero faltaba que Dios se lo concediera" (303), refer to an omnipotent, all-controlling signified. As Jesusa says: "se lo pido a Dios para prepararme y caminar hasta donde sea su voluntad" (304), adding "le digo a Dios que me deje morir allá en la punta de un cerro" (303). These comments reflect her grounding in an omnipotent Other
whom she signifies as God. One of her basic assumptions is that of reincarnation and she stresses that the pain and suffering endured in this world are both the payment for past wrongs and a purification for a better future life: "bendito sea Dios porque he sufrido tanto", says Jesusa, "seguro que yo nací para eso" (134).

Only once in the entire text does Jesusa refer to Jesus, saying that "si Jesucristo se quejó porque no se pudo aguantar, cuantimás yo que no soy más que basura" (296). She explains that the trinity is completed by Roque Rojas, the founder of the Obra Espiritual. Roque Rojas, also known as Padre Elías, or as Enviado Elías, represents the Espíritu Santo. With respect to the Holy Spirit aspect of the Trinity, Jesusa reflects that "en la Iglesia Católica dicen que es una palomita porque allí no explican nada" (16). The only thing she mentions about Satan in this opening chapter is to comment that the devil has a point to his tail.

There are several interesting stories in Hasta no verte Jesús mío which give fascinating insight into the dynamics of what is meant for Jesusa when she uses the signifiers "God" and "Satan"; for example, in chapter eighteen she relates the story of her encounter with Manuel el Robachicos, the man who had ulcers on his feet which prevented him from working. As Manuel had no-one to help him cover the cost of the treatment, Jesusa decided to assist him. Manuel's needs increased and several pages into the chapter Jesusa is paying not only for his treatments and medicine, but is fully supporting him. And, continuing cycle.
Manuel has manipulated the situation so that providing him with an income is perceived as Jesusa's obligation, rather than as her act of charity towards a sick man.

Early one Sunday morning, when Jesusa is in still in bed after dancing all night, Manuel sends a child to get money from her so that he can go to the movies. Jesusa refuses to provide it immediately, and the child returns several times during the day with messages from Manuel saying that she will grow horns and a tail because she refused to give him money for his entertainment. He tells her that this is going to weigh on her and that she has been warned. Sometime later, one night after dancing Jesusa is in a restaurant with some friends. She, and only she, sees someone peer three times through the window of the restaurant. Jesusa describes this person as about twenty-five years of age, male, and very attractive. She comments that he was not in animal form, but appeared as a Christian; in other words, as a human. In this novel, only Satan appears in the terrestrial world in the recognizable signified of the human form; God does not have such a readily identifiable presence. One of Jesusa's friends identified the young man in the window as El Buen Amigo, but Jesusa interjects as narrator to clarify that it was Manuel who evoked Barrabás, El Buen Amigo, to hurt her because the very next day she began to have symptoms of peritonitis. Clearly, Jesusa conceptualizes Satan as a physical being, attractive and male, who is susceptible to the petitions of humans and who is capable of directly causing her harm. She knows what she knows about Satan through the context in which she lives her life, as indicated by the
common prefigurative shared with Manuel el Robachicos and with her friends in the restaurant.

By this point Jesusa is visiting the chapel on occasions when she wants to resolve something of importance to her. When she begins to have stomach pain she goes to the chapel and calls upon Manuel Antonio Mesmer through a magnetic fluid (185) and he presents himself, speaking through a medium (186). Although Jesusa petitions God, she never dialogues directly with the Creador, the Ser Supremo, but communicates with the world of the divine triangle and the dead through revelations and through discourse with her three protectors, Manuel Antonio Mesmer, Manuel Allende, and Luz de Oriente. In this case, it is Mesmer who confirms that it was indeed Brother Lucifer whom she saw the night before. Lucifer was watching her because she had agreed to do a favour which not been taken as such, she had done a good deed and was being paid by a bad. Mesmer informs her that she will suffer greatly in order for the devil to understand that he has no power over her, but he reassures her that she need have no fear because he will be with her. Thus, Mesmer, summoned from the world of the dead, provides Jesusa with guidance and protection. He also contributes to her knowledge of the physical reality of Satan, and explains the responsibility of this nefarious supernatural power for her illness. Mesmer explains himself to her: "es que soy alma del espacio. Veo y vigilo por toda mi hermana humanidad" (164). Jesusa knows that it is her protector with whom she communicates because of the physical sensation she feels (163, 222), because of a consistency between past events and present
communication that the medium could know nothing about (163, 222), and because she recognizes Mesmer's way of speaking (222). He is an Other who has become known to her.

During the time that Jesusa is quite ill she sees a woman with very white hands and face, dressed all in black, standing at the foot of her bed. The black dress initially leads her to identify the figure as death; however, when she wakes up the next day with no stomach pain she realizes that she had been cured by the Virgen de la Soledad, whom she should have recognized by the way she folded her hands. Here the characters of the Obra Espiritual and the Catholic ones that Jesusa so vehemently rejects have been syncretized. This vignette, like the one concerning the appearance of El Buen Amigo, shows how Jesusa interprets literal references through the religious metaphors available to her.

At the end of the chapter, Jesusa adds another piece of information about the guidance received from her protector Manuel Antonio Mesmer: she is to forgive Manuel el Robachicos. While blessing the statue of a saint which Manuel brings to her, Jesusa fulfills her protector's request and Manuel is absolved of guilt for enticing Satan to cause peritonitis in Jesusa. All the action in the story is played out at a supernatural level: Satan caused peritonitis in Jesusa at the request of Manuel el Robachicos and Jesusa was cured by the Virgen de la Soledad through her association with the spirit Manuel Antonio Mesmer. Thus the locus of control for the human character Jesusa is external to her self; she did not, as an example of an internal locus of control, think that
she had acquired an infection and needed the appropriate antibiotic, neither did she reason that the illness may have manifested itself because she was weak from her conflict with Manuel el Robachicos and from dancing all night after working. Since Jesusa understands her illness as an interplay between human sentiments and supernatural forces, she turns to the supernatural for a cure. Comments in support of this external, supernatural locus of control occur throughout the text: "yo me mantengo por la voluntad de Dios. Es El quien me ha ayudado" (138); "tiene uno que ir al paso como Dios disponga" (213); "si ya le toca a uno morir del temblor, pues que le aplaste a uno la voluntad de Dios" (41). However, in view of her anger at Ángel's mother, the woman who did not seek medical help for her child but rather accepted his death as the will of God (118), there is some ambiguity to Jesusa's position.

The character of Jesusa reveals to the national and international reader an aspect of life in México that may not otherwise be directly accessible; but also, inherent in the cultural grounding of Jesusa's narrative, she exposes the reader to an ideology "steeped . . . in the adjacent space with which it identifies" (Meyer 1). It is because the literal reference which Jesusa seeks to articulate is so ephemeral that she necessarily employs metaphorical reference to express it.30 This metaphorical reference, not the literal one, is drawn from the adjacent

30 Ricoeur proposes that "de même que l'enoncé métaphorique est celui qui conquiert son sens comme métaphorique sur les ruines du sens littéral, il est aussi celui qui acquiert sa référence sur les ruines de ce qu'on peut appeler, par symétrie, sa référence littérale" (La Métaphore vive 279). Ricoeur is describing a dialectical relationship, or tension, between the literal reference (the first level of reference) and the metaphorical sense of a statement (the second level of reference). He proposes that, since the metaphorical reference eclipses the literal meaning, a redescribed reality or a gain in meaning is acquired. This is particularly evident when objects are used in a metaphorical sense; however, the eclipse of the literal meaning is more complex when
space in which Jesusa’s life is steeped. Jesusa’s Other may be analyzed as an existing Spirit that unfolds itself, revealing itself as humans seek to know it. In *Hasta no verte Jesús mio* the literal reference to an unfolding Geist is metaphorically represented as Other and is identified by the signifiers God, Satan, protectors, and dead persons. This second level of reference places Jesusa in a relation with an Other which, through reflection, serves to *mettre en relief* a relation with herself: the Other enables Jesusa to become conscious of herself. In Hegelian terms, "the relation to another, to someone who could acknowledge me, is the mediation of my relation to myself that necessarily passes through a relation to another person" (Rockmore 104). In this dependent relationship of self to Other Jesusa is the Hegelian master, while the conceptualized Other is the slave that provides her with acknowledgment. In Hegelian terms, Jesusa cannot deny the Other, for she would lose the recognition the Other provides her of her self and her place in her world. The Hegelian movement towards self-consciousness however, does not acknowledge the influence of the adjacent space from which such metaphorical reference is drawn.

Metaphors, however unconsciously drawn from an adjacent space for the purpose of providing representation of the unknown Other, also powerfully...

---

the literal meaning is a concept. The objection could be raised that the concept of "God" does not gain its metaphorical reference on the ruins of the literal reference because the latter is distinctly ephemeral. However, Ricoeur argues that, "ce transfert d'un champ référentiel à l'autre suppose que ce champ soit déjà en quelque sorte présent, de manière inarticulée, et qu'il exerce une attraction sur le sens déjà constitué pour l'arracher à son ancrage premier" (379). In other words, the literal sense of "God" is in some way present in an unarticulated manner. This unarticulated literal meaning is eclipsed by metaphorical reference, tearing the already constituted sense from its initial anchoring and providing a redescribed reality or a gain in
function both consciously and unconsciously to structure the space and the social relations within it. Configuring Jesusa's Other as the recognition of an inarticulable immediate knowledge, mediated through representation, runs into the difficulty that any representation, any second level of reference, is necessarily interwoven in the language of the adjacent space with all its inherent psychological and sociological implications. It must be noted that, once the psychological and sociological implications inherent in the adjacent space are necessarily stripped away in order to articulate the many facets of the relationship between the self and the other as a means of becoming conscious of the self, one is returned again to inarticulable immediate knowledge. However, it is the presence of beliefs, value judgments, prejudices and inherited taboos implicit in language that leads to a bifurcation in the approach to the conceptualized Other. In this bifurcation these supernatural figures are analyzed not as an attempt to articulate inarticulable immediate knowledge, but as a figment of the collective imagination of the adjacent space in which Jesusa's life is steeped, as a means of psychological wish fulfillment and consolation, or as an opiate that functions manipulatively to maintain a particular social order. Poniatowska utilizes this analytical approach stating that, "nadie le hacía falta. Se completaba a sí misma; se completaba sola. Se bastaba. Le eran suficientes sus alucinaciones o sus desilusiones, producto de su soledad" ("La muerte" 14). Focusing simply on the psycho-social implications of how Jesusa conceptualizes the Other leads to the configuration of Jesusa's meaning.
Other as a hallucination, a product of her solitude. However, such an approach also posits Jesusa as noble in the Nietzschean sense of the relationship between self and other in which she creates her own values. In this configuration Jesusa stands alone, a proudly independent woman who violently defends herself. In opposition to the traditional image of the subservient, abnegating Mexican woman (the Nietzschean slave who is dependent on the other to set ethical standards to which she can conform), Jesusa neither wants nor has a husband and children, and she exhibits her strong will through her rebellious, confrontational and combative approach to the conditions of her adjacent space. Thus, the Hegelian interpretation must be amplified not only to explain that Jesusa's immediate knowledge of an ephemeral literal reference is mediated through representation, but to acknowledge that this mediation is achieved through particular representation drawn from metaphors available in her adjacent space. The metaphorical references selected by Jesusa from this space are mediated and confirmed by her own life experiences.

Jesusa's Other is not naïvely drawn from the doctrines of the Obra Espiritual. Consistent with her characteristic combativeness and independence, she demonstrates her resistance to a blind conformity with what religious authorities dictate, as in her initial highly skeptical response to spiritualism (155) and her disdain for the Spiritual Brothers' advice to find work in a protected environment where she would not hear the vulgar things she had heard all her life (245). In addition, the perspective from which Jesusa is narrating her story is from a position of discord with the group founded by Roque Rojas. As a
result, the narrator communicates directly with her protectors, without the intermediary of one of the chapel mediums. Jesusa's Other is an Other with whom she communicates through dialogue: she asks, and there is a response. The epistemological question regarding Jesusa's knowledge of this Other has been explored above. The particular signified articulated when Jesusa uses the signifiers of "God" and "Satan" has been cycled through the language habitat in which she lives. Religion depends on reflection, and Jesusa, reflecting on an ephemeral literal reference she interprets to be Other, draws on metaphorical characters available through her language habitat; in representing the Other, Jesusa is at the same time articulating her consciousness of her self within the signifiers of her context.

Thus, not only is the text Hasta no verte Jesús mio rooted in a particular historical context, but this particular context is rooted in a specific ideology which is implied by the main character's use of the metaphors God and Satan. This ideology refers the reader from the text to the world that was Josefina's world. This analysis is based therefore, on the premise of "the full capacity of language for expressing the relation between man and world, man and himself and man and the other" (Ricoeur "Poetry" 450). Through acceptance of Ricoeur's understanding of the relationship between language and philosophy, Jesusa's narrative may be understood as provoking reflection on her perspective of the ideology of the adjacent space with which she may be identified. However, not only did Josefina not recognize the text as representative of her life, but she clearly claims that she does not identify
herself with her "adjacent space," namely México. Jesusa claims that, "no me siento mexicana ni reconozco a los mexicanos. Aquí no existe más que pura conveniencia y puro interés. Si yo tuviera dinero y bienes, sería mexicana, pero como soy peor que la basura, pues no soy nada" (213). Yet, as noted above, not only do external criteria such as place names and historical events situate Jesusa in contemporary México, her own language reflects a profoundly Mexican character -- a character that in itself is other to those Mexicans who do not share her particular language.

In relation to Twilight of the Idols, Alexander Nehamas comments that "Nietzsche believes that interpretation reveals the value dependence of various points of view . . . [and that interpretations] embody and carry forth the interests and values through which we are most likely to thrive" (6); or, in Jesusa's case, to survive. Poniatowska observes that "ella es un fenómeno aislado y solitario que reúne características que no son las de la mujer mexicana . . . No es la abnegada mujercita mexicana, como se le dice: 'Tú como el león para el combate y yo la paloma para el nido'. Ella no tiene nada que ver con eso. Ella es una mujer que combate desde que tiene nueve o diez años, que toda su vida ha trabajado y ha luchado y no tiene nada que ver con los patrones clásicos" ("Testimonios" 159). This reading of the text brings out a configuration of a poor, hard-working Mexican woman who is proudly independent in "un país caracterizado por 'una] burocracia infame, una policia cruel, unos jueces corruptos y la absoluta imposibilidad de hacerse oír" (Steele "La mediación" 217).
Jesusa consistently maintains a lack of comprehension of those who acquiesce to real or perceived authority. For example, she describes Emiliano's obedience to their father by summarizing her perspective of the situation with the saying, "caballo manso tira a malo y hombre bueno tira a pendejo" (54). She particularly expresses a disdain for women who do not assert themselves with respect to men. Jesusa states, "con todo y lo vieja que estoy, todavía no me dejo de los hombres" (208). Although she uses the term "dejarse" particularly with respect to women submitting themselves to males, Jesusa's actions indicate that she not only refuses to submit to men, but to any other person: "Pero yo era de carne y hueso, sigo siendo de carne y hueso, y no me gusta que me digan nada. Todavía siento lo material y me defiendo" (244). She tells of the French woman who did not permit her children to be changed often and demanded that Jesusa clean them when they were very dirty. Jesusa did not obey but rather expressed her disgust, and the French woman fired her (58); Jesusa beats Pedro's women if sufficiently provoked (102) and she openly snubs the pretentious women of the Protestant temple (291). Jesusa asserts her position, "no me la andes regañando ni me la andes haciendo nada. Por eso me hice grosera" (23), affirming that, "a mí que me gusta gritar yo, no que me giten a mí" (148) and, declaring her own agency, she states, "al que trató de ponerse chueco lo quebré" (149).

"Jesusa pertenece a los millones de hombres y de mujeres que no viven, sobreviven," comments Poniatowska ("Hasta" 7). Jesusa's Nietzschean will to power manifested itself from her early childhood when she chased away the
first of her father's women: "me llené mi cotoncito de piedras y la acaparé a puros piedrazos" (23). This action, along with similar actions against other women brought into the family by her father served not only to protect Jesusa from their abuse, but also to protect her father from women who drank and spent his money on themselves (23, 24). Jesusa's protection of her father extended into the time they were soldiers in the Revolution (67, 77). Arturo Pérez Pisonero argues that this behaviour simply reflects an unresolved Oedipus complex, yet this role of protector is present throughout the text -- and not only in relation to her father. It is Jesusa who protects Ignacia, her pregnant sister-in-law, from Efrén's beatings (31); she who protects a drunken Valentín Flores from others who wanted to rob him of the fruit he was selling (150); she who physically fights with the policeman who is refusing to pay his rent to doña Adelina in Nezahualcóyotl (209); and she who cares for the Vidales children and arranges for land for the family in Tablas de San Agustín when the widower of her friend Felícitas Vidales is incapable of doing these things for his family (267). Exemplifying Nietzschean noble morality,31 Jesusa does not protect these people in order to conform to some external rule about what is good, but because the action wells up from within her self. It is certainly not from example that Jesusa protects others, for she was abandoned many times and left without someone to protect her, first by the death of her mother when she was six or seven and shortly thereafter by her father, who left her for the first of

31 Nietzsche discusses noble morality in particular in his Beyond Good and Evil. In brief, the noble supercedes the übemunsch, for the transvaluation of values is specifically characteristic of the noble's will to power. This master morality is opposed to the acceptance of values and the
many times alone in Tehuantepec when she was seven or eight. She was expelled from the guardianship of her stepmother Everista after Everista hit her with a knife, causing Jesusa, at nine or ten years of age, to go to work as a servant in the home of Felisa Martínez de Henestrosa where she cared for herself when she had chicken pox: "¿quién diablos quería que me curara si yo no tenía madre? Mi papá sabe Dios donde estaba. Por eso me dediqué a buscarme la vida como Dios me diera a entender. Si no, ¿cómo comía yo?" (52).

"La pobreza en América Latina es la de la indiferencia, no hay nadie ante quien pararse y decir: 'No he comido, hace días que no como', porque a nadie le importa, eso no importa" (Poniatowska in Steele "La mediación" 215). Jesusa is able to triumph over her drinking, "cuando dije: 'Ya no tomo', dejé de tomar. Yo tengo la voluntad muy fuerte: ¡para que es más que la verdad! Cosa que decido que nunca voy a volver a hacer, nunca la hago. Desde chica he sido así de terca" (247). Yet, despite her stubbornness and hard work, she does not pull herself out of the miserable condition of poverty, illiteracy and violence that characterizes her life. "La ciudad avienta a sus pobres, los va sacando a las orillas, empujándolos, a medida que se expande," observes Poniatowska ("Hasta" 10), but Jesusa does not have this ability to step back and observe herself as part of a larger phenomenon. She blames her Catholic father's refusal to send her to the public school (because it was run by Protestants) for her illiteracy. She remembers having to wear the donkey's ears at the convent conformity to the status quo characteristic of slave morality.
school, commenting that, "claro que yo me hice más rebelde y me vengaba colocándoles [a las monjas] bolas de chicle en las bancas y les pegosteaba las naguas" (53). Jesusa learned to tell time, but cannot read a calendar (135, 138), causing her the pain (see Poniatowska "Hasta" 9) which is likely related to her insistence that Perico study and do his homework (278); however, her desire for literacy appears to be surpassed by her desire for freedom: "desde chiquilla no me hallé sino con la libertad, todo mi gusto era andar sola en el campo o arriba de un cerro" (30). When the owner of the house in Netzahualcóyotl, doña Adelina, decides to spend some time with an Obregónista, she leaves the management of her business entirely in the hands of Jesusa. Doña Adelina is surprised on her return when Jesusa promptly hands her the keys to the business, refusing to stay on: "necesito mi libertad . . . ¿O qué no tengo derecho a pasearme? Desde que usted se fue yo no salgo ni al cine. No he ido a ninguna parte porque todo se me fue en cuidar la casa para que no faltaran las mujeres, las bebidas, y el fandango" (170). Later Jesusa leaves the Magueyitos after a quarrel with a neighbor and, as she herself reflects, "si me hubiera esperado un mes tendría mi terreno" (260). She mentions that the family she was living with at the Magueyitos had built a multi-roomed house on their allotment of land in the suburb of la Joya and were living off the income from the rents. Thus Jesusa’s desire for freedom and her impetuous actions have inhibited her from pulling herself out of her impoverished situation. Jesusa has made choices. As will be elaborated below, Jesusa does not acknowledge self-responsibility for these choices, but
understands that the circumstances of her life are as God wills.

As Jesusa's father had tied down Jesusa and her brother Emiliano when he went off to work after the death of her mother (24, 29), so Jesusa locks Perico in the room where they lived (269). As the nuns had punished Jesusa for her resistance, so Jesusa hits Perico when he cries that he doesn't want to go to school (277), and when at thirteen it is apparent that Perico knows some soldier girls, Jesusa beats him in the street in front of them (280). She accepts the contextual understanding of the indispensability of violence towards children as succinctly expressed to her by her step-mother Everista Valencia, "si te pego es porque no quiero que te quedes sin aprender nada" (53). Jesusa fiercely rejects charity, a value which she tries to instill in Perico. When she spies him standing in a doorway watching people eat after he had eaten breakfast, she drags him home and confronts him with a pile of tortillas and a pot of beans: "¡ahora se lo acaba! Para que se le quite la manía de andar como perro en las puertas . . . Tú no te acabas eso y yo te agarro a palos. ¡A ver qué prefieres!" (270). When Jesusa discovers that Tránsito, a neighbour in the vecindad, is giving Perico an allowance (su domingo) she immediately reproaches her for it: "hágame favor de no andarle dando dinero a Perico porque yo no quiero que se acostumbre a que las mujeres le den dinero . . . Yo he sufrido bastante, me he pasado los días sin comer, pero nunca pedí caridad" (278). Poniatowska confirms that Jesusa's frequent and harsh use of violence with Perico (the historical Lalo) is based on a family model and Josefina's wish that "el muchacho sirviera para algo" ("Entrevista" 95), but she denies that this is what
caused Perico to live a vagrant, uncommitted life: "yo creo que las circunstancias de Lalo eran circunstancias de tanta miseria, que tenia los problemas que tiene mucha juventud muy miserable, muy pobre en México" ("Entrevista" 96).

Although Jesusa sustained the three orphans Ángel, Rufino and Perico from her meagre resources, gave in to those who wanted the candy or the clothes she was selling on credit (245), and supported Manuel el Robachicos, a constant theme in her dialogue is that "no hay bondad, nadie tiene bondad, no se crea que hay bondad" (138). She comments that this is because as children grow up "el demonio se va apoderando de ellos, de sus pensamientos y les va transformando las cosas, ensuciándolas, cambiándoles el color, encharcándoselas" (21). Her comment serves to highlight a profound difficulty inherent in understanding the world in terms of an absolute good and a wicked devil who leads humans astray, as expressed in Jesusa’s reflection on her first months in Mexico City: "esta señora Raquelito no tenía ninguna obligación de darme el alimento. Yo estaba allí nomás, ése no es mal trato. ¿Por qué ha de ser mal trato cuando las cosas están predestinadas por la mano omnipotente de Dios?” (132). She admits to some exceptions in her sisyphean struggle for survival, such as those she encountered as she walked accompanied by a dog to the capital from Ciudad del Maíz and carrying on her back all the material belongings derived from the pork killing business that had served the soldiers of the Cristeros: “ya me dieron de comer. La gente es buena en el campo” (235, 236), she affirms. However, the few people whom Jesusa names in positive
terms, Emiliano Zapata (77), Isabel Chamorro (135), Valentín Flores (151), and Felícias Vidales (263), pale in the ocean of those who have been hostile to her: "yo no creo que la gente sea buena, la mera verdad, no . . . de aquí sobre la tierra, ¿quién quiere usted que sea bueno?" (304).

In examining the phenomena of Jesusa's life, one is inclined to see her as an example of the strong, independent re-evaluator of values who does not help others out of pity, but from an overabundance in her self. One is further tempted to indulg in the argument that her conceptualization of the metaphysical is what has permitted her to resist the established order of the dominant religious paradigm, and that her resistance has freed her to be the proud, self-sufficient, self-determining being that her actions demonstrate her to be: "yo era fuerte, de por sí soy fuerte. Ya mi naturaleza es así" she states, adding, "el coraje, eso me sostenia. Toda mi vida he sido mal geniuda, corajudo. Si no comía, pensaba: 'Bueno, pues al cabo yo no tengo hambre' " (106). Jesusa observes that "desde chica fui mala, así nací, terrible" (99) and she continues, throughout the text, to make very frequent references to herself as "el vivo demonio" (227). "Estoy llena de jíotes, con el alma en un hilo" (295). "Mi sangre es negra y amarga y tengo las venas en cruz" (103). "El perro y yo; qué curioso; dos perros que se van corretando por allí sin rumbo, y que se husmean como diciendo: me hueles a perra" (215). These examples of some of the many references to her self signal to the reader that Jesusa lacks the central characteristic of the noble: self-reverence. "Se trataba a sí misma como animal maldito," observes Poniatowska ("La muerte" 14). It is this that gives the
reader pause in hastily refiguring Jesusa's strong character as a function of her rejection of the institutions of both Catholicism and the Obra Espiritual and propels the reader from the phenomena of Jesusa's action into further reflection on her conceptualization of her muse.

"¿Y cómo nos vamos a limpiar?" Jesusa rhetorically asks the reader, "A fuerza de dolor y de sufrimiento," she answers. "Nosotros creemos que El se equivoca, y no; los que nos equivocamos somos nosotros porque no oímos, no entendemos, no queremos reconocer el verdadero camino . . ." (14). Jesusa cites the example of the suffering of Sebastiana who "se esponjó de los pies y no podía andar" following a stillbirth. She comments that the petitions and penitences Sebastiana made in the Catholic Church towards improving her poor health were useless (15). She explains that from Sebastiana's appeals to the Obra Espiritual it became clear that her present suffering was caused by the many women whom she had made unhappy in her past life as a man, and that the children she lost were the women whom she had abandoned (15). "Lo que se debe, se paga aquí, en la otra no hay pago, porque lo regresan a uno a la tierra a compurgar las penas" (286), explains Jesusa, adding that "es forzoso regresar varias veces a la tierra, según las deudas que uno tenga" (12).

Jesusa "responde a una moral maniquea: el que es bueno es bueno y el que es malo es malo, pero como se impone el mal, los pocos buenos de antes se vuelven maliciosos, lo cual es casi decir malos" (Poniatowska "La muerte" 18). She is highly opinionated and expresses intolerance for what she feels is not good, regardless of the offense it may engender. In her adaptation of the
story of Adam and Eve for example, Jesús interjects, "¿qué changos ni qué changos! A lo mejor allá en Francia creen esas changueses, pero aquí en México somos cristianos y tenemos el cerebro más abierto" (297); "la gente que no conoce a Dios a cualquier palo se le arrodilla" (211); "me tenía harta la moledora de los sindicatos . . . eran puros convenencieros" (229). For Jesús there is no gray area; there are no interpretations that are as valid as her own. There is only an Absolute which is revealed to those who have cleansed themselves to receive Him, the Truth.

Sebastiana's story exemplifies Jesús's understanding of her own poverty, mistreatment and abandonment -- as punishment for her own past actions, "todo lo que yo atravesé son purificaciones" (12), she affirms. She emphasizes that "así es de que uno viene a pagar un adarme y va abonando en la tierra todas las deudas que el Ser Supremo tiene escritas allá arriba" (15). She concludes from these assumptions that she must owe a substantial amount because "Dios me quitó a mis padres desde chica y dejó que viniera a abonar mis culpas sola como lazarina" (12). It is clear that Jesús has accepted the common theodical arguments that suffering is a necessary evil in order for humans to become more worthy in the sight of God and that her suffering is temporal, bound to her earthly existence. It will subside when she is clean and

---

32 Jesús's comments on the Revolution, the government, the rich, and social institutions, recorded in Hasta no verte Jesús mio, along with her extratextual comments on post-textual events such as the massacre at Tlatelolco, recoded in commentaries such as "Hasta no verte Jesús mio" (11), are informative in their perspective of a poor woman who was a soldier in the Revolution. They reveal a particular criticism of these elements of Mexican society which calls into question the Marxist-socialist assignment of categories and the fixing of their values, such as State = bad, revolution = good, status quo = bad, "the people" = good, etc. Unfortunately, an elaboration of this interesting topic is not within the scope of this particular essay.
recognizes the true road, the kingdom of God: "si la mayoría de la gente llegara a reconocer el camino limpio de Dios no habría hombres abusones ni mujeres que se dejaran" (14). What Jesusa identifies as the "clean road of God" sounds very much like Nietzschean noble morality, for it refers to self-reverent individuals for whom a subjected other is not a prerequisite for this sense of self respect; however, Jesusa's acceptance of God as first cause, combined with her desire to remain free from long-term responsibility, robs her of full access to her will to power and inhibits the few slight possibilities she has to realize her potential.

Jesusa has absorbed an attitude of fatalism from a context "en que resulta normal una calamidad diaria infligida por el otro o por las circunstancias" (Poniatowska Luz y luna 68). In her analysis of Rufino's flight from the pork-killing business with the knives and scales, Jesusa concludes that "Rufino era vago de nacimiento" (233). Jesusa comments of her younger self that, "ya traía la malicia dentro" (22). She compares Perico with her brother Efrén, affirming that "el que nace de mala cabeza, ni quien se lo quite" (30) and on her failing to receive a plot of land during the re-distribution under the

---

33 Nietzsche discusses the noble in Beyond Good and Evil, particularly in Chapter 2, "The Free Spirit"; however, he declined to describe the noble as specifically as Kierkegaard described the knight of faith. stating that the noble "is no one kind of person"; never the less, there are literary characters that embody what Nietzsche provokes, such as Howard Roark in Ayn Rand's The Fountainhead, Max Demian and Gain in Hermann Hesse's Demian, and Dagny Taggart in Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged.

34 González-Lee proposes that spiritualism provides a bridge between the spiritual world and the actual world which permits Jesusa to fulfill her potential as a curandera. However, Jesusa is unable to realize herself fully as a curandera. not only because in her Manichean way she refuses to acknowledge and critically comprehend healing methods outside those which she asserts to be right (see 284, 296), but also because she moves from one place to another relatively frequently, particularly as a response to conflict, and thus cannot establish either a good reputation or a stable client base.
government of Lázaro Cárdenas she comments: "lo que sea de Dios" (260). When her godmother Trinidad Pérez de Soto invites her to the location of the Primer Sello in Pachuca to receive the Sagrada Marca, Jesusa admits that she has no money to pay for the trip. "Si de Dios está no le ha de faltar dinero ni permiso" (248), her godmother reminds her; and, through a series of unexpected events, Jesusa does go to Pachuca. As Nietzsche points out in Beyond Good and Evil, however, one will interpret an omen as one wishes. Thus, although the opportunity to receive the Sagrada Marca served as one of the events that strengthened Jesusa's faith in the Protestant representation of God, it would still have been an omen indicating the will of God even had she been unable to go. In other words, understanding events in terms of the "will of God" is basing epistemology on a theory that cannot be falsified.

Jesusa mentions that as a child working in the prison in Tehuantepec she attended morning mass daily (38). She proclaims: "si no cumplo [el trabajo que me dio el Creador] no tendré ni porqué molestarme en pedirle a los santos el ruega por nosotros porque estaré olvidada de la mano de Dios" (12); yet when she hears the song about the Señor de Chalma she cries out to this saint to cure her legs which were swollen from working in damp conditions (241). As discussed above, it was the Virgen de la Soledad that cured her peritonitis. These are indicators of the syncretic fluidity of her representations for a literal reference that are clearly drawn from an aspect of her adjacent space to which she is overtly hostile, as will be discussed.

Movements such as the Obra Espiritual are considered to offer an
alternative to the monolithic, authoritarian, elitist Catholic Church. Jesús has absorbed a familiar criticism of the Catholic Church from the fundamental Protestants currently evangelizing this alternative for Latin America, "ellos ganan mucho dinero en la misa, en los casamientos, en los bautizos. En la Obra Espiritual no sólo despiertan al pueblo sino que la misma congregación sostiene el Oratorio; las sacerdotisas, las mediunidades, las pedestales, las columnas ayudan, y ninguno pide limosna" (16; see also 48). Those who support this interpretation are disinclined to elaborate by examining factors such as the sources of funding for fundamentalist Protestant temples and the origins of evangelical propaganda. Another familiar argument is that based on a threat: "conocen la Obra Espiritual, nomás que no la quieren desarrollar porque son egoístas. No quieren que despierte el pueblo porqué se les cae la papa" (16), an argument which neglects to mention the satisfaction with which many Cristianos observe the statistics of converts as a sign of "Christ's" increasing power. A third complaint against the Catholic Church which has influenced many people to look outside the Church for spirituality is the reliance on rules and formulas: "en las Honras Fúnebres nomás ponen el aparato allí, el ataúd tapado, un cajón de a mentiras, hacen un montón de figuretas y zangolotean el incensario pero no llaman a la pobre alma que está penando" (16). However, movements such as the Obra Espiritual appear to be more directly efficient in

meeting people's spiritual needs, "en la Obra Espiritual no nos piden que ayunemos ni hagamos esas pijeces que discurren en la Iglesia Católica: '... que no coman carne, que coman pescado.' Esas son pendejadas, pues si a veces no tienen ni para los frijoles, ¿cómo van a comer pescado? ... Míreme a mí," proclaims Jesusa, "era muy bailadora, muy tornadora, muy peleonera. Dejar de tomar y dejar de pelear; ése es el ayuno que me puso el Ser Supremo" (292).

Despite her overt rejection of the Catholic Church, Jesusa insists that she conforms to one of its central tenets of particular importance for women, that of sexual abstinence: "Denme harto que comer porque me gusta comer y tomar, pero eso sí a mi no me digan que les pague con lo que Dios me dio" (149). Jesusa adds that, "anduve con muchos soldados paseándome con ellos en el puerto de Acapulco por las calles, cargando guitarra y botellas y nunca me metieron mano" (150). While she expresses her appreciation and enjoyment of her male friends, Jesusa holds at the same time a deep disdain for men as "putos siempre con el animal de fuera, a ver a quién se lo meten" (77). She adds that this includes priests who, of flesh and blood, also "andan hambrientos de mujer" (203). Poniatowska observes that, for Jesusa, "ser hombre era portarse mal" ("La muerte" 9). Consistent with her perspective of the male sex and as discussed above, Jesusa conceptualizes El Buen Amigo Satan as an attractive male. It is as though there is an attraction, something forbidden and appealing that, as Jesusa's experiences with Pedro Aguilar clearly illustrate, is

luna, las lunitas (México: Era, 1994) for a discussion of the Obra Espiritual in Mexico.
perverted and destroyed. "¿Por qué me voy a dejar? Aunque fuera el dios Huitzilopochtli, conmigo se estrella" (149). The stereotypical machismo of Mexican males alienates Jesusa from knowing the other, and she chooses instead to protect herself. "Por eso yo soy sola", admits Jesusa, "porque no me gusta que me gobierme nadie" (149). Interestingly, in Jesusa's idyllic description of the first Palancares, a soldier who defected from the French army to work the land in Oaxaca (215), she comments that he was "un hombre que tenía hombria." He worked hard and harvested abundant crops and he taught "his woman" to make goat cheese, butter, and other things. Jesusa's conceptualization is thus not that the woman took the initiative to contribute to the partnership, but rather that the woman was taught her crafts by the man. Jesusa declares that these days "nadie estima a su mujer ni la cuida. Al contario, entre más le sacan, mejor. Cualquier día no podrá hacer ya nada y ni modo de decir: 'Mi muchacho va a ver por mí.' No, hombre, mejor me largo. Ya para qué le sirvo, estoy imposibilitada de lavarlo ni hervirle sus frijoles" (302). Jesusa measures her worth wholly in terms of her practical use to the other.

The description of the dependent first Palancares woman and of the pragmatic female role are two examples which reveal that not only are the metaphoric representations of the institution that Jesusa so overtly rejects inherently part of her conceptualization of an ephemeral literal reference, but that the values deeply embedded in these representations have resurfaced in her current source of metaphorization, the ultraconservative Obra Espiritual, where they serve to reinforce a puritan ethic which in no way produces any real re-
evaluation of values.

Citing Gerardo de la Torre, Poniatowska comments that Jesusa "se coloca al margen de la ética de su tiempo, una ética que ni entiende ni le interesa" ("La muerte" 17). As noted above, however, metaphors function powerfully both consciously and unconsciously to structure the space and the social relations within it. Jesusa's language reveals a deep Manichean acceptance of the theological premises that permeate the context of her existence: she understands suffering as a reflection of her own actions and stresses the importance of suffering as a means of purification; she accepts the prevalent fatalistic understanding that all is predestined by God; and she expresses antipathy for the Catholic Church as a means of interacting with God; yet, consistent with the omnipresent image of Guadalupe, she demonstrates her "goodness" by asserting her sexual continence. Thus Jesusa's interpretation of an ephemeral literal reference through the metaphorical references available to her in her adjacent space serves to present in her a variation on the theme that characterizes this space.

There is a dialectic tension between Jesusa's rejection and acceptance of the value structures of her adjacent space. Jesusa vehemently rejects the formal organization of both Catholicism and the Obra Espiritual while she continues to profoundly combine and accept their values. Jesusa contains the ideology of her adjacent space, yet rejects her Mexicanness because México has rejected her. It is because she contains this ideology that she interprets herself as "garbage" and her self-protective independence as "bad." That which
Jesus describes metaphorically as God gives clues to what for her is the backbone of her existence. But it is not her conceptualization of God that has caused her to rise up against the conditions of her life; it is rather in spite of this conceptualization that she has innately reacted to these conditions in the same way as Camus' Sisyphus: with defiance. It is precisely this defiance, these "bad" qualities, which drew the attention of Poniatowska and thus it is these qualities which the implied narrator emphasized in the text. The recalcitrant main character of the text survived in the hostile circumstances of the poor in México, yet her historical counterpart vehemently rejected the manuscript, saying that "usted inventa todo, son puras mentiras, no entendió nada, las cosas no son así" (Poniatowska “Testimonios de una escritora” 160). Josefina's rejection of the narrative demonstrates her rejection of the portrayal of herself as an unconforming, proud woman who asserts that "si me den una patada es porque los he dado dos por adelante" ("Hasta" 11) . . . yet she accepted the finished text when she saw the Niño de Atocha on the front cover.

In her article "Testimonio y autoridad en Hasta no verte Jesús mío" Steele discusses the testimonial as confession, interpreting Josefina as justifying herself before her confessor, "la catrina" Poniatowska, and ultimately before a community of readers. The profound incompatibility of the religious values that are part of the space adjacent to her self causes Jesusa to be acutely aware of her unconformity with her language community and fuels her willingness to "confess" herself. However, Jesusa also notes that, "a pesar de que soy mala, Dios no me deja de su mano" (138). This means that even if she
is rejected by her community, there is still One, the greatest One, who loves and accepts her. Jesusa presents herself as the "alma que ama a Dios" who called her dead family members out of obscurity (17), adding that "son un montón de cristianos enfermos del alma que tengo que curar, pero como no lo he hecho, seguimos sufriendo todos, ellos y yo" (12). Her acceptance of the text with the Niño de Atocha on its cover validates Josefina's desire to confess to the world not that she is a strong, unconforming Mexican woman, but rather that she is a servant worthy in her love and service to God.

Jesusa's articulation of an elusive literal reference is permeated by the language habitat through which she expresses it; thus, her representation of God and Satan is consistent with contextually available metaphorical references which are not neutral in terms of their ethical value. It is because the testimonial novel is embedded in a world external to the text that the representative character of Jesusa enables a refiguration of Hasta no verte Jesús mio to contribute significantly to a discussion of ethical issues pertinent to the historical context of the poor in both pre and post-Revolutionary México. This refiguration draws the reader into the dynamic process of bringing preconfigurative knowledge to the configuration of the text and adding to the prefigurative base, thus impacting both on subsequent experiences of México and on rereadings of the testimonial novel.

Lucas Gavilán, the narrator of *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán*, creates a narrated world which projects both the story of Jesucristo Gómez in modern México and that of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine. He sets this narration within his own world, indicating that Jesucristo Gómez was his contemporary and that the biblical text is part of their shared prefigurative repertory. The construction and the significance of this diegetic world will be explored below, for it is through its formal unfolding that one can explain the way in which the text projects a world which has the capacity to redescribe the world of action.

*El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán* appeals to two sources of external reference: Luke's version of the life of Christ found in the New Testament, and the socio-political situation of México in the mid-1970's. Gavilán clearly states that he is "ignorantly" choosing to draw logical parallels between the time of Jesus Christ and present-day national realities (12). Recognizing the limitations and dissimilarities between ancient Palestine and contemporary México, Gavilán recounts the lifestory of a marginalized Mexican who advocates a more equal distribution of México's wealth. In telling this story, Gavilán reveals the consequences of the character's public stance – consequences which, due to structure of the hypertext, closely parallel those experienced by Jesus of Nazareth. The narrative of Jesucristo/Jesus is thus an imaginative creation that opens the way for reflection on the fate of those who act from outside an
existing power structure, yet whose discourse and actions affect this existing system.

This essay begins with a formal analysis of the text *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán*. Such formal analysis, into which historical and phenomenological commentary is integrated, serves to explain the sense of the work through an examination of the narrator and the narrated world. The first section of formal analysis explores the role of Lucas Gavilán, the unknown teller of the tale. The next section examines the way in which the presence of text of the Gospel of Luke, as part of the narrated world, serves to guide the reader to closely link the stories of Jesus of Nazareth and Jesucristo Gómez. The final formal section explores the narrated world in which the life of Jesucristo Gómez unfolds. In following the orient of the novel through this formal analysis, the “thing” or “issue” of *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán* is revealed. The thing projected in front of the text is then put into play, providing a hermeneutical reflection on the meaning of the relationship between the discourse of Jesucristo Gómez and his way of being within the diegetic world of action.

**The narrator: perspective of liberation theology**

The narrator of *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán* is both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. He is homodiegetic in the prologue, participating as the “I” who is directing his discourse to Téofilo. Here he specifically states the perspective from which he intends to narrate the story of Jesucristo Gómez: "... decidí intentar mi propia versión narrativa [de la figura de Jesucristo] impulsado por
Liberation theology grew out of the three principal objectives of Vatican II (1962-1965): to reconcile the Catholic faith with modernity and rationality, to open the Church to ecumenical dialogue, and to become the Church of the poor. In 1968 the Council of Latin American bishops met in Medellin, Colombia, to focus specifically on the third objective of Vatican II as it pertained to Latin America. It was here that Gustavo Gutiérrez first used the term “liberation theology.” Liberation theology is theological in the sense that it refers to the possibility of attaining the kingdom of God here and now, of achieving abundant life for all in the terrestrial world created by Him. It is liberating in the sense that it seeks, as Marx would say, freedom from the weight of the chain of economic (as well as social and political) oppression that would permit all persons the possibility of plucking the living flower of abundant life.37

36 This is but one example of the subversion of the reader's expectations of the characters in this text. There are others: a strike leader who is acting under instructions from the governor (227), priests who are (149, 246/307), an employee of the Procuraduría General de la República (PGR) who advocates for Jesús Cristo Gómez, and campesino leaders who are millionaires (198).

37 Of course, Marx identifies religion as an epiphenomenon of oppression, as an opiate which is taken as compensation for real suffering and distress. Liberation theology integrates a supernatural point of reference with a conscientization of the causes of poverty and its associated suffering.
The way that Gavilán has chosen to tell the story of Jesucristo Gómez is consistent with the objective of liberation theology to rationally articulate the factors which impede the existence of abundant life for all. Gavilán explains that he is writing "esta paráfrasis del Evangelio según San Lucas buscando, con el máximo rigor, una traducción de cada enseñanza, de cada milagro y de cada pasaje al ambiente contemporáneo de México de hoy desde una óptica racional y con un propósito desmitificador" (11-12). In providing rational explanations for the miracles and healings performed by Jesucristo Gómez, Gavilán bases his gospel on rational analysis which works for "pie now," rather than "pie in the sky when you die." Here it is not the supernatural which brings about changes in living conditions, but rather dialogue and forms of human action. This perspective is particularly notable in his treatment of events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth which were inscribed by Luke as miraculous.

In Luke's Gospel for example, the devil confronts a Jesus weakened by hunger and tempts him first of all to prove that he is indeed the Son of God by performing the miracle of turning stones into bread. Jesus refuses with the famous citation that "one does not live by bread alone." The devil then offers Jesus authority over all the kingdoms of the world, if Jesus will worship him in exchange. Jesus refuses, recalling the second commandment that a Jew should not worship idols, but only God. The devil then tries one more time to lure Jesus from his principles by taking him to the highest pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and challenging him to demonstrate his trust in the steadfast love of his God by throwing himself from the pinnacle. Jesus again
refuses, recalling that the devout must not put God to the test.

In Gavilán's paraphrase of the temptation of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesucristo Gómez is also confronted with possibilities for personal gain at a time when he is feeling a hunger for something other than exercising the profession of his father. The three biblical temptations are presented to him rationally, through the character of Diablo Samperio, a carpenter with whom he enjoys a good professional relationship. Paralleling Jesus of Nazareth's temptation to obtain food when he was hungry, Diablo presents Jesucristo Gómez with the possibility of obtaining stable and well-paid work in México City; work which also offers opportunities for their own business in the future. As Jesus of Nazareth refuses the lure of satiating only himself, so Jesucristo Gómez refuses this temptation:

--No sólo de pan vive el hombre, ya lo dice el Evangelio -- respondió Jesucristo Gómez.
--¿Entonces qué quieres?
--Ayudar a mi gente, a los jodidos (58).

Several days later, Jesucristo Gómez and Diablo are drinking beer in a corner store and Diablo tells Jesucristo Gómez that the regional delegate of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, a friend of the governor, was interested in having Jesucristo Gómez work with him. Diablo points out to Jesucristo Gómez that this could be the beginning of his ascendancy in the political pyramid. Jesucristo Gómez, again paralleling the actions of Jesus of Nazareth, refuses to worship the idols of the political establishment. As they leave the store, Diablo tries one more time to encourage his friend to take one of the
opportunities available to him to make something of himself. He frames his suggestion in terms which reflect Jesucristo’s stated aims: "Si para ayudar a los jodidos ne te gusta la lana ni te convence la política, sólo te queda ser enviado de Dios" (59). As the devil challenges Jesus of Nazareth to demonstrate that his God does indeed protect him, so Diablo challenges Jesucristo Gómez to accept the protection of the Church: "con ellos no hay quien pueda. Ahi se rajan hasta los políticos, nomás revisa la historia" (60). However, reflecting the response of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesucristo Gómez too refuses to test the miracle of this protective power.

In juxtaposing the biblical account of the temptation of Jesus of Nazareth with the temptation of Jesucristo Gómez through translating the supposedly historical events which took place in Palestine two thousand or so years ago into the fictional events which occurred in areas on the periphery of México City during the mid-1970’s, Gavilán places the biblical temptations into a concrete context in a way which serves to elucidate both the biblical story and the historical context of contemporary México. It is of note that, much later in the narrative, Apolonio Zacarías informs Jesucristo Gómez that Diablo Samperio owns a brick factory in Meztitlán (231). Here Gavilán adds an aspect to the story which is not brought out in the Gospel of Luke: that these worldly temptations do indeed bear fruit.

Thus the first person intellectual voice exhibited by Gavilán in the prologue is subverted during his narration of the story of Jesucristo Gómez. In telling the story, Gavilán becomes a heterodiegetic narrator, retreating behind a
third person narrative voice. This voice has no focalization, for Gavilán does not restrict himself to seeing the events of the life of Jesucristo Gómez though the cognitive and perceptual limitations of one or another of the characters. This minimum of restrictions permits him the liberty of conveying knowledge which is independent of that of the characters. For example, Gavilán indicates that Jesucristo Gómez has learned of the death of Juan Bautista. The narrator then continues: "todo empezó cuando a don Horacio Mijares le llegaron con el cuento de que el Frente Común de Juan Bautista se había reorganizado y sus hombres andaban alebrestando la comarca. Juan Bautista los dirige desde la cárcel, le decían a Horacio Mijares . . . Desde luego Mijares dudaba de la veracidad de tales informaciones, pero como no quería tener problemas con su gente se lavó las manos y les dijo: hagan lo que quieran" (128). The narration of the factors leading directly to Bautista's death provides the reader with information regarding a sociopolitical dynamic of the world in which Jesucristo Gómez and his disciples are living and acting. In juxtaposing the discussion between Mijares and some of his loyal people with the simple indirect statement by the narrator that Jesucristo Gómez "se enteró de la muerte de Juan Bautista" (128), the narrator highlights the ignorance of the main character of the implications of his discourse and actions with respect to the interests and ambitions of others in his environment.

In *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán*, the dialogue of the characters adds a certain degree of polyphony to the text. In the context of a novel in which the narrator does not enter into the consciousness of the actors, comments made
by the Procurator of the State of Mexico reveal the impotence that this official feels with respect to his ability to act within the bureaucracy of which he is a part:

Hasta cuándo dejaremos de hacernos bolas y hasta cuándo dejará de hacer cada policía lo que se le antoje. Yo estoy pintado o qué. A mí vienen y me dicen y yo digo y como si hablara a las piedras, siempre hay un pretexo para torcer una orden o nunca falta un telefonazo para cambiar las cosas a beneficio de quién. Si yo a veces no entiendo menos van a entender mi gente . . . tanto escándolo para un caso de nada que a fuerzas me obligaron a enredar para convertirlo en el chivo expiatorio de otros casos sin resolver no por mi culpa ni por culpa de nuestra dependencia, sino por la maldita culpa de ese montonal de policías y más policías cada vez más fuera de control . . .” (286).

Although this dramatic monologue, a defensive response to an implicit listener, does point to some of the difficulties of occupying an administrative position in an unwieldy bureaucracy and to the ensuing apathy, the Procurator continues on to reveal the politicization of his position:

. . . Pero en fin, yo no estoy para ésas ni voy a arriesgar mi puesto por un caso que ni siquiera vale el coraje . . . Primero me agarraron los dedos entre la puerta y con el pretexo de la amnistía me hicieron soltar a ese infeliz de Benito Barrera . . . con eso ganamos un poco de prensa y hasta los radicales nos dedicaron por ahí un elogio, pero ahora me voltean la tortilla, y a un pobre loco sin antecedentes penales me lo convierten en preso político . . . De veras quisiera saberlo, qué buscan. ¿Volver a que siga habiendo presos políticos y lanzar en mi contra a los radicales para agarrarme de nuevo los dedos entre la puerta? ¿Eso buscan? O ponerme de pique con Gobernación . . . Por un pobre diablo no voy a jugarme ni el prestigio ni el puesto . . . (287).

This unframed monodialogue augments the information about the political context in which the death of Jesucristo Gómez occurred. It also provides insight into the internal motivation of one of the characters who is well-
positioned to intercede on behalf of Jesucristo Gómez, but chooses instead to protect his own position.

Consistent with liberation theology, Jesucristo Gómez' cause is that of advocating social justice, for the creation of this situation would permit abundant life, or the existence of the kingdom of God, for all on earth. He warns of the signs of the coming of this kingdom: "cuando vean a los poderosos aferrarse a sus valores y defender a la desesperada sus privilegios, den por seguro que se acerca el tiempo de la verdadera justicia" (260). He accepts responsibility for the actions of those who support his cause, for he is intransigently confident that his particular idea of justice will ultimately prevail. He tells his disciples: "de su vida y de sus actos respondo yo . . . a mí pueden insultarme y criticarme, pero ay de aquél que desprecie la causa de mi pueblo, acabará pagándola muy cara, ustedes lo verán" (168).

There is clearly a value judgment in Jesucristo Gómez' position, one that advocates the valor of his intransigence: "el que no sea capaz de renunciar a todo para andar en las que yo ando, mejor quedese en su casa y no hay problema" (193). Jesucristo Gómez thus advises his disciples: "ustedes prediquen con el ejemplo y no tengan miedo a los que asesinan líderes o reprimen movimientos; mucho más peligrosos son los que tienen poder para calumniar a esos líderes o pervertir el sentido de una lucha legítima" (168). This complete lack of political astuteness is also valued as the unconditional commitment to the cause of the kingdom of God on earth: "... para ese cambio todavía falta tiempo; antes van a sufrir muchas desgracias, mucha represión. El
cambio no se dará pacíficamente. Costará muchas vidas. Habrá guerras y se desatará la violencia contra todos los que traten de conservar sus bienes y sus privilegios. Pero abusados, ¿óiganme bien: todo el que trate de salvar su vida la perderá, y el que la pierda la salvará" (210).

These dialogic comments define not only the diegetic perspective that Jesucristo Gómez has of his own actions, but also the way in which these actions are regarded by others within the narrated world. The position of other characters with respect to the actions of the main character varies significantly. When Jesucristo Gómez confronts the priest of his hometown during his sermon, the people comment of him:

--Está loco.
--Sáquenlo . . .
--Está borracho . . .
--¡Veniste nomás a perturbar la casa de Dios! (66).

The advisors of Horacio Mijares on the other hand comment:

... le llegaron de vuelta [a Mijares] con la novedad de que había aparecido otro alborotador más latoso que Juan Bautista.
--Necesitamos parar en seco a ese cabrón antes de que empiece a dar problemas serios --aconsejaron a don Horacio.
--¿Tanto así?
--Tanto así, mi jefe.
--¿Y quién es el tipo? --preguntó.
--Se llama Jesucristo Gómez --le respondieron (129).

Jesucristo Gómez is clearly perceived by the people he has known since he was a child as a lunatic who is disrupting order. He is therefore simply and summarily removed from the church in San Martín el Grande. This response saddens Jesucristo Gómez and leads him to comment: “Nadie es profeta en su pueblo” (67). On the other hand, Jesucristo Gómez is perceived as a real threat
to people of the cacique Mijares, the implications of which the main character
does not capture. Although the conversation between Mijares and his people is
given to the reader through the privilege of the omniscient narrator, the growing
antagonism towards Jesucristo Gómez is expressly made known to him
through the direct discourse of his disciples:

--Allá por la Huasteca oí hablar de ti -- dijo Juancho Zepeda.
--También por el sur de Veracruz se mienta mucho tu nombre
-- dijo Mateo Leyva.
--En el estado de México todo el mundo te conoce --dijo
Tomás Carrillo.
-- ¿Y qué dicen de mí? --preguntó Jesucristo.
--La gente de los caciques dice que eres un alzado.
--Los del gobierno que eres un alborotador.
--Los curas, que un loco.
--Dicen que andas queriendo formar un partido político, pero
que estás mal.
--Porque te falta gente.
--Porque no tienes un programa.
--Porque ni siquiera hablan de ti los periódicos.
--Porque para cambiar el país hace falta una revolución. Eso
dicen (132).

Jesucristo Gómez' response to these factors parallels the attitude of
Jesus of Nazareth:

--De éses que ahora se burlan de mí, de éses que me llaman
alborotador y loco y se avergüenzan de ser mis amigos, yo
también me burlaré y me avergonzaré cuando llegue la justicia
(133).

Gavilán participates in his text in the prologue, stating his intention that
the orient of his heterodiegetic narration be consistent with the principles of
liberation theology. The Gospels are of course the primary texts from which
these principles have been refigured and Gavilán has chosen to tell the story of
the fate of his compatriot not only consistent with a particular theological
approach, but also consistent with one of these primary texts.

The hypertext: the story of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine as related in the Gospel of Luke

_El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán_ is a direct paraphrase of the Gospel of Luke. Gavilán not only states this clearly the prologue, which parallels Luke's dedication to Theophilus, but he also utilizes several techniques which serve to construct close ties with the biblical narrative. He titles his narration as an "evangelio", as a gospel or as true testimony. This testimony is then divided into the prologue and seven major sections, which Gavilán informs the reader follow the Spanish version of the Jerusalem Bible. Each of these sections is preceded by a black and white reproductions of woodcuts that depict events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Each of these sections is further divided into a series of anecdotes which are announced by italicized subtitles taken from the Gospel of Luke. Gavilán has then selected events from the life of Jesucristo Gómez which place him in diegetic situations which reflect those related in the biblical text and fitted them into the appropriate subsection. These paratextual clues -- the title "evangelio", the sections of the text, the woodcuts of biblical scenes, the inclusion of biblical references to each subsection -- create a strong intertextual structure which serves to project an analogy between the world of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine and Jesucristo Gómez in modern México.

Luke bases his account of the life of Jesus of Nazareth on the Gospel of Mark and on stories that he has heard about Jesus of Nazareth. Gavilán cites his sources for his recounting the similar life of another man, Jesucristo Gómez:
the Spanish version of the Jerusalem Bible, the new Testament produced by the Sociedades Bíblicas en América Latina (Dios llega al hombre), unspecified homilies, conversations with friends, theological articles, and "sugerencias incluidas en libros". Both narrators utilize their narrative authority to synthesize these cited sources to produce a coherent and verisimilar story. As Luke, Gavilán is a participant in the world which he narrates. However, while Luke likely wrote about 60 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, Lucas Gavilán is writing only two to four years after Jesucristo Gómez' death. Gavilán is thus closer to the events which he narrates in the sense that he is much closer to the historical context to which his testament refers.

Both authors have a motive for writing their testimonies to the life of their main characters. Luke was writing during the time of the initial spread — and harsh resistance to — the new form of Judaism which recognized in the figure of Jesus of Nazareth the anticipated Messiah. Luke wished to strengthen the belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah through documenting the miracles and healings attributed to him as the Christ. Gavilán wishes to retell this biblical story in a modern setting through the new perspective of liberation theology. In other words, Luke writes to support the spread of a new development within Judaism; Gavilán writes to stimulate reflection on this historical development from a particular perspective within Christianity and from within the context of contemporary México.

Similar to the style of the biblical story of Jesus of Nazareth, the story of Jesucristo Gómez is related in picaresque form. Fragments of the life of this
poor and itinerant man have been selected according to the objective of the narrator of paralleling the life of this contemporary Mexican labourer with the ancient Jewish carpenter. They are woven together to create the illusion of presenting the complete story of the main character. The narrative voice of Lucas Gavilán parallels the narrative voice utilized by Luke. Gavilán uses a simple descriptive language with few adverbs or adjectives, similar to Luke's style in his testimony. Gavilán however, inscribes dialogue in a colloquial language which is appropriate for each character. For example, one of the policemen beating Jesucristo Gómez jokes: "¿Cómo vas, cabrón?" (278), while one of the priests in the seminario conciliar comments: "¿Puede ser tan amable de esperar un momento a que bendigamos los alimentos?" (164). The use of popular language which integrates typical expressions such as "de no saber pío" (29), "se aparecieron unos tipos" (28), "cedieron su chamban" (120), among many others, is a technique which serves to locate Gavilán's text in contemporary, lower class México, as does the Pascal dinner of beer, pozole, and pambazos (270). This situating of the narrative within a particular class is particularly consistent with Gavilán's stated objective of narrating the events of the text consistent with the principles of liberation theology. Arising out of the objective of Vatican II to become the Church of the poor, at the Latin American bishop's conference in Puebla, Mexico, the way to achieve this objective was concretized as the "option for the poor".  

38 Gustavo Gutiérrez posits that a poor person is "someone who may have to wait a week at door of hospital to see a doctor. A poor person is someone without social or economic weight, who is robbed by unjust laws; someone who lacks the possibility of speaking up in order to
of insignificant or marginalized sectors of society as its centre. Gavilán’s situating of his narrative has permitted him to write from the perspective not only of a marginal sector of the Catholic Church, but also of a large sector of Mexico which is neither its sociocultural nor politicoeconomic centre.

The physical appearance of the actors in the text is not described either by the narrator or by the characters themselves. The characters are developed rather through discursive forms that refer almost uniquely to their actions, rather than to their internal thoughts. It is principally through these actions that the characters reveal their ideological perspective of the world. However, as noted, Gavilán has adapted the stance of an objective observer narrating from outside of the consciousness of the actors, thus it is the perspective of the narrator which prevails, not the perspective of those whose story is being narrated. Consistent with this narrative position, the inner thoughts and feelings of the main character are related only as they may be observed from his outer appearance and actions. In the excerpt cited below it is only from the external changes in Jesucristo Gómez (that he paled, that he stood up abruptly) that readers may perhaps infer -- but not know for certain -- that Pedro Simón’s comments disturbed him, that he does not perceive himself as a Christ whose mission is to save the human race and that he does not want to be perceived as such:

—¡No! —brincó Pedro Simón—. Tú no te llamas en balde como te llamas porque eres el mismísimo Jesucristo. Ése que vino a
salvamos hace un chorro de siglos.
Jesucristo Gómez empalideció.
--No le digan eso a nadie--dijo. Y se puso en pie inmediatamente (132).

The deixis of reference in El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán is the narrator, for the story is communicated through Gavilán’s telling of it, not through the figurative conscience of the characters themselves. It is Gavilán then who selects the speech of the characters for inclusion in his account of the life of Jesucristo Gómez. Complementing the indirect discourse of Gavilán, the dialogue of the characters is intradiegetic narration which provides further information regarding the context in which the main character is living and acting. Through their dialogue the characters indicate that they are aware of certain dynamics in their diegetic space for the information regarding this space has, despite Gavilán’s selection, come directly from them.

The direct discourse of the characters thus adds some vocal diversity to the text and contributes to the movement of the story towards its denouement. The dialogue of the actors contributes to their characterization in the statements which they make of themselves, and in the statements that one character makes regarding the actions of another. Dialogue, for example, serves to delineate and clarify the relationship between Jesucristo Gómez and his disciples. Juancho Zepeda for example, complains to Jesucristo Gómez that he disagreed with the advantage that the leaders of the Nacional Campesina in Uriangato were taking of the work of Jesucristo Gómez in order to organize people in Uriangato. Juancho wished to put a stop to this perceived abuse of
the teachings of his leader, but his fellow disciple Pedro confronted him, saying that Juancho was not the leader of the disciples and had no business giving orders on their behalf. As a father calming a dispute between his children, Jesucristo Gómez takes the arm of Juancho and guides him away from the offending Pedro, advising him: "apréndete esto y no lo olvides nunca: el que no está contra ustedes está con ustedes" (142). This paternalistic dynamic between Jesucristo Gómez and his followers is demonstrated throughout the text, even when Jesucristo Gómez sends the disciples out to work on their own: "los discípulos estaban de mal humor. No entendían por qué el maestro quería dejarlos solos . . . Tenían miedo. Se sentían incapaces" (127). Consistent with the Gospel story, it is only Jesucristo who is intelligent; his disciples are clearly subordinate to him and in constant need of his advice and direction.

The characters of El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán are thus generally stable, uncomplicated actors who maintain a thematic role which is not modified during the course of the events of the text. Horacio Mijares is always the arrogant cacique, the disciples are always somewhat ignorant, the Procurator of the State of Mexico is constantly unable to take a stand before his advisors. The character of Jesucristo Gómez however, in contrast to his biblical counterpart, does undergo some transition when directly confronted with his passion. In the first five sections of the text, consistent with the first five sections of the life of Jesus of Nazareth as narrated by Luke, Jesucristo Gómez responds in a verbally aggressive manner to challenges to his work with comments such as: "qué me ve cabrón, qué me ve qué me ve. Aquí no venga
con mamadas porque me lo chingo" (70); or, "mi única madre y mis únicos hermanos son los que trabajan por mi causa" (113). Despite his verbal aggression throughout these five sections, Jesucristo Gómez does not advocate physical aggression, refusing, for example, to lead Bautista's Frente Común (103). In the sixth section of the text however, when he is unequivocally confronted with the reality of his impending passion, Jesucristo Gómez does not promise his disciples authority in his kingdom for their loyalty to him (cf. Lk 22:28-30), nor does he maintain his righteousness before the council of elders (cf. Lk 22:67-69), as does Jesus of Nazareth. Jesucristo Gómez rather exhorts his disciples, "si alguien tiene forma de conseguir dinero, consígalo; y el que no consiga nada, que venda su camisa o su chamarra para comprar un arma. Porque ahora me persiguen como a un asesino y tratarán de acabar conmigo y con ustedes" (272). And, after being severely tortured by the judicial police, Jesucristo Gómez agrees to every charge they wish to accuse him of, offering, "¿Pongo otra hoja? Ya son las diez y media" (282), rather than insolently responding to this council that the accusations they are making of him are false (Lk 23:3).

The hypertext then, the systematic integration of the biblical text, creates an overall consonance between the character of Jesucristo Gómez and the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. This intertextuality functions to strengthen the relationship between the two men as victims of political systems in which the interest in self-preservation is greater than that of supporting any idealist who advocates a kingdom in which there is justice and well-being for all.
The world projected by the text: the story of Jesucristo Gómez in modern México

Gavilán narrates his gospel retrospectively, several years after the death of Jesucristo Gómez. Although the story is narrated from a position posterior to the action however, it is the present of the characters which serves as the temporal point of reference for the events which unfold within the text, rather than the present of the narrator. The narration thus refers to past and future times only in relation to the diegetic present, and never in relation to the present of Gavilán. Although in his prologue the narrator situates the story of Jesucristo Gómez with respect to a particular theological perspective and historical context, as noted the plot of the story develops without direct reference to this prologue. Such internal temporal focus negates overt, didactic reference to either the world of Gavilán or to the world of contemporary México within the narrative itself.

Yet there is much evidence within the text to indicate that the diegetic space of El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán reflects contemporary México. The illusion of this space is not created through direct descriptions of the physical setting, but is evoked rather through the use of proper names, through references to popular customs and historical events, and through the elaboration of a particular social dynamic between the characters.

Gavilán explicitly states that Jesucristo Gómez was born in the city of México, a city with a specific historical referent in the world of action and a city which Gavilán implicitly parallels with the Jerusalem of Jesus of Nazareth.
Jesucristo Gómez grew up in San Martín el Grande, a village that exists in the State of México. San Martín el Grande is thus equated with the biblical Nazareth, and the State of México with Galilee. The integration of names of particular places in the historical context of México, such as the lookout El Cantil, La Villa, la Vicente Guerrero, and Parque Lira among others, situate Jesucristo Gómez in a particular context with a particular historical referent. Jesucristo Gómez earned his living as a construction worker (albañil) traveling throughout Iztapalapa, Tuxpan, Toluca, Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, and Xochimilco. Prefigurative knowledge of México identifies the places where Jesucristo Gómez wandered as poor areas on the periphery of the Federal District, very different from areas such as San Ángel or Polanco. This knowledge serves to deepen the sense of the kind environment in which the character Jesucristo Gómez is situated and serve to parallel the lifestyle of Jesucristo Gómez with that of Jesus of Nazareth.

References to popular customs, such as the response of a couple with ten years of childless union, highlights not only the value of children in a marriage in this particular context, but also indicates the avenue taken by a couple with little economic means to try to fulfill this ideal:

Zacarías e Isabel ofrecieron penitencias y mandas a todos los santos conocidos para que Dios les hiciera el milagro de mandarles un chamaco. Nada. Ni el Santo Niño de Atocha, ni el Cristo del Gran Poder, ni Judas Tadeo, ni Rita de Casia, ni la Virgen de Guadalupe, ni el Señor de Chalma, ni San Martín de Porres, ni la Virgen del Sagrado Corazón abogada de las causas difíciles y desesperadas dieron señales de escuchar las súplicas” (17).
In the text this approach, consistent with Gavilán's objective of discarding supernatural intervention as the cause of change, is ineffective. The rational response to “Isabel's" infertility comes from the medicine man (el hechicero), a man named Juan San Juan. After consulting the medicine man for a period of one month -- sufficient time to for ovulation and fertilization to occur -- the wife of Zacarías Bautista becomes pregnant and later gives birth to a son, who is baptized Juan Bautista.

The integration of references to historical events into the text also enriches the sense of the diegetic space. In celebrating the baptism of his son, Zacarías "cántó . . . corridos de la Revolución y de la guerra cristera. Cantó el Patria México febrero veintitrés, el de la muerte de Emiliano Zapata, el de Quirino Navarro y el del fusilamiento del general Felipe Ángeles" (26).

It is the elaboration of a particular social dynamic between the characters however, which specifically sets the text within a context that has an identifiable historical referent. For example, as mentioned above, María and José were in México at the time of the birth of their son to try to obtain the necessary official papers that would prevent the expropriation of their land. Gavilán narrates that:

José Gómez y María David tardaron todavía como semana y media en regresar a su pueblo. El albañil no pudo dejar arreglado el asunto de la casita y el terreno. Le sacaron sus buenos centavos, le hicieron promesas, pero no parecía seguro que fueran a conseguir siquiera la indemnización (35) . . . Se perdió la casa a orillas del camino viejo y también, por supuesto, el terrenito. De la indemnización sólo recibieron una tercera parte, y todavía muy menguada porque el abogadillo del comisariado ejidal inventó quien sabe cuántos gastos y repartos entre los funcionarios de la capital (38-39).
This social dynamic between the provincial couple and the bureaucrats of the capital reflects the difficulties faced by two individuals trying to protect the little material stability they have before the federal decision that a highway will go through their small property in San Martín de Grande.

Similar social dynamics are repeated throughout the text. The widow Corral however, refused to understand that, in order to establish ownership of her land, "era necesario esperar el juicio de la Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria, luego de realizadas las averiguaciones indispensables por parte de la Comisión de Regularización de la Tenencia de la Tierra a la luz de una nueva recolección de testimonios y levantamientos topográficos ordenados por las autoridades del centro" (210). Unlike María and José, the obstinate widow won her case, and "recibió la escritura de sus tierras en la misma ceremonia en que el presidente municipal inauguró la escuela agropecuaria y el nuevo kiosko de la plaza de armas" (211). It is through the elaboration of such social dynamics, along with the integration of references to historical events, popular customs, and place names in the Republic of México that Gavilán clearly locates his gospel in a diegetic space that has close referential ties to this particular contemporary historical context.

Despite the strong ties of the written text of El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán to an extratextual world, Jesucristo Gómez relates parables which, although they are directly related to the events being narrated by Gavilán, create a metadiegetic space that is ahistorical in nature. The stories of the sterile fig tree (174), of the seed and the yeast (178), and of the good
Samaritan (149), and of the seed sower (111) are stories told by Jesucristo Gómez to illustrate a point he wishes to make. The parables of the prodigal son (193) and of the grape farmer (251) are repeated or read by Jesucristo Gómez from the New Testament. Although these parables are told in direct relation to the event being narrated, they refer to the event in a philosophical, rather than in a historical manner. The parables included in El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán are thus second degree narratives within the framework of the life story of Jesucristo Gómez and Lucas Gavilán's recounting of it which serve to provoke reflection on the events of the diegetic present.  

The characters in a narrative serve as a point of departure for the discussion of the ideology implicit in the text, for they are the medium through which this ideology is transmitted (Relato 63). In El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán, the principal characters are identified by names that are semantically similar both to the biblical names of the characters whom they parallel in the Gospel of Luke and to Mexican names: José Gómez, Jesucristo Gómez, Pedro Simón, Mateo Leyva, and Santiago Zepeda, for example. Other characters have Mexican names which are not as easily identified with their biblical counterparts; however, as Gavilán precedes each anecdote with its biblical reference, these other characters may also be identified with their biblical parallels. The cacique (284) Horacio Mijares for example, is the Herod who washes his hands of any responsibility for the death of Juan Bautista at the

---

38 The treatment of the parables does not always create this metadiegetic space, as in the case of the parable of the mines (233), which is narrated by Gavilán as an event in the diegetic present.
hands of Mijares' agents (128); the judicial police who force confession parallel the council of chief priests, elders, and scribes (279); the _licenciado procurador_ in México (282, 286) fills the role of the biblical Pilate.

The main character of Gavilán's gospel, Jesucristo Gómez, was born December 20, 1942 in Mexico City. Paralleling the biblical voyage of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, José Gómez and María David are obliged to travel from San Martín el Grande in the State of México to Mexico City, despite María's advanced pregnancy. As was the case with Mary and Joseph, José and María's trip to the city was necessary for bureaucratic reasons. It is not that the latter couple are required to go to the male's home town to be registered, but that they must go to the capital in order to obtain papers from the federal government which would prevent their land and house in San Martín el Grande from being expropriated for a new highway. There are many _campesinos_ in the city also trying to make their way through the labyrinth of required official documents and thus, as did Mary and Joseph in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, José and María have difficulty finding lodging in Mexico City. They are finally given refuge in a _vecindad_ and their first son, Jesucristo Gómez, is born under the corrugated tin roof of the laundry area.

Jesucristo Gómez experiences an affinity for God from early childhood, a characteristic which is remarked on by the adults around him: "—A lo mejor se mete al seminario, siempre está hablando de Dios" (46), they comment. At the same time however, Jesucristo Gómez is grounded in the earthly realm, and does not understand the suffering he sees around him:
--¿Por qué hay pocos que tienen mucho y muchos que tienen poco? --preguntaba Jesucristo.
--¿Por qué hay gente pidiendo limosna en la entrada de la iglesia?
--¿Por qué hay cárcel en el pueblo?
--¿Por qué le damos dinero a la señora de la tienda?
--¿Por qué el señor cura es tan rico?
--¿Por qué doña Mercedes les pega a sus hijos? (39).

The result of these two childhood tendencies produces a man who seeks the kingdom of God in terms of life and social justice through action which brings marginalized sectors of society to the centre. In other words, the adult character of Jesucristo Gómez is that of a contemporary Mexican who lives the Gospel message in the earthly terms refigured from the biblical text by liberation theologians.

El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán thus utilizes the Lucan story of Jesus of Nazareth as the point of departure for creating an imaginative narrative of a man who speaks and acts in a manner which reflects that of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine. The character of the evangelio however, lives in a diegetic world which closely parallels that of contemporary México and he seeks to help the poor not through exhorting increased devotion to God in heaven, but through practical action within the earthly social sphere.

The diegetic time is ordered chronologically, creating a concordance between the story and the succession of events in the text. Flashbacks are not used, nor are events from a future time narrated before they occur in relation to the diegetic present. The text is simply a series of anecdotes, ordered sequentially from the birth to the death of Jesucristo Gómez, which serve in
their totality to project a fictional world which has a particular historical referent.

The related anecdotes are not brief summaries of the actions of the characters, yet the brevity and lack of direct continuity between each scene tends to accelerate the rhythm of the text as a whole. Although each particular event is narrated only once and is not continuous with the one preceding it — at least not until the events of the passion begin to unfold — there is also a continuity to the scenes joined together to form the text. This continuity is related to the similarity of the themes of the narrated events. This theme is focused on stories of individuals who are struggling to obtain minimal living conditions, of instances of difficult sociopolitical relations, and of Jesucristo Gómez' intervention in the limited number of specific cases narrated. The frequency of the similar kinds of stories related in the various anecdotes of individual cases serves to slowly bring to awareness the existence and complexity of the political situations which result in grossly inequitable standards of living.

Jesucristo Gómez does not participate in social justice movements that are organized to meet the needs of the organizers, rather than as a means of assisting others who have sought support in a particular struggle. He refuses, for example, to participate in an invasion of a new suburb being constructed on land for which small farmers had accepted compensation "hace mucho [tiempo]" (254). The particular intervention that the main character offers in response to the demands of fellow citizens is not identical in each situation, yet the kind of intervention is similar. Jesucristo Gómez' response to the
representatives of Juan Bautista provides an example of the kind of intervention he practices throughout the text:

Los enviados de Juan Bautista llegaron con Jesucristo Gómez y le dieron el recado tal cual [de si no quería encabezar el Frente Común de Bautista].

En lugar de responder directamente, Jesucristo les pidió que lo acompañaran durante unos días. Anduvieron con él poco más de una semana, semana y media tal vez. Lo oyeron hablar, lo vieron resolver problemas en éstas y en aquella ranchería, se dieron cuenta de su arrastre popular (103).

The narration of specific situations which are resolved though pacific means actualizes and brings to consciousness an approach to social injustice which is consistent with that advocated by liberation theologians. It is an approach that privileges dialogue and practical works over armed rebellion as a means of attaining a basic standard of living within communities that do not enjoy access to services such as potable water, paved roads, sewage, electricity and gas.

Gavilán states clearly that in drawing logical parallels between the time of Jesus Christ and present-day national realities that he wishes to "acrecentar las enseñanzas que hemos recibido y depurar nuestra fe" (12-13). Consistent with his intention, the perspective projected through the structure of El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán is a first level reference from which the reader reflects on the lessons received from the world which emerges from the story of a contemporary Mexican characterized as a modern-day Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus of Nazareth speaks of salvation for the humble, the meek and poor in the heavenly kingdom of God, a discourse which is perceived to be
inconsistent with the existing system of Jewish elites and Roman imperialism. Jesucristo Gómez speaks of un-Christian social relations, a discourse which exposes a bureaucracy that is largely self-serving and religious institutions whose doctrinal concerns take precedence over responding to pragmatic human needs. The inscribed and integrated Umwelts of Jesus of Nazareth and of Jesucristo Gómez project a metaphorical Welt which serves as a point of departure for reflection on effective approaches to addressing the issues of suffering confronted by both. A hermeneutical exploration of the relationship between Jesucristo Gómez’ discourse and his action reveals the trajectory that lead to the personal consequence that directly resulted from his approach to the diegetic world in which he acted.

As revealed in the formal analysis above, there is a consonant relationship between Jesucristo Gómez' discourse and his actions. He states that his interest is in helping the poor and he resists the temptations for personal gain that could derive from his stated interest. He lives simply, and helps others who ask for his assistance in resolving daily problems in their lives. Although Jesucristo Gómez has his selected disciples who follow him, as discussed above they are not his equals and they are unable to advise him. Although this aspect of the life of Jesucristo Gómez is consistent with the hypertext, it differs from the principles of liberation theology. Liberation theology places an emphasis on the creation of social movements that are rooted in popular communities. In this approach, a leader arises from within a movement, representing and consolidating its perspective and objectives. Thus, not only is
Jesucristo Gómez a self-appointed leader, but he does not engage in community-building and the maintenance of solidarity, important tasks from a liberation perspective in addressing the issues which are inhibiting abundant life for all of God’s children.

Jesucristo Gómez does not work within an organized structure through which he could influence systematic change. He is an itinerant labourer who addresses situations on an arbitrary ad hoc basis. His work has a local and isolated focus, which again is consistent with the hypertext. Liberation theology however, analyzes not only the local conditions of poverty, but also national and international factors which are contributing to the local situation.

Jesucristo Gómez does interact with the intellectuals, politicians, and landowners who do act on a somewhat more global level. As may be noted in the citations above, Jesucristo Gómez’ interaction with these official and powerful people tends to be directly adversarial and confrontational, rather than an opportunity for finding some measure of support. As a result of his independence, Jesucristo Gómez negotiates from a weak position; yet he does not bother to nuance his discourse when he speaks with these influential people. He is not politically astute, and due to this ignorance he does not take into consideration his disciples’ comments regarding the sentiments that certain people have towards him. It is not until he is directly confronted with the reality of his death that Jesucristo Gómez acknowledges the danger of articulating and acting on a discourse that runs counter to the interests of official and powerful people. And Jesucristo Gómez neither has a group of people surrounding him
with the capacity to protect him, nor a community in which he inspires solidarity. These factors render Jesucristo Gómez' work ineffective in the building of an infrastructure which, based on socially just principles, would provide better living conditions for a greater number of people. Instead, like an inconsequential mosquito, Jesucristo Gómez is squashed by those who wish to maintain the status quo.

After being severely beaten and tortured by the judicial police in México, Jesucristo Gómez is transported to Toluca, where he is again beaten by the judicial police. In the interest of removing a political prisoner from the judiciary system in the state of México, the cacique Horacio Mijares arranges for a very weak Jesucristo Gómez to be transported back to México again. Two other prisoners, also being transported to México, comment on the dying third prisoner sitting with them on the floor of the van:

--¿Y qué vendía?
--No, no vendía nada. Hablaba de justicia y de quién sabe cuántas chingaderas. Se soltaba duro contra las autoridades, ¿no es cierto? . . . Pero lo hubieras visto cómo hablaba de recio y de encabronado. Y la gente, pendeja como siempre, se quedaba con la boca abierta nomás oyéndolo [. . .]
--Pero ya viste para qué chingaos te sirvió tanto discurso.
[. . .]
--Le sirvió para una pura madre, cómo no voy a saber. ¿No lo estoy viendo? A poco no, Jesucristo: hablabas de salvar a los jodidos y ni siquiera tú te pudiste salvar.
[. . .]
. . . ya estoy en las últimas. --Hablaba como si fuera un fuelle, jalando aire. --¿Y sabes qué me pesa? Que tu amigo tiene razón: fracasé.
[. . .]
--Fracasé --repitió Jesucristo en el momento en que un borbotón de sangre escapó violentamente de su boca. Se enderezó sobre las rodillas desesperado, ahogándose. Con las
manos crispadas se sujetó el cuello. Se tensaron sus músculos. Se puso tieso. —¡Dios mío ayúdame! —gritó por última vez Jesucristo, y cayó de canto como un chivo degollado (291).

*Oficio de tinieblas* is set in the diocese of Ciudad Real, Chiapas. This diocese includes the Chamula community of Tzajal-hemel and San José Chiuptic (the finca of Leonardo Cifuentes), and it is governed at the State level by Tuxtla. The plot is woven together by an omniscient third-person narrator who creates the story by alternately relating the present actions of four basic groups of characters: Chamula Indians Catalina, Pedro and Marcela, coletos Leonardo, Isabel, Idolina and Julia, Catholic monks Alfonso and Manuel, and federal functionaries Fernando and César. In addition to relating the actions of the diegetic present, the narrator also digresses from the main story line to recount stories from the past. These flashbacks serve to give insight into the motivations behind the current actions of the characters. The weaving together of past and present, of landowner, Indian, functionary and priest characters creates a complex polyphonic perspective of the events that lead up to the implementation of the *Ordanzas militares* that serve to re-establish peace in the diocese of Ciudad Real. Sommers reflects on the interdependence of the various threads that compose the fabric of the diocese, commenting that, “las dos líneas generales [de San Juan Chamula y de Ciudad Real] se entrecruzan

---

40 Castellanos comments that “el oficio de tinieblas se reza, por la liturgia católica, en el viernes santo. Millán adds that “[Oficio de tinieblas] se refiere a uno de los ejercicios de la Semana Santa, que contiene pasajes de las *Lamentaciones* de Jeremías; es anterior a las celebraciones del Viernes Santo, y consiste en apagar gradualmente las velas que están en el altar, cuyo número varía entre doce, quince y veinticuatro, y de las cuales sólo debe quedar prendida una. Se trata de un oficio fúnebre que sugiere el desconcierto y la oscuridad en que quedó el mundo después del prendimiento de Jesucristo y de su crucifixión; la convulsión de la naturaleza, el dolor de los discípulos y la ceguera [del pueblo y sus oficiales]. La luz renace con la resurrección y el sacrificio propicia la vida eterna” (292).
y se contaminan; las relaciones sociales de un mundo tienen siempre que ver con el otro: hay un ir y venir constante entre los dos lugares centrales y un proceso de entreveramiento decisivo entre los dos grupos" ("Oficio" 15).

The novel Oficio de tinieblas is based on historical events of the Reform period which preceded the Guerra de Castas (1869-1871) in Chiapas. Villarreal notes that “la Guerra de Castas . . . comenzó por ser una escapatoria de la opresión, fundada en motivos religiosos, con un contenido social más acorde con las normas de vida de los indios que con las que los curas les enseñaban” (67). Castellanos comments (Obras 359) the historical events themselves are somewhat unclear: Millán documents the creation of a clay idol by a Chamula couple, Pedro Díaz Cuscat and Agustina Gómez Checheb, who claimed that the woman had borne the idol and Villarreal cites anthropologist Calixta Guiteras Holmes’ version that a female sheepherder found three idols. Despite such incongruencies, the historical account of the events in general is that the local priest removed the idol, considering it heresy; but another idol appeared in its place. The movement grew, as did resentment against the ladinos. The local priest and his assistant were killed when trying to destroy the idol. Cuscat was jailed and then released. The movement culminated in the crucifixion of Domingo Gómez Checheb, an eighteen-year-old Chamula boy in Tzajal-hemel in 1867. A white person, Ignacio Fernández Galindo, led the indians in the assassination of ladinos and in the destruction of ladino property. The

---

41 1867 is the date that Castellanos cites for this crucifixion (“Oficio” 359). Millán cites 1868 (293) and Lavou 1869 (328).
government intervened; the sublevation was violently quelled, and Fernández was killed.

Castellanos notes that “a medida que avanzaba, me di cuenta que la lógica histórica es absolutamente distinta de la lógica literaria. Por más que quise, no pude ser fiel a la Historia . . . trasladé de tiempo [el suceso real], a un tiempo que conocía mejor, la época de Cárdenas [1934-1940]” (359). As may be seen from the synopsis of particular historical events of the Reform period, and from references in the text itself to the agrarian programs of the Cárdenas era, Oficio de tinieblas is clearly based on two sets of historical events in the world of action. These events are the basic strings through which the threads of the design of the story are woven. This design is the inscription of the dynamic of the interrelationship between the inhabitants of the area of San Cristobal, Chiapas – a dynamic which had not changed substantially in the thirteen years between the historical events to which the novel refers. As Sommers comments, “al trasponer a la era de Cárdenas un acontecimiento histórico de hace sesenta y cinco años, lo que está haciendo es dotar la estructura de su novela de una disposición irónica hacia, precisamente, esa misma substancia histórica que constituye la materia prima de su mundo novelístico” (“Forma” 89). Oficio de tinieblas therefore, is an aesthetic creation which has taken the historical events as its point du départ. The novel is not historical in the didactic sense, yet the verisimilitude with which the characters interact in the diegetic space reflects the world of action from which the text emerged.
Miller observes that, "casi toda la lucha en Oficio de tinieblas se libra en un plano religioso-cultural" (136). This essay will reflect on the religious discourse of the four groups of characters identified above, and on the dialectic relationship between this discourse and the actions of the characters. Castellanos comments that, "de acuerdo con la manera de . . . concebir el mundo, a los chamulas les era imposible conquistar la ciudad enemiga" (Obras 359). Inherent in the religious discourse of the Chamulas are indications of the way that they conceptualize the world. The landowners, the representatives of the Church, and the representatives of the government also reflect their conceptualization of the world in their religious discourse. The distinct conceptualizations of the world inherent in the religious discourse of the Chamulas, the landowners, the Church and the government functionaries are closely related to the differing actions of the characters in the historical context novelized by Castellanos. Therefore, as it is consistent with their way of conceiving the world that it was impossible for the indigenous to conquer the enemy city, so it is also consistent with their way of conceiving the world that was possible for the landowners to maintain their position, that it was impossible for the representatives of the Church to reconcile landowners and

---

42 Miller discusses Oficio de tinieblas in terms of a Gramscian ideological hegemony, "la penetración a través de la sociedad civil de todo un sistema de valores, instituciones, creencias, relaciones sociales y tradiciones culturales. En medida que ese fenómeno 'superestructural' funciona a nivel de la masa con el fin de perpetuar el orden prevalente, es preciso que la lucha por la liberación se esfuercie por crear una visión contrahegemónica del mundo" (132). She notes that Gramsci posits that "en este proceso [de cambio social] la transformación de la conciencia es parte inseparable del cambio estructural" (132). Thus Miller proposes "cualquier grupo social que quiera desafiar esta hegemonía tiene que establecer su autoridad en la esfera cultural, antes que en el dominio económico, político y militar" (136) and she argues that this is Catalina’s function in Oficio de tinieblas.
indigenous in the name of God, and that it was impossible for the representatives of the government to enforce federal law. The actuality of the situation in the diocese of Ciudad Real persists for, implicit in each distinct discourse, is an understanding of the world which serves in part to render its adherents unconscious of the whole fabric, obscuring the role of each individual in the intricate design of interrelationships which creates their community. Thus, the actions of each different group, rooted in their distinct conceptualizations of the world -- conceptualizations that are an intrinsic part of their religious discourse -- result in the preservation of the status quo in the diocese of Ciudad Real.

**Role of religious discourse in the diegetic world of Oficio de tinieblas and its relationship to the actions of the characters: the Indians**

The indigenous characters in Oficio de tinieblas “viven su miseria como si fuera un castigo de los dioses”, observes Lavou (325). The Chamula of the diocese of Ciudad Real understand the miserable conditions in which they live as conditions which are imposed on them by extrahuman forces as punishment for their behaviour. Following this logic, the way to ameliorate living conditions is not to explore the possibilities for change within the given sociopolitical human environment, but to appease the gods in order that they will lighten their punishments, that they will deign to act on behalf of the Chamula and improve their situation for them. “¿Acaso”, says Catalina to an indeterminate audience, “ignorabas que siempre que Dios mira con malevolencia al mundo y quiere
destruirlo (porque lo irritan nuestros pecados, porque se avergüenza de nuestra miseria), los hombres lo aplacan con estos regalos?” (209).

The question then is *which* gods to placate with gifts. Xaw, the sacristan of San Juan, follows worshippers from San Juan to Tzajal-hemel. What he sees there causes him to reflect “que vengan a adorar a esas imágenes que son las de sus protectores, las de los únicos santos vivientes. Los santos de verdad viven en la iglesia de Chamula. Esos sí pueden apartar de nosotros el daño de los brujos, pueden ayudar a que la milpa crezca y los rebaños abunden” (220).

Evidently there is some tension within the indigenous community, for some people wish to direct their supplications to the gods in the cave, while others wish to honour the gods in the Catholic church. It appears that it is not possible for the gods to co-exist, for each group of worshippers desires that the whole community worship *their* gods. During the preparations for Good Friday for example, “de pronto [Catalina] poseyó la certidumbre de que los ídolos de Tzajal-hemel acababan de ganar una batalla a los santos de Chamula” (313).

Yet the gods in the Catholic church remain dominant, for they are woven into the governing structure of the community. After hearing Fernando’s warning regarding the state of emergency in Ciudad Real, the *principales* met to debate which gods to placate in order to obtain support:

- --Nuestro patrón es San Juan.
- --San Juan pastorea rebaños. No tiene espada.
- --Santiago es jinete.
- --Cura los caballos cuando pisan la hierba mala. No quiere pelear.
- --¿La Dolorosa?
Este proposición no tiene respuesta. La Dolorosa vagaba por la tiniebla de las noches, lamentándose de sus hijos muertos. Triste, loca, madre, ¿cómo los podía defender? (308-9).

The mayordomos, principales, the sacristan, all of these official religio-political positions can only be filled by a male. It is these men who interpret the will of the gods; and it is these men who determine whom to propiciate for the well-being of the community, for it is understood that “Dios establece su alianza entre libaciones sagradas, entre luces mortecinas, entre salmodias agradables; eso lo saben quienes pactan con él, los que escuchan sus mandatos y sirven de guía al pueblo” (209). But the woman Catalina also knew how to “mirar de frente el misterio” (13) and how to to “apaciguar estas voluntades cuando eran adversas, a excitarlas cuando eran propicias, a trastocar sus signos” (13). Catalina, the woman whose womb remained “cerrado como una nuez” (13), despite consulting many curanderos and brujos to identify her sin and to determine how to appease the gods to lift their punishment of sterility, “quedó confinada en un mundo sombrío, regido por voluntades arbitrarias” (13). Catalina, “sorda para las relaciones del mundo, aprende a escuchar las voces de sus dioses ancestrales” (Millán 294). Thus Catalina, as the mayordomos and principales, was in a position to guide the villagers, although the official positions remained unavailable to her. Her abilities to interpret the will of the gods do not open for her the possibility of accepting the public cargo of mayordomo or principal within her community, but rather, due to her gender, put her in the dubious position of witch.
Catalina assumes this role, but she does not assume it with the vision of freeing the community from the misery in which they live. Catalina was childless: "si tú fueras madre de ese niño ¿recibirías el trato que recibes? El desvío del hombre, su esquez, son castigo de tu esterilidad" (193-4). “Estoy sola. Es preciso entenderlo bien. Sola” (192). Following the creation of the clay gods, the narrator observes that, “otra vez, entre su pueblo y ella, no había desgarradura. Catalina lo volvía a tomar de la mano, como a un niño, para conducirlo” (250). Catalina assumed religious leadership in Tzajal-hemel as it gave her a role, as a childless woman, within San Juan Chamula. But the assumption of this role arose from a personal need for recognition and fulfilment, not from a desire to help her community.

Catalina’s role as witch puts her in a position antagonistic to the dominant Christianity. In her mythical recreation of the events of San Juan Chamula, Teresa tells Idolina that “los jueces pidieron a la ilol razón de sus poderes y ella dijo que los había recibido no del Espíritu Santo sino de San Jerónimo el del tigre en las entrañas, patrón secreto de los brujos” (367). Catalina confirms this when Pedro is talking to other men about the situation of the Indians and she is alone, before she returns to the cave that she discovered as a child, “no llevo . . . el perro, el tigre de San Roque, protector de los brujos . . . no se puede avanzar” (191). The rupture between witches and Christianity is also evident when Xaw explains that “quienes se pudieran perdonarse, eran los brujos” (118). And Catalina, like all witches, “conservaba siempre en su mano izquierda la amenaza, la posibilidad de hacer daño” (15). This possibility of doing harm is
what makes the witch an ambiguous figure not always respected by the community: “ese instante en que la tribu entera enarbolaba el pale, el machete, el luk, para acabar con el perro rabioso. O con el brujo” (322).

Catalina’s leadership however, did offer an alternative to improving the living conditions in San Juan for it presented new — and potentially more powerful gods — to propiciate. It was an alternative to the priest who, “ante los ojos de los indios Manuel Mandujano era la materialización del dios caxlán . . . Podía temérsele, sí, reverenciársele. Pero quererlo, entregarse a él, jamás” (216). And it was an alternative to La Madre Protectora, who was of “oído duro, pecho indiferente, mano cerrada” (10) with respect to the life of the indigenous (but in whom Xaw and the officials of San Juan nevertheless placed their allegiance). Thus the worshipers of the cave gods were jubilant: “¡Por fin! ¡Por fin! Ha terminado ya el plazo del silencio, de la inercia, de la sumisión. ¡Vamos a renacer, igual que nuestros dioses! ¡Vamos a movernos para sentimos vivos! ¡Vamos a hablarnos, tú y yo, para confirmar nuestra realidad, nuestra presencial!” (212). And “los ancianos, con los ojos nublados de vejez, agradecian haber vivido lo suficiente para ver el fin de su esperanza” (209). Later, after this initial jubilation had been frustrated by padre Mandujano, but when it yet sought expression, Lavou observes that “[el enemigo común que todos quieren destrozar] no es sino el ladino en tanto fuerza de opresión” (Lavou 327).

From within the community however, the force of oppression, of dark and dirty sparsely furnished adobe dwellings, of illiteracy, of hunger, of sickness, of
severely limited economic possibilities, is inherent in the conceptualization of evil. Evil is present, tangible: Lorenzo is handicapped because "lo arrastró el gran pukuj y se ha olvidado de todo" (192). Evil is to be feared: when Marcela goes into labour during an eclipse, Catalina "con cortezas de árboles había hecho una máscara para defenderla de los ojos del gran pukuj que ahora andaba suelto" (48). Evil is always lurking, it can be evoked by a jealous neighbour to destroy a family. Evil is powerful and is not to be regarded lightly. After witnessing the worshippers of the stone idols in the cave, Xaw reflects, "es el diablo . . . el pukuj se ha apoderado de ellos" (221).

It is Pedro, within the indigenous community, who offers a secular alternative to ameliorating the living conditions in San Juan. After enganchándose at the finca "La Constancia" and taking advantage of the school there, Pedro can no longer only understand the situation of the Indians in overtly religious terms. Pedro however, alone in his understanding and perspective which is drawn from his experience, receives little support from his compadres:

—Es una vida trabajosa.
—Es.
A Winiktón le rebelaba este fatalismo.
—Podría ser de otro modo.
Ninguno escuchó. No tenían curiosidad. No les interesaba contradecirlo (309).

By chapter six in the novel, "Pedro y Catalina están prácticamente incomunicados, uno se dedica a las actividades políticas, y la segunda a las religiosas" (Villarreal 74). For her part, Catalina "no solía manifestar su
desaprobación a la conducta de Pedro por medios directos. Y esta vez acudió a su fama de ilol para pregonar que, auxiliada por su doble vista, había advertido que la estancia de los dos caxlanes en Chamula no tenía más fin ni propósito que dañar a la gente de la tribu" (189). In Catalina's conservative thought, shared by many of her compatriots, the hope for a better life lay not in political conscientization but rather in the good will of the gods to intervene on behalf of the Chamula.

Xaw is not indifferent to the politicization of his people and shares Catalina's disapproval of it. He conceptualizes the government functionaries as evil, reflecting that "estos extranjeros [Fernando and César] eran pukujes, diablos que habían venido para perderlos y condenarlos" (183). However, although Xaw shares Catalina's perspective, their competition for the spiritual leadership of the village inhibits any possibility of communication that might lead to an alliance between them.

Pedro, with his experience on the finca and his experience in San Juan, is torn between two different conceptualizations of the world. Watching the cult growing around his wife, he feels the power of the supranatural: "Pedro fue, poco a poco, dejándose ganar por un supersticioso respeto, por un obscuro terror" (213). But when he hears the news that the gods had returned to the cave for the second time he reflects that, "nosotros no sabemos adorarlos, no podemos defenderlos. Vienen únicamente a colocarnos ante al cólera del caxlán, vienen a azuzar contra nosotros a nuestros enemigos. Pero entre el hombre y el dios, pensaba Pedro, la mujer no es más que un instrumento sin
conciencia. Por eso Catalina se abandonaba a la fascinación del milagro, sin ver el abismo que se abriría más allá” (249). But, despite these thoughts, Pedro whispers in his wife’s ear as she sleeps, “La tierra Catalina. Díles que nos devuelvan la tierra” (249), hoping that “esa palabra llegase a ser depositada en el altar, para que la recogieran los ídolos” (249).

It is Pedro who tells Fernando that, “es la fiesta de la Semana Santa ajwalil. Si no la celebramos no hay agua para las siembras” (299). The principales also “temían que si el rito de la Semana Santa no se seguía con exactitud las potencias que hasta ahora los habían protegido se les tomaran hostiles” (299). Thus, convinced of the necessity of the Holy Week celebrations to propiciate powerful extraterrestrial forces, when Fernando gathers the people of San Juan together on the eve of Holy Week to warn them of the state of emergency invoked in Ciudad Real, the principales are skeptical: “¿Dónde está la fuerza? ¿En las armas, en los cañones? No, dentro de este cuerpo, que ha bebido el agua de los manantiales sagrados. En esta cabeza donde penetran las emanaciones del pom. En estas manos que sostienen las andas de los santos, que riegan la juncia de las festividades, que ensarten las guirnaldas de flores. ¿Qué puede, contra estos hombres invulnerables, el caxtlán blasfemador, descuidado de sus deberes religiosos? ¿Qué pueden sus balas de plomo contra esta carne a la que ha comunicado sus atributos lo divino?” (305).

The need of the Indian community to propiciate external forces in order to obtain the material things they need on earth is concretized through the
adaptation ladino religiosity. This syncretism is rooted in the imposition of Christianity by the Spanish in the sixteenth century and it is supported by Chamulas who perceive that the well-being of the ladinos derives from the strength of their god:

Los ídolos de la cueva todavía no daban signos de su poder. No se habían medido ni con los santos de Chamula; menos aún con el dios de los caaxanes.

—Ellos lo clavaron en una cruz y lo mataron y bebieron su sangre. Desde entonces nadie los puede vencer (309).

Villarreal comments that, "desde la primera página de la novela Rosario Castellanos nos va adentrando en lo que resume la clave de las desigualdades: el sincretismo religioso" (65). Commentators propose that the crucifixion of Domingo is an example of the syncretism of the ancient American religious practice of human sacrifice with the European image of the crucified Christ. But Nance observes that "la Iglesia Católica aquí es el modelo para la práctica del sacrificio humano" (349). "La crucifixión de Cristo se nos presenta como la absoluta verdad, como el mito del cual parte el año uno de 'la historia', y con el cual el Occidente se ha abierto espacios a través de la conquista y el colonialismo", adds Villarreal (76). It is through this sacrifice that the gods were sufficiently propiciated to redeem the Europeans and to grant power to them. Thus the crucifixion of Christ "refuerza la idea del sacrificio humano como..."

---

43 Millán's use of language in her description of indigenous religiosity reveals her prejudices: "bien se sabe que, entre los pueblos indígenas, vagas nociones de la cultura occidental, superpuestas a restos de culturas prehispánicas, dieron un producto distorsionado en el que las contradicciones y las aberraciones se encuentran . . . Es en el aspecto religioso donde los intentos civilizadores dieron frutos más impuros . . . nociones que no se apegan a nuestra lógica. Y es natural: una comprensible distancia se abrió desde siempre entre blancos e indios a causa de la religión idolátrica de éstos . . . Mutilados quedaron en su expresión, en sus creencias, en su vida social" (291-2, emphasis mine).
práctica común entre el bando que tanto capital ideológico obtuvo al condenar el ritual azteca" (Nance 348-9). However, as "los hegemónicos habían citado a Cristo como origen de su autoridad . . . [entonces la crucifixión de Domingo] se trata de un esfuerzo por conquistar el acceso a la fuente de la victorias católicas" (Nance 348). Thus, "mediante esa crucifixión, los indios quieren apropiarse de lo que representa la fuerza, el fundamento espiritual del grupo dominante: la figura del Cristo" (Lavou 327). Lavou comments that:

[La crucifixión de Domingo] subraya . . . la importancia que tiene la Iglesia en tanto aparato ideológico . . . Es la instancia de poder que recuerda si cesar a los indios que el arbitrario social de que son víctimas no está ligado a unas causas estructurales sino que proviene de la Causaldad transcendente. En otros términos, la Iglesia (en su representación de la dinámica social) oculta los verdaderos motivos de explotación de los indios y por lo mismo desempeña, directamente o no, un papel de legitimación del orden social establecido. Desde estas consideraciones, resulta vital para los indios dotarse también de un símbolo para contraponerlo al símbolo máximo de la Iglesia" (328).

Consistent with Catholic doctrine, Catalina tells the people gathered before the Cross, "quizás alguno de nuestros antepasados pecó y por eso nos fue exigido ese tributo" (324). Thus, "el Dios único y verdadero; en este caso, producto de la violación de un blanco a una india . . . conducido a redimir, a través de su muerte, los pecados de los otros" (Villarreal 75). And, although Catalina is unconscious of the factors affecting the socioeconomic situation in San Juan, Domingo must be conscious in order to save his people: "¿Se ha rendido tan pronto y tan sin resistencia? Su martirio no saciará el hambre de los dioses. ¡Su muerte no va a bastar para redimir a la tribu!" (322).
As Domingo hangs dead on the Good Friday Cross, in a parody of the Easter mass, Catalina proclaims: “ahora nosotros también tenemos un Cristo. No ha nacido en vano ni ha agonizado ni ha muerto en vano. Su nacimiento, su agonía y su muerte sirven para nivelar al tzotzil, al chamula, al indio, con el ladino . . . sobre nuestras cabezas ha caído la sangre del bautismo. Y los que son bautizados con sangre, y no con agua, está dicho que no morirán . . . está dicho que ninguno de nosotros morirá” (324-5).

Catalina’s audience accept her words in literal terms and, caught in the irrational impact of witnessing such an act as the crucifixion of a child, there follows a series of disorganized petty incursions on ladino properties in areas surrounding Ciudad Real. The ladinos respond with military action which destroys and completely disintegrates the entire Chamula community. Thus, consistent with their way of conceiving the world in terms of powerful external forces in need of propitiation, it was impossible for the indigenous to conquer the enemy city.
The landowners

All commentaries of Oficio de tinieblas cited in this essay accept a simple dichotomy between indigenous and “ladino”. These commentaries also propose that the omniscient narrator permits the plot to unfold through the consciousness of characters on both sides of this dichotomy. This reading acknowledges both this dualism and the equidistance of the narrator’s psychological penetration into it, but posits that greater heterogeneity is portrayed in the mestizo group. Although there is some differentiation between the ideologies of Xaw, Catalina, and Pedro, such differentiation is more disparate between Leonardo, Alfonso, and Fernando. Thus, rather than considering the mestizos in the text as a single group, the religious discourse of the landowners, the representatives of the Church, and the representatives of the federal government will each be considered separately.

However, before exploring the relationship between the religious discourse of the mestizos and their actions, another dichotomy posited by commentators must be brought to attention. It is a dichotomy between history and myth, a dualism which parallels that of indigenous-“ladino” division. Villarreal states that in Oficio de tinieblas, “existen dos tiempos: el tiempo histórico y el tiempo mítico” (69). Sommers elaborates on Villarreal’s statement, proposing that, “[una fuente de contradicción ideológica] proviene de la antítesis irreconciliable entre la historia -- el cuadro que enmarca los acontecimientos de la sociedad ladina — y el aura mítica que impregna la consciencia y la visión del mundo de los tzotziles” (“Oficio” 16). Sequential,
progressive historical time is that of the mestizos and enclosed, static mythical time is that of the indigenous (see also Millán and Sommers “Forma”). However, as will be discussed below, one of the central aspects of European ethnocentric religious discourse is not only that history began in year 1 with the death of the carpenter, but also that this time is renewed each year on Easter Sunday: the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Thus, although the mythic -- whether Indian or European -- has its distinct forms, it is nevertheless mythical. For the mestizos of the diocese of Ciudad Real, the mythical inherent in religious discourse sometimes functions as a shield which serves to avert the possibility of becoming conscious of certain aspects of their community. Occasionally it functions consciously to create or support a particular state of affairs. And it always serves to validate the actions of the characters.

The mestizo landowners have a conflict of interest with the Indians for control of resources, particularly the resource of land. As Lavou observes, “ese conflicto de intereses . . . se desenvuelve en el terreno simbólico, religioso o espiritual” (328). This is because “los coletos terratenientes esgrimen todo un conjunto de valores ideológicos para legitimar su propio poder y por lo tanto justificar la explotación de los indios” (Lavou 321). Consequently, as will be shown, implicit in the religious discourse of the landowners is a reflection of the way in which they perceive the world and the way in which it is ordered by an external force.
A mother says to her child, "haz una cruz sobre tu boca y cállate" (275); the citizens of Ciudad Real agree that to "descubrirse ante la iglesia de Caridad... es un signo de respeto" (177); "Señor mio Jesucristo, Dios y hombre verdadero" (199) is one of the hypnotic phrases Julia repeats to herself in order not to think, to not be conscious. (339). As Miller comments, "la Iglesia Católica, para los ladinos, ha degenerado prácticamente en una convención más de la clase media" (136-7).

In Ciudad Real God lacks substance, He is not urgently needed by the Ciudad Realenses. Although the citizens of Ciudad Real make comments such as, "[César] vendió su alma al demonio" to identify César with a force not in their favour (as Xaw also does with regard to César and to Fernando), the Ciudad Realenses do not have an intense fear of a supernatural evil to which God is the protective counterpart. Julia comments blithely to Leonardo: "te estoy adivinando el porvenir. Tengo algo de bruja ¿sabes?" (339). Julia uses the term "bruja" lightly, it has no adverse implications for her. Young single girls invoke the supernatural to warn their suitors to keep their distance: "Dentente, enemigo! El corazón de Jesús está conmigo!" (287), for it is from the boys which comes the most urgent need for protection. In Oficio de tinieblas religious metaphors are not used by the coletos to conceptualize suprahuman intervention in the terrestrial world, but are rather part of an acceptable social etiquette -- until there is a crisis. Confronted with the immanent barbaric Indian subleavage, citizens of Ciudad Real turned to the Augustinian notion of original sin and the stories of the medieval councils as a means of invoking God to
come to their aid. Women “vagaban por las calles como locas, confesando a gritos sus pecados, arrodillándose ante cualquier transeúnte para pedirle perdón. Porque había que limpiar de sus pecados a Ciudad Real y ellas lo lograrían con la penitencia” (335), and “los transeúntes se arrodillaron en plena calle y, con las manos unidas, recitaron en voz alta los versículos de la Anunciación” (273).

The Bishop prohibits the faithful from reading novels (73). Although Alfonso’s reason for this is not given, this prohibition serves to inhibit the faithful from gaining knowledge of a world outside of Ciudad Real and to limit their reflection on their own community. The Bishop also propagates the idea that acceptance of an unhappy situation is more worthy of a good Christian than actively seeking to change it: “el propio Señor Obispo hizo a Isabel una visita especial para recomendarle paciencia, esa virtud que, entre todas las cristianas, es la única equiparable a la caridad” (200). The limited external stimuli, the paternalism of charity, and the advocacy of patience all serve to render well-to-do Ciudad Realenses complacently accepting of the socioeconomic situation in their diocese.

The narrator observes that Alfonso “estaba . . . acostumbrado a absolver sin llegar siquiera a representarse con claridad los pecados que escuchaba” (267) and that priests advise women in the confessionary: “cuando la tentación te asalte encomiéndate a la Santísima Virgen . . . Vete en paz” (286). These observations attest to the vacuity and the lack of consciousness in upper-level Church personnel of their own actions, and to the way that this
unconsciousness is sanctified by lower-level personnel to the faithful. The Catholicism received by the mestizos in Ciudad Real does not promote conscientization, thus permitting that “vuelven a triunfar las tinieblas en las que se han preocupado por mantenerlos, para su provecho, los únicos hombres verdaderamente fuertes: los finqueros” (Millán 297).

Leonardo Cifuentes, the man who killed the only son of the family who adopted him and gave him a respectable name (335), and then married this only son’s land-owning wife, is the “destacado representante de los intereses de los terratenientes de Ciudad Real” (Lavou 320). As other mestizos in Ciudad Real, Leonardo uses conventional religious metaphor in his speech: “gracias a Dios, podemos subsanarla [el cuarto para las visitas]” (149); “entonces me hice el ofendido y los amenacé con dejarlos que se averiguaran como Dios les diera a entender” (341). But Leonardo goes beyond the use of a religious discourse which identifies him with his community to make astute use of it in order to meet his personal goal of entering into politics.

As Villarreal notes, “los hacendados se legitiman en la fuerza. Su estrategia es la gran alianza con el clero y la burocracia estatal” (75). The landowners recognize that “desde el pulpite cualquiera habla bien. El día en que alguno de ellos pegue un grito, el pueblo entero de Ciudad Real se abalanza a destrozar a los chamulas” (278). This is because, despite the vacuity of social etiquette, the Church controls the metaphors that serve both to maintain the majority of Ciudad Realenses unconscious of the whole of the fabric of their diocese and to legitimate the power of the landowners. As will be
discussed below, the Bishop of Chiapas exonerates himself from any responsibility for the political role of the Church in the diocese of Ciudad Real. The landowners are astute in assessing the position of others with respect to maintaining the peace and stability of Ciudad Real on the existing conditions. The shrewd Leonardo recognizes the Bishop's lack of responsibility, commenting to other finqueros, “vamos a dejar por la paz a don Alfonso ya que de momento, y gracias a Dios, no nos es indispensable” (275).

As Oficio de tinieblas progresses, a design begins to emerge from threads of the plot, a design which increasingly focuses on the association of the growing numbers of Indians in the cave at Tzajal-hemel. The landowners in the diocese of Ciudad Real are not concerned about idolatry or any challenge to their God, for they are confident in their source of supernatural support. The lawyer Virgilio Tovar expresses this confidence in observing that, “[los indígenas] . . . recurren a sus supersticiones, a sus brujerías. Como creen que sus ídolos los protegen se lanzan a matar y a destruir. ¡Se olvidan de que nuestro Dios es más fuerte y más poderoso que los de ellos!” (242). Virgilio acknowledges, through his religious discourse, the strength of the landowners. But he is also part of the pacto de caballeros in which all of the respectable lawyers of Ciudad Real agreed not to take the defense of the jailed Indian women. In addition, the landowners know how to contact the civil authorities, they are received by the clergy, and they have access to lawyers. But Virgilio attributes this power to his God, thereby sanctifying his power and the power of his land-owning allies.
However, as religious freedom is guaranteed under the Mexican constitution, it is clear that acknowledging the association of Indians for religious purposes cannot provide any justification for repressive action, which is what Leonardo seeks. In court, the prosecutor of the Indians who associate in the cave refers to the ostensive Church-State division, but reveals the presence of mestizo faith: "el abogado que sostenía los cargos contra las detenidas tuvo presente que la libertad de cultos era una garantía salvaguardada por la Constitución y, aunque de ninguna manera aprobara su ejercicio (era un católico que tomaba la intransigencia como baluarte de la fe), prefirió dar al asunto otro cariz tan eficaz como el que abandonaba, para predisponer el ánimo de los oyentes contra las inculpadas: el cariz político" (233). Thus, through the astute use of rational argument, the conflicting religious aspects of the drama and the insight that they offer into the events unfolding in the diocese of Ciudad Real are intentionally subverted.

Clearly, the citizens of Ciudad Real have been agitated with the threat of a violent sublevation and they are concerned, in the immediate present, about their personal safety and about the safety of their material possessions. Less consciously for most, and in the longer term, they are concerned about maintaining the status quo, of continuing to control the subjected group on which they depend for affordable domestic and agricultural labour. Thus, consistent with their way of conceiving the world, reflected in the vacuous use of religious discourse by the majority of Ciudad Realenses and the astute use of it by a few, it was possible for the landowners to maintain their position.
The Church

Nance comments that, "el catolicismo sirvió [en la novela y en la sociedad que la produjo] a los propósitos de control social y manipulación de la clase gobernante; incluso reforzó el poder de los dominantes" (347). Certainly, firmly rooted in Biblical authority, the Church exercises sociopolitical influence within the diocese of Ciudad Real. Padre Balcázar actively demonstrates the interdependent relationship between the Church and the dominant class in Ciudad Real: "el padre Balcázar se retiró del despacho [del doctor Palacios] mascullando anatemas contra la cobardía de los mundanos y citando aquel texto evangélico que aconseja a los escandalosos colgarse una piedra de molino al cuello" (162). It is when padre Balcázar speaks with doctor Palacios, the director of the Instituto Superior de Chiapas, on behalf of mestizos concerned about their children receiving a communist education that "a partir de ese instante el doctor Palacios tuvo la certeza de que el caso de Fernando Ulloa estaba perdido" (162). And, although the director of the Instituto Superior was not concerned about Fernando's teaching (quite the opposite), Fernando lost his position.

Ciudad Real is the seat of religious power not only for the diocese of Ciudad Real, but also for the state of Chiapas. It is there that are located the Cabildo Eclesiástico, the Curia, and the Obispado (Miller 133). The Bishop of Chiapas, Alfonso Cañaver, does not acknowledge that the Church reinforces the power of the dominant group for, as he comments to Manuel: "sí, hacen
genuflexiones pero ya no pagan los diezmos. No establezcasm nunca alianza con los ricos, Manuel. Siempre exigen más de lo que dan. En cambio los pobres . . . ¡Qué consoladora es aquella promesa de Evangelio: “siempre habrá pobres entre vosotros!” (198). Although Alfonso expresses a rejection of an overt alliance with the landowners, clearly the most powerful of the landowners does not reject such an alliance with the Church. Leonardo seeks the Bishop’s advice before reporting the idol worship to the civil authorities in Tuxtla as the beginning of a sublevación, and the Bishop agrees to send Manuel back to San Juan at Leonardo’s request, in return for Leonardo’s promise that he will not relate his conversation with the Bishop to other landowners (261). Thus, despite the Bishop’s rhetoric, “las dos fuerzas que bien cristalizan ese rechazo [de cambios sociales] son el grupo dominante de los terratenientes y la Iglesia. Entre estas dos fuerzas existe una alianza tácita” (Lavou 324).

Alfonso is conscientious, in his position as Bishop, to ensure the continuing presence of the Church in Chiapas. He recognizes in the promise of the Gospel that “the poor will always be among us” that the significant membership of the poor in the Church assists in maintaining the strength of the institution. When sending Manuel back to San Juan, Alfonso solidly bases his advice to Manuel in the New Testament, recommending “tacto al joven sacerdote, ánimo conciliador; recordó la parábola del hijo pródigo, esta vez aplicada a Tzajal-hemel . . . y no los condenes porque ahora son idólatras. Es la ignorancia, el desamparo. Sirveles de consuelo tú, que sientan, al través de tu ministerio, que nuestra Iglesia los acoge y los protege” (263).
The Bishop, "un viejo cínico que vive en el Palacio Episcopal, rodeado de muebles lujosos y obras de arte" (Smotherman 154), does not lack sympathy for the poor. This sympathy is reflected in his paternalistic stance toward the poor. The Bishop's paternalism causes him, however, to verbally take responsibility for the position of the other: "la idolatría de los indios no es mala fe, es ignorancia —dictaminó—. ¿Y quién, más que nosotros, es responsable de tal estado de cosas?" (227). Lavou suggests that this paternalistic comprehension functions to "acentuar su presión sobre los indios con el objetivo de controlarlos" (320). Clearly Alfonso's benevolence is rooted in his certainty of the universality of his faith, which renders him unconscious of the possible validity of other religious expressions; thus in this sense, his Catholicism does indeed serve to control the religious expression of those to whom his paternalism is extended. Alfonso's profound desire to care for a dependent other persists even after he has completely abdicated his responsibilities as Bishop, as indicated by padre Balcázar's comment during the visit of the Governor of Chiapas to the Palacio Episcopal: "[el obispo] cree que se podían vender, que eran propiedad suyo y no del Palacio. Cree que con el dinero se alivian las necesidades de los menesterosos" (351). This sympathetic and paternalistic attitude is also reflected in the charitable work of church women during the period when Ciudad Real was shut down as the men prepared to confront the Indian sublevación, "la Congregación de la Hijas de María y la de las Damas del Sagrado Corazón fueron las primeras en apiadarse y organizaron un comité de beneficencia" (279-80).
Manuel however, does not share this paternalistic attitude towards the poor. Alfonso tries to animate Manuel for his post in San Juan Chamula by reminding him of his Biblical predecessors, “[el Espíritu Santo] les mandó que fueran y predicaran y ellos fueron y predicaron” (109). However, as Smotherman observes, “el padre Manuel Mandujano, símbolo de la Iglesia colonial, considera su puesto de párroco entre los indios como un castigo o un exilio, y los mira como seres inferiores desde el principio. Desprecia sus expresiones de religión popular, y nunca hace el menor esfuerzo para conocerlos como seres humanos” (154). Miller comments that “[los ladinos] han pretendido dominar aun en las creencias de los indios para sustituirlas con otros medios de subyugación cultural” (133), but Manuel, despite his ardent desire to impose Catholic orthodoxy, does not consider the Indians children of God; they are not part of the flock it is his vocation to shepherd. Manuel wants, more than anything else, to leave San Juan Chamula. He is willing to charge the Indians with fomenting an armed sublevation in order to substantiate alerting the civil authorities of the activities of the cave. This not only serves to avenge the flagrant idol worship that extended beyond the bounds of the worship of saints accepted by the Church, but also this way he “había logrado un magnifico pretexto para salir de San Juan” (227).

“El padre Manuel llevaba siempre esta imagen consigo [un crucifijo de marfil, un regalo de Alfonso]. Lo hacía por hábito, una especie de apego supersticioso” (116). Yet when he is called to the stand during the trial for sublevation of the Indian women who had been worshipping in the cave,
Manuel testifies that “desde el día de su llegada a la cabecera del municipio de Chamula pudo advertir que se hallaba en un mundo en que las verdades del cristianismo haban sido corrompidas por la ignorancia y degenerado en ritos groseros, en bárbaras supersticiones” (235). While on the stand, Manuel also testifies that, “el indio recurra al brujo, confiaba en el pulseador y no concedía al sacerdote más que una limosna en la que el alma no estaba, de ninguna manera, comprometida” (235). Manuel’s refusal to accept any deviation from his version of Catholicism leads commentators such as Sommers to observe “el recurso al catolicismo como una especie de mano blanda aculturadora” ("Oficio" 16).

In his fervor for Roman Catholic orthodoxy, Manuel regards as a threat to the authority of the Church not only the idols of the cave (227, 235), but also the socioeconomic programs of Cardenism: “el padre Manuel interpretó la necesidad, que él mismo padecía, y desde el púlpito fustigó a esos emisarios de Babilonia, esos portadores de ideas peligrosas que fatalmente producirían costumbres abominables” (106).

The Bishop of Chiapas’ rhetoric expresses his unconsciousness of the Church’s alliance with the landowners and his paternalism towards the Indians. His dialogue also indicates that, as padre Mandujano, he too is wary of State power. Alfonso is wary of the State not because it may impede the imposition of Catholic orthodoxy however, but because it could threaten the existence of the Church in Ciudad Real. Alfonso advises Manuel that, “la situación de crisis por la que está atravesando actualmente la Iglesia puede convertir cualquier
incidente en una provocación. Tú sabes que nos persiguen en Tabasco; que deshonran a los sacerdotes, queman los templos y profanan las imágenes. Lo mismo puede suceder aquí" (107). When Manuel tells Alfonso that he wishes to report the idol worshippers to the authorities in Tuxtla, Alfonso replies: "¿Qué tienen que ver ellas con estos desvaríos de los indios? . . . Si acaso los agrandarán para darse infuslas. O los fomentarán. Las autoridades civiles son enemigas nuestras" (227). Manuel responds with a comment that resonates with the Bishop: "Si no las ponemos al tanto de lo que sucede en Tzajal-hemel podrán, más tarde, acusarnos de complicidad" (227). At this reference to the possibility of State persecution, Alfonso does not insist further. As Miller comments, “el obispo Cañaveral, hombre ya viejo y de salud débil, elude su responsabilidad exagerando sus enfermedades y aislándose en la oscuridad de su alcoba” (Millán 298). Alfonso comments of himself that “yo he sido siempre demasiado tranquilo, no he provocado nunca disturbios” (98). Benita is the only character who expresses some consciousness of the lack of responsibility which ultimately rests on the Bishop’s shoulders. As the townspeople try to console her after her brother’s death by repeating that it was “la voluntad de Dios, la voluntad de Dios . . .”, Benita cries, “¡Malhaya! . . . no fue la voluntad de Dios. Fue la envidia de estos poltrones —añadía señalando el Palacio Episcopal—. Ninguno tenía sus tamaños” (268). Confronted by the results of his inability to support his rhetoric with his terrestrial actions, the Bishop of Chiapas retires to his bed in the obscurity of his chambers, giving the
landowner Leonardo the opportunity to stand on the steps the Palacio Episcopal and speak to the citizens of Ciudad Real.

"El padre Balcázar describe la cooperación que existe entre la Iglesia y el Estado: 'Es confortador –decía–, ver cómo las contradicciones entre las potencias terrenales y la potestad espiritual, se anulan. Cómo todo se concilia cuando se persiguen metas comunes: la justicia, el orden, la paz' (356). En este caso, la justicia, el orden y la paz se definen de acuerdo a las necesidades de los finqueros y el ejército" (Smotherman 154). When the Governor asks Alfonso if he feels that the citizens of Ciudad Real had reason to curse him for not sending military aid to the city, Alfonso replies, "yo entiendo los hechos desde otra perspectiva. En todo caso Dios pudo haberlo escogido a usted para convertirlo en un instrumento de su castigo" (358). Thus Alfonso indicates his perspective that responsibility for the recent events in the diocese of Ciudad Real is in God's hands and that therefore humans must remain unconscious of why they occurred. But as Sommers comments, "los frutos del progreso se desconocen en un San Cristóbal dominado por fuerzas conservadoras . . . el clero es factor prominente entre estas fuerzas. Negándose a comprender al indígena, y temiendo contradecir la sociedad cristobalense, la iglesia funciona en la novela como agente catalítico, induciendo el desastre" ("Rosario" 86-7).Thus, consistent with their way of conceiving the world, of Manuel's orthodox militancy and Alfonso's passive trust in God, it is impossible for the representatives of the Church to reconcile landowners and indigenous in the name of God; rather, as Nance observes,
Oficio de tinieblas is a “testamento de la irresistible fuerza de la Cristiandad, pero como entidad monolítica al servicio fiel del status quo” (350).

The representatives of the federal government

Fernando Ulloa, the functionary sent to the diocese of Ciudad Real to implement federal agrarian reforms, was orphaned as a child when his campesino father deserted the farm on which he worked in order to follow the revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata (155). The difficulties experienced by his mother and himself after the death of his father form part of the basis on which Lavou identifies Fernando as “el representante de la conciencia nacional en la novela” (Lavou 330). It is through the character of Fernando through which “los ideales del cardenismo” are represented (Lavou 320). The ideals of Cardenism were the ideals of the Revolution for which Fernando’s father died: that Mexicans would become conscious of the unequal distribution of the resources of their country, and that land and liberty would be granted to all Mexican citizens through legislative reforms.

As discussed above however, although the novel is set in the Cárdenas era, the events that are woven together to create the plot are drawn from the Guerra de Castas of several years earlier. Lavou observes that in Oficio de tinieblas “la guerra de castas (ficcionalizada) . . . [es] una rebelión indígena de tinte mesiánico cuyas motivaciones . . . [estan opuestas] al ‘mesianismo’ oficial de la burguesía mexicana (la formación de una nueva sociedad donde todos vivirán felices se logrará por medio de reformas)” (325).
The character of Fernando Ulloa believes that the Law is all-powerful, he turns to it for support and sustenance, and he uses it to validate his actions. For Fernando, the Law is his religion. The narrator of Oficio de tinieblas observes however, that "México había hecho de la ley un ídolo al cual reverenciar y no un instrumento útil para servirse de él. Pero no puede serlo si el legislador, al redactarlo, no tiene en cuenta los datos concretos de la realidad a la que pretende regir" (174). In other words, those who created the agrarian reforms which Fernando was sent to the field to enact were unconscious of the actual situation in rural Chiapas. Lavou observes that neither is Fernando, even in the field, conscious of this situation: "[él] desconoce la dinámica social de Chiapas que –por otra parte– pretende cambiar mediante la aplicación de unas reformas burguesas" (330). It is Leonardo who arranges to have Fernando brought to San José Chiuptic to assess the position and malleability of the government employee. Fernando, for his part, is confident in the Law and does not bother to assess the position of the landowners. In addition, consistent with his científica conceptualization of the world, Fernando never approaches the representatives of the Church to determine their role in the sociopolitical dynamic of the area in which he is to implement the agrarian reforms. As Lavou points out, "Oficio de tinieblas insiste precisamente en el abismo entre el hecho de dictar leyes (fuesen revolucionarias) y su aplicación en un espacio socio-económico determinado" (330).

Fernando disdains the mythic background which nourishes both mestizos and Indians in the diocese of Ciudad Real, commenting that "no me fío de los
milagros. Conozco la historia. Las rebeliones de los chumilas se han incubado siempre, como hoy, en la embriaguez, en la superstición. Una tribu de hombres desesperados se lanzan contra sus opresores. Tienen todas las ventajas de su parte, hasta la justicia. Y sin embargo fracasan. Y no por cobardía, entiéndame. Ni por estupidez. Es que para alcanzar la victoria se necesita algo más que un arrebato o un golpe de suerte: una idea que alcanzar, un orden que imponer" (308). Yet, the Revolution had an idea to achieve, an order which the Cárdenas administration attempted to impose. It appears that, as Millán comments, “los programas y las buenas intenciones no bastan para transformar la realidad de un pueblo” (299).

Consistent with the ideals of Cardenism, Fernando “parte de la razón, de la necesidad de que los indígenas tomen conciencia de su situación de explotados” (Villarreal 68). However, Villarreal adds that “la ‘toma de conciencia’ como mecanismo revelador de la opresión en que viven y de la explotación que padecen parece no ser el camino adecuado de la nueva campaña de los intelectuales comprometidos. La lógica de la cual se parte no es la misma a la cual se llega” (Villarreal 76). The Revolution emerged from the frustration which resulted from the unequal distribution of the resources of México. The good intentions and the legislative reforms came largely from a minority who were conscious of the ideals of the Revolution, not from the masses who fought out of desperation, a desire for adventure, or the will to survive. It is not that conscientization is not the adequate road (although many citizens are not interested in becoming conscious of the socioeconomic
dynamics of their country); rather it is that this conscientization takes more than the five tumultuous years between the most violent phases of the Revolution and the Cristeros and the installation of Cárdenas as president. In addition, there is a profound aspect to social change which needs to be brought into consciousness; that is, the popular ideology, inherent in religious discourse, which supports the politicoeconomic organization of the diocese of Ciudad Real.

It is César who recognizes this, stealing Julia’s chal to give as a gift to the worshippers in the cave who did not trust the white man Fernando. This gift, supposedly from the wife of the ajwall to the stone gods, served to increase the confidence of the indigenous far more than Fernando’s attempts to explain, in Spanish, the situation of socioeconomic inequality of the Republic of México. The chal increased the prestige of the idols, which increased the trust of the Chamula in Fernando, and they began to give the white man their cherished land titles (306). It is César again, who fuels the Indians to resist the mestizos by telling them that the Ciudad Realenses had not brought the Virgen de la Caridad from the church into procession (305). And it is César who recognizes that the Indians withdrew their support for the sublevation as “la Virgen de la Caridad se apareció a los ladinos y custodiá el pueblo. Los indios no se atreven a luchar contra ella” (348).

Fernando “aparece en la novela como el instigador de la rebelión de los indios” (Lavou 322), a violent situation which throughout the novel he condemns (153, 307). Yet his participation in the crucifixion of Domingo
motivates him to lead the Chamulas in an armed attack on mestizos and their property. This violence gives the landowners ample reason to enact Leonardo's *Ordenanzas militares* — a danger which, prior to the moment of the crucifixion, Fernando was quite conscious of. This situation is an acknowledgement the limits of rational thought. “Ninguno de los acontecimientos últimos era susceptible de ser ni comprendido por la razón ni calificado por la moral. *El mismo giraba alrededor de una órbita ajena a sus convicciones más entrañables, a sus hábitos más arraigados.* No se reconocía. Era parte del mecanismo de un mundo ininteligible” (347, emphasis mine).

In *Oficio de tinieblas* the unintelligible is the supranatural, that which is not illuminated by human rationality. It is the power of the unintelligible which overcomes Fernando and leads to the destruction of the possibility of implementing the federal reforms. As Villarreal comments, “*su ‘oficio de tinieblas’ [de escritora] permite la entrada de la luz, del entendimiento, pero no sólo de la razón vive el hombre*” (Villarreal 82). Thus the irrational act of the crucifixion, carried out in the *tinieblas* of the unconsciousness of the dynamics of the situation between mestizos and Indians in the diocese of Ciudad Real, did not save the Chamulas. Instead, it caused the spark of hope for a better life, rationally animated by Pedro, Fernando and César, to be extinguished. Lavou comments that “*ese final trágico [donde se reprime ferozmente la insurrección de los indios] plantea al mismo tiempo el alcance de un movimiento articulado por una conciencia religiosa*” (329), adding that “*Oficio de tinieblas actualiza . . . la difícil cuestión de la comprenhensión de todas esas rebeliones populares*
mexicanas (hasta diríamos latinoamericanas) cuyas significaciones socio-
políticas se desperdician por ser tachados de mesiánicas, milenaristas . . . ; es
decir por ser —a pesar de todo—‘irracionales’ y por lo tanto incompatibles con
las pautas del raciocinio positivista dominante” (330).

Thus, consistent with Fernando’s way of conceiving the world in terms of
the need for the rational conscientización of the exploited and the application of
the Law, it is impossible for this representative of the government to enforce
federal programs because his idealistic way of conceiving the world inhibits him
from becoming conscious of the way the Chamulas and the mestizos perceive
and act within their sociopolitical environment. Ultimately, Fernando’s inability to
rationally acknowledge the realities of the context in the diocese of Ciudad Real
is consummated in the irrational, which not only makes the situation worse for the
Chamula, but costs him his life.

Castellanos recognizes that “a primera vista se tiene la impresión de que
el papel de víctima corresponde al indio y el de verdugo al otro. Pero las
relaciones humanas nunca son tan esquemáticas y las sociales lo son aún
menos” (“Novela” 126). She adds that, “escogi este nombre [Oficio de tinieblas]
porque . . . la palabra tinieblas corresponde muy bien al momento por el que
atraviesan tanto los indios como los ‘blancos’ que los explotan, en Chiapas”
(359). This moment that the Indians and the whites are experiencing in Oficio
de tinieblas is related to a fundamental lack of communication between the
main characters in the heterogeneous community of the diocese of Ciudad
The resulting in fog in which the characters play out their lives is summed up by the narrator of Oficio de tinieblas:

Catalina repite una salmodia sin sentido. Fernando pronuncia la palabra ley y los oídos sordos la rechazan y la devuelven convertida en befa. ‘El que nació cuando el eclipse’ grita cuando la Cruz lo crucifica. Winiktón arenga a un ejército de sombras. Xaw Ramírez Paciencia tartamudea el falso testimonio con que han de condenar a sus hermanos. Julia ríe. Doña Mercedes Solórzano musita una confidencia. Marcela y Lorenzo, y el martoma y su mujer, Felipa. Y otros que no tuvieron nombre ni cara. Y otros que se despeñaron en los caminos. Y otros que fueron abandonados. Y otros que se arrastraron hasta su fin. Idolina escucha un instante, sobrecogida de terror. Y grita, como si también la crucificaran, y Teresa Entzin López, su nana, acude a ella solicita y la acoge en su regazo y acaricia su cabeza y le cuenta un cuento para calmarla, para dormirla (366).

The tinieblas of unconsciousness which settles over the action of the text is marked by the characters’ preference for myth, rather than for listening to and dialoging with their fellow characters in order to become conscious of diegetic realities. The sleep of unawareness is more comfortable than the terror of the actuality, and the characters (with the exception of Leonardo) reflect this withdrawal in their religious discourse, for the way in which they conceptualize supernatural forces -- or, as Fernando, negate their importance -- serves largely to render each character powerless to effect any change in the diocese of Ciudad Real.

This incapacity for superation,44 embedded in the religious discourse of each group of characters as discussed above, has caused commentators to

44 Commentators generally recognize Oficio de tinieblas as marking the beginning of a deeper and more refined articulation of a heterogeneous community. Ocampo for example, proposes that Oficio de tinieblas “ha sabido romper con los viejos moldes de la novela de indios, y ver a éstos, en lo esencial, como seres humanos, aunque inmersos en una miseria atroz” (201).
view *Oficio de tinieblas* as pessimistic. Sommers for example, comments that “lo que limita . . . este admirable papel, es su pesimismo sociocultural, el tratar al indio como un sujeto incapaz de entender su pasado o de analizar su presente, y al ladino como alguien que permanece congelado en un inalterable y rígido sistema social de corte capitalista y agrario” ("Oficio" 16). Nance observes that “en el mejor de los casos, las novelas indigenistas45 acaso hayan expuesto y neutralizado el poder político y social de la religión; en el peor, han sugerido la imposibilidad de la victoria” (353).

But this pessimism stems from the historical referent of the novel and from Castellanos’ effort to “transmitir sus experiencias vitales recogidas en su región chiapaneca, que tan bien conoce y ama” (Millán 289). In making reference to Carpentier, Castellanos comments that, “lo maravilloso no se encuentra en ningún otro mundo sino precisamente en éste . . . no acertamos a verlo porque no hemos acertado aún a nombrarlo ni a describirlo . . . el nombre y la descripción habrá que comenzar a romper este círculo vicioso de malos entiendidos” ("Arte" 193). Thus for Castellanos, naming and describing an aspect of the world of action is a first step in clearing the fog of

---

Consistent with commentator’s observations of *Oficio de tinieblas* as pessimistic, Smotherman comments that, “falta en la novela la plena conciencia de un indio que puede liberarse por sus propios esfuerzos” (156). In her examination of three *novelas indigenistas* written over the last thirty years (Rosario Castellanos’ *Oficio de tinieblas* [1962], Manuel Scorza’s *Redoble por Rancas* [1971], and Gustavo Alfredo Jácome’s *Porqué se fueron las garzas* [1980]), Smotherman documents “una progresiva concientización por parte del indio” (155) in the Latin American novel, observing that what she identifies as the *novela neoindigenista* “ahora es mucho más que la novela del indio oprimido, sin esperanza de mejorar la situación en que vive” (157).

45 Castellanos acknowledges that, “yo he hecho hasta ahora un tipo de literatura que se llama indigenista”. She adds however, that “este es un título que no me gusta . . . Si yo pensara que mis libros van a ser leídos por los indios, estaría completamente fuera de onda” (Obras 9). Thus although the *novela indigenista* is about indigenous people, at this point it is neither by nor for
unconsciousness and its concomittant lack of communication. It is through writing that Castellanos has the priviledge of entering the consciousness of others, superceding the solipsism of her own self to engage in the imaginative act of inscribing events from the distinct perspectives of the individual characters.

"Castellanos se adhiere a la línea de la literatura comprometida y al realismo crítico", states Miller (135). "Realismo crítico", explains Castellanos, "[es lo en] que el escritor se sitúa desde una perspectiva para considerar la totalidad de los hechos y sustenta una ideología que le permite juzgar esos hechos y mostrar su relación con los fines buscados" ("Novela" 118). She adds that "reconozcamos que el escritor no hace más que situarse desde una perspectiva determinada para contemplar la realidad. Que no inventa ni exagera. Que aun, en ocasiones, disminuye la magnitud de los acontecimientos en beneficio de la verosimilitud y que, en todo caso, transcribe" ("Pesimismo" 196). Thus critical realism not only purports to reflect the world of action, but it does so from a critical perspective that seeks to evoke not only the actual situation described, but also to explore its causes.

This "urgencia de aprehender la realidad y expresarla en formas estéticas puede ser uno [de los móviles de la vocación de escribir], muy fuerte", comments Castellanos ("Novela" 130). She recognizes however, the apparent pessimism that arises from this critical realistic approach to inscribing the world of action. She observes that although some Latin American writers
acknowledge the influence of the Enlightenment in adopting the position that “los hechos que ocurren tienen una explicación racional y, por lo tanto, son remediables” (“Pesimismo” 196), many express the attitude that “lo que ocurre es así, ha sido siempre así, y seguirá siendo siempre así, por lo que no vale la pena siquiera analizarlo aunque sirve como un desahogo reproducirlo estéticamente” (“Pesimismo” 196).

Clearly Castellanos is one of those writers who makes an effort to inscribe the world of action in narrative form; however, despite its critical realism, Oficio de tinieblas is not simply an aesthetic reproduction of the world of action. Literature (and art in general) is not a simple imitation of something which is absent; it is rather an aesthetic creation which, through its productive reference, provides a point du départ for reflection. This is Castellanos’ perspective, for she comments that, “la literatura comprometida está hecha de pruebas, de alegatos, de refutaciones. Leerla puede no causarnos placer pero nos inclina a asentir o a rechazar” (Miller 141). Thus it is that the movement from the written text to the world of action is not a direct, representative one, but rather a reflective one. Castellanos recognizes literature “como invención de lo posible” (“Historia” 184) and there are hints in Oficio de tinieblas of the possible. But Oficio de tinieblas does not create a world that could be; rather, it focuses on capturing a complex lived reality. It is this inscription of the world of action in itself which serves as the starting point for reflection and for the invention of the possible.

---

46 Miller cites Castellanos’ comment to argue that “la literatura pueda participar en la
B. Hermeneutics: How has my world changed after reading the text?

Ricoeur's conceptualization of the relationship between the world of action and narrative follows his model of the movement from the first level of reference to the second – except that when he considers the world of action as text, the primary level of signification in-itself is not an integral part of the movement to the secondary level of signification. In the early 1970's Ricoeur proposes, consistent with his theory of metaphor, that it is the surpassing of the said of speaking from the saying of the event which permits the consideration of the world of action as text. In this conceptualization of the world of action as text however, the event, as a primary level of reference, does not play a significant role. Ricoeur argues that it is emancipation from the ostensive references of the act of saying which permits the emergence of the non-ostensive reference of the text of the world of action. It is here that he deviates from his own theory of metaphor for, in the case of the metaphor, the primary reference is one that may be recognized over and over again, whereas in his consideration of the world of action as text Ricoeur is postulating that the primary, or the ostensive, reference is inconsequential and that it is the meaning of the event which is fixed. In this case it is the non-ostensive reference which can be identified and re-identified, for Ricoeur has posited that it is only meaning which endures over

---

concientización de las masas para incitarles a la acción" (Miller 141).

47 It can also be argued that, although Ricoeur proposes that discourse is a dialectic of event and meaning, when he examines the possibility of fixing of the world of action as text he cuts off the "event" aspect of discourse, effectively eliminating its dialectic nature. See the discussion in I.B. which elaborates the problematic of the movement from the world of action to inscribed text.
the fleeing ostensive reference. The difficulty is that when the non-ostensive reference is severed from its ostensive reference, this effectively inhibits attaining the meaning of action by way of the primary reference, as with metaphor.

Ricoeur broadens his conceptualization of the world of action as text in his essays from the late 1970's onwards, acknowledging the importance of the ostensive references to the world of human action (although not in the sense of direct reproduction, as will be discussed below). In support of this acknowledgment, Ricoeur cites Hannah Arendt's observation that "action is what calls for narration" ("Mimesis" 142). The ostensive references to action thus now constitute the primary level of significance which requires a reader/narrator to configure a movement to a secondary level of significance. Such configuration of the ostensive references of the world of action creates a written text.48 This written text in turn is available for configuration by anyone who can read the signs in which it is inscribed. It is through reflection on the external references of the written narrative that its non-ostensive references may again be refigured, thus further enhancing the meaning of a world of action.

As Ricoeur formulates his theory of action from his theory of metaphor by applying the model of the split reference of metaphor to the world of action, so too he elaborates his theory of text by applying this model to the whole of a

48 The consideration here applies specifically to the written text, although the term "text" may also refer to other art forms such as theatre, cinema or the plastic arts.
work. Ricoeur's theory of text evolves in a way which parallels the way in which his conceptualization of the world of action as text develops. In the early 1970's Ricoeur maintains that the written text is the primary signification that moves the reader to configure the world projected by the inscribed signs. At this point in his theory of text, Ricoeur is discussing the world projected by a written text as referring only to the novel, extralinguistic world of the work ("Metaphor" 306, 309). Paralleling his initial conceptualization of the world of action as text as inscribing only non-ostensive references, Ricoeur's theory of text in the early 1970's does not yet acknowledge an external referentiality that is pertinent not only to the world projected by the text, but also to a historical world of action.

Ricoeur's theory of text evolves by the late 1970's to acknowledge that the referential field implied by the text (the "world" of the text ("Mimesis" 144)) is not limited to an extralinguistic reality, but that it is interconnected with the world of action: "despite the break [coupure] it introduces", states Ricoeur, "fiction would never be understandable if it did not configurate what is already figured in human action" ("Mimesis" 143). Ricoeur thus specifically posits that the referent of narrative is obvious: it is human action. "If narrative were closed off from the world of action," he observes, "it would be harmless and inoffensive" ("Creativity" 469).

During the 1970's Ricoeur's work was influenced by his dialogue with French structuralism. This dialogue deeply marked his theory of text. In a 1980 essay Ricoeur argues that semioticians focus on the internal aspects of the text, or on mimesis, considering the outside of the text to be the
psychobiography of the author and the psychosociology of the reader and hence irrelevant to the text itself ("Mimesis" 140). It is the semioticians, he now states, who consider that what is outside of the text is an extralinguistic reality ("Life" 431) and hence outside of the bounds of empirical philological inquiry.

In response to the approach of structuralists, Ricoeur argues that the distinction of “inside” and “outside” is a methodological artefact. He proposes a theory of text which recognizes a circular relationship between the world projected from inside of the words inscribed on a page and the world of action outside of these inscribed words. Ricoeur grounds his theory in the sediment of Greek philosophy, recalling that “for Aristotle, there is mimēsis only where there is poiesis [and that] far from producing a weakened image of pre-existing things [as for Plato], mimēsis brings about an augmentation of meaning in the field of action” ("Mimesis" 138). Ricoeur defines mimēsis as a “structuring operation that begins in life, is invested in the text, then returns to life” ("Mimesis" 151). He observes that it is the reader who, through reading, engages in a “concrete process in which the textual configuration conjoins the practical prefiguration and the practical transfiguration” ("Mimesis" 140). Mimēsis₂, as the activity which mediates between the reader’s prefigurative repertory and her refiguration, is the stimulus which, through refiguration, brings about an augmentation of meaning in the field of action. It is the activity of reading which permits the movement “from a prefigured world to a transfigured world through the mediation of a configured world” ("Mimesis" 151). It is this augmentation of
meaning which is attained through the appropriation of the configured world which in turn offers the reader the possibility of transfiguring the world of action.

Ricoeur adds that "mimesis is mimesis of an action, and that what makes such imitating a poiesis or productive activity, is the activity of arranging incidents into a plot" ("Mimesis" 138). Ricoeur is no longer arguing that it is the meaning of action (the non-ostensive aspect of human action) which is inscribed in narrative, but rather that it is the emplotment of action which gives narrative its intelligibility. Thus, although Ricoeur emphasizes that the activity of reading permits the enlargement of the prefigurative repertory through understanding the Welt projected in front of the text, he maintains that this configured world is constructed from the non-descriptive emplotment of actions.

Yet Ricoeur is troubled by the problematic of re-presented presence and raises the issue of the real or irreal world for further discussion at the end of his 1980 essay "Mimesis and Representation". He asks rhetorically whether the three moments of mimesis imitate real action, answering that if real means already there and available, then they do not. On the other hand, if real means action that is "effectively" refigured though configuration, then the three moments of mimesis do imitate real action ("Mimesis" 152). This effective refiguration, made possible through reflection on the reading experience, is discussed in detail below.

"The intersection between the configured world of the plot and the transfigured world of the reader constitutes in itself a very complex problematic", comments Ricoeur, adding that "this is due first of all to the
diversity of its modalities" ("Mimesis" 148). The following consideration of two such modalities -- the testimonial and the fictional novel -- permits an examination of this intersection between configured and transfigured worlds. It is because the imaginative configuration of a particular world of action offers readers the possibility of refiguring the cultural imaginary of their world of action that these literary forms serve to provide a particularly fertile ground through which to explore the articulation between the configured world of the plot and the transfigured world of the reader. As will be noted, neither of these modalities didactically argues for a particular appropriation and understanding of the world of action. Rather, each evokes complex sociocultural realities by means of their productive reference; that is, by means of the capacity of these works to provoke reflection in the reader with respect to the historical realities to which they refer.

As Ricoeur's later writings conceptualize the incidents of world of action as searching for a narrator, so literary critics such as David Foster also articulate a "need to interpret social experience through the medium of cultural writing" ("Latin" 148). As a literary critic, Foster adds that "the attention to the formal aspects of writing only has critical validity if it ultimately leads to a characterization of the cultural text as one legitimate example of the construction, through the medium of writing, of a meaningful interpretation of sociocultural experience" ("Latin" 148). The most elemental function of discourse such as literature is that it say something to someone about something ("Hermeneútica" 2) and Foster "affirm[s] the need to retain an
emphasis on literature and cultural writing not as merely the "representation" of social experience but as a specific (re)formulation of meaning about the Latin American social experience" ("Latin" 148-9). As will be elaborated below, Ricoeur articulates a theoretical argument which supports written texts not as constructions directly representative of sociocultural experience, but rather as puntos de partidas for reflection on social experience. With respect to literary criticism, Valdés concurs with Foster, emphasizing the role of the critic in communicating and discussing her reflections on the interpretation of social experience projected by a text: "literature . . . is about reality and truth, and literary criticism's function is to comment on the shared meaning, the intersubjective truth of the redescription of the world that is based on the reading experience" ("Introduction" 265).

Foster observes that "empirical reality" and "imaginative fantasies" are spurious categories, noting that "virtually all the major studies on Latin American literature [have made the] point" that there is a continuity between documentary history and imaginative narrative literature ("Latin" 1-2, 38). This is because narrative strategies have a powerful capacity to permit the evocation and elucidation of experiences in the world of action that didactic texts do not have. Barnet observes that "the only way that an author can obtain the greatest benefit from a phenomenon is by applying her fantasy, inventing within the essence of the real" ("Novela" 140). In his refiguration of Poniatowska's La noche de Tlatelolco (1971) for example, Foster observes that "the author's goal is not to present an 'academic' analysis of a particular moment in recent
Mexican history but to re-create the sense and the feel of an event in order to highlight its inescapable reality" ("Latin" 17). Certainly this text, translated into English and now in its fifty-fourth reprinting in Spanish (1997), has permitted readers around the world to engage in a configuration of this literal reference which has sparked a plethora of reflective refigurations. These refigurations refer to the ostensive and non-ostensive references not only of the world projected by this text, but also to those of a particular historical context.

An approach to literature which recognizes a relationship between the inscribed world of action and the transfigured world of the reader is one which has received much attention following the emergence of the boom novels of the 1960's and 1970's, and it has sparked a reflective inquiry into the nature of the phenomenon of literature itself. Barbara Foley responds to the challenge presented to literary studies by this conscious literary expression of the world of action in citing Bakhtin's observation that "the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing" (The Dialogic Imagination 33 in Tell 27). Foster too comments on this phenomenon, observing that "the boundaries between 'literature' and other forms of cultural writing have become hopelessly blurred". He observes, however, that not only does this blurring "expand considerably the frontiers of what we are going to call literary production in Latin America", but that it is from within these border areas that much creativity has emerged ("Latin" 147). From within these debates on the nature of literature itself, Foley states that literature may be taken as "a highly
general term denoting the whole province of ‘imaginative’ writing –thus
including a good deal of history, biography, autobiography, and journalism” (Tell
28, fn 3). The testimonial novel is one example of a creative configuration that
has emerged from the space where the cultural writing of history, ethnography,
and fiction meet.

John Beverley identifies Miguel Barnet as the person who “baptized” the
genre of the testimonial novel with his 1969 essay “La novela testimonio:
socioliteratura” (Voz 10). In this essay Barnet asks rhetorically if the medieval
crusaders and the Greek poets were not narrating (novelando) when they wrote
about their travels or about the activities of gods. He responds that of course
they were narrating and that what is significant about these stories is that they
did not separate the imaginative sparks from the real events. He identifies these
texts as “organic wholes” in which reason and myth are integrally mixed. These
stories, he states, “demonstrate a consciousness of being, of being in the world
(sic)” (“Novela” 126). This statement implies a reference to Heidegger which
signifies that for Barnet, the story is a means of expressing Dasein, of narrating
the being-there that we are, of novelando the experience of life.

Barnet observes that in recent decades however, this relationship
between story and life has become disjointed through separating language from
ideas and words (“Novela” 126). He argues that the definition of the term
“novel” limits and disarticulates it from its function as a way of narrating or of
organizing a story, and that this disarticulation has served to alienate the novel
from the world of action which it seeks to articulate. He notes that this
phenomenon is particularly evident in foreign society\textsuperscript{49}, in which man is simply another product for consummation, and in which objects predominate over ideas in its literature. "This literature, like its society", states Barnet, "is a road with no exit" ("Novela" 127). He comments that in the European \textit{nueva novela} it is as though man has lost his essence, or his sentiment, and that all that is left to him are his old and rusted rational instruments. He observes that for many years in Europe there have been no social movements of importance nor any political explosions and that European literature reflects this innocuous state of affairs ("Novela" 129). This literature is inoffensive, adds Barnet; it is outside of all that is organic, it limits itself to elites, it is caught in its own spiral ("Novela" 129). He argues however, that there is a movement towards more organic and expressive inscription in which "all the screws of the machine serve a primordial function" ("Novela" 126). Barnet does not recognize "experimental", "disruptive" or "innovational" writing as literature, much less as creative literature, as does Foster. The common ground between Barnet and Foster nevertheless, is that both seek to elucidate a relationship between written narrative and the world of action, one through an organic rearticulation of the novel in America in particular, and the other through the expanded boundaries of literature in general.

\textsuperscript{49} It is tempting to place a determinate article in front of these two words for Barnet makes it clear (from his description of the department store [127], from the quote from Faulkner [127], and from his exclusion of Japan [128], for example) that he is expressing his perception of specifically European society and literature and reflecting on this aspect of North American society. Although he acknowledges the work of Americans Salinger and Faulkner, Barnet does not discuss the \textit{nueva novela} in Latin America, thus generally suggesting a monolithic categorization in which the old and rusted approach of Europe is discarded for a new (and unrooted) configuration of America (130).
Rebecca Chopp comments that in exploring this relationship between written narrative and the world of action theoreticians "must resist sublating the gap [between the named and the unnamable] by reducing it to the side of the event, thus assuming that language will really represent the event (the modern dilemma) or that language is itself the event (certain postmodern theorists). In the first mistake, theory assumes full power of judgment because the theorist can really see what takes place, perhaps better than those who see the event themselves. In the second type of error, suffering and hope are occluded and historical events are reduced to a problem of language" ("Theology" 8). Testimonial literature is a genre which exhibits a particularly strong link between the written narrative and a world of action as it makes direct claims to use language in order to inscribe, from the perspective of a participant, the suffering and hope implicit in the narrated historical events. The testimonial novel thus challenges theoreticians to acknowledge a polyphonic vision of particular historicities, for its discourse both evokes the lived historical event through language, and it offers the reader the possibility to refigure meaning through configuring the suffering and hope of a participant as it was inscribed through the fusion of the horizons of the participant and the reader/narrator.

Testimonial novels\(^5\) are told in the first person voice from the perspective of the person who was directly involved in the events narrated ("Anatomia”

---

\(^5\) There are many examples of the testimonial novel in Latin America such as Gabriel Garcia Márquez' *Relato de un naufrago* (1970) and Miguel Barnet's *La canción de Rachel* (1970). To mention several that relate specifically to México are Abel Díaz Santiago's *Diario de un obrero mexicano* (1966) relating the story of a worker in Mexico City and Ricardo Pozas A.'s *Juan Pérez Jolote* (1952) which is the story of a Charnula at the beginning of the 1930's.
157). However, it a characteristic of this genre that, "as transcription of oral speech -- 'speech act' -- the testimonial always involves the immediate presence of an interlocutor" ("Anatomia" 162). This statement reflects the first of Ricoeur's observations on the discourse of the world of action which he drew from the linguistics of the sentence; that is, that in the speech act the speaker is saying something to someone. As the speaker of the testimonial is often illiterate and/or excluded from the institutional circuits of journalistic or literary production, the person to whom s/he is saying something is frequently an ethnographer, journalist or professional writer. Thus the production of a testimonial novel generally involves the recording, transcription and writing of the oral narration by an interlocutor who is distanced from the action itself ("Anatomia" 157).

Beverley states that the situation of the narrator of the testimonial "always" involves a certain urgency or necessity for communication that originates in a lived experience of repression, poverty, exploitation, marginalization, crime, or struggle ("Anatomia" 157, 163). Chopp identifies a "poetics of testimony" to


52 See part I.B. for a discussion of the relationship between the author of the written text (the reader/narrator) and the narrator(s) in the world of action.

53 Chopp defines "poetics of testimony" as a "genre [which] includes poetry, theology, novels, and other forms of literature that express unique events or experiences outside the representation of modern, rational discourse". She adds that "poetics of testimony is [her] way of naming the discursive practices and various voices that seek to describe or name that which rational discourse will not or cannot reveal" (2). In using the term "poetics of testimony" Chopp is referring to discursive practices such as that of Anna Akhmatova's poem expressing her experience outside a Russian jail in which her son is imprisoned and Elie Weisel's narratives of his experiences on the inside of the death camps in Germany during the second world war. It is somewhat unclear why she insists that such discourse, simply because it is not consistent with its related dominant discourse, is therefore not rational.
refer to "those discourses – poetry, novels, theory, theology – which speak of the unspeakable, and tell of the suffering and hope of particular communities who have not been authorized to speak" (6).

"The history of those without history . . . has found its megaphone in these excavators of the collective conscious [the authors of testimonial novels], states Barnet (143). He adds however, that it is indispensible for the production of a testimonial novel that the "I" of the gestor, or the reader/narrator, is suppressed ("Novela" 135). With the advent of Gadamerian phenomenological hermeneutics, followed by other theoretical developments identified as postmodernity, this negation of the subjectivity of the reader/narrator has been directly challenged, particularly for its claims to present an "objective" reading of the other. Arising out of these postmodern debates, Valdés' hermeneutical innovation of the recognition of two distinct historicities that enter into dialogue provides a fruitful conceptualization of the relationship not only between the historicity of a written text and the historicity of its reader, but also of the relationship between the historicity of the narrator and the historicity of the interlocutor, which together result in the production of a testimonial novel. Beverley acknowledges this dialectic relationship between reader/narrator and actor/narrator, commenting that the "narrator/compiler relation can serve as an ideological figure of the alliance between popular forces and progressive intellectualism" ("Anatomía" 166).
Testimonial literature is particular in that it is linked to a social commitment on the part of at least the reader/narrator. Barnet comments that "the gestor of the testimonial novel has a sacred mission which is to reveal the other side of the coin . . . to take away the mask with which historical acts have been covered by a prejudiced and classist vision" ("Novela" 138). Consistent with Foster's observation that it is from within the border areas of literature that much creativity has emerged, Chopp observes that "such [testimonial] discourse is an invention, in and of itself, for it must create language, forms, images to speak of what, in some way, has been ruled unspeakable or at least not valid or credible in modern reason" (6). Beverley concurs, stating that "the testimonial is primarily a way to give voice and name to an anonymous people" ("Anatomia" 166); that is, the testimonial novel serves to give voice to those peoples who are anonymous by virtue of the fact that they have remained outside of modernity, usually not by choice. Although the testimonial novel is narrated in the first person, it refers to an anonymous people, rather than to an anonymous individual. Testimonials are thus "collective and social" (Chopp 7), for the narrator lives within a collectivity and speaks from this situated

54 This comment refers specifically to testimonial novels (not to testimonial documents such as travel diaries or memoirs). Although some protagonists of testimonial novels exhibit a strong social commitment (see Elizabeth Burgos Debray. Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nacio la conciencia. Habana: Casa de la Américas, 1983), the qualifier "at least" is here used to refer to the reader/narrator as it is not universal that in every case of testimonial writing that the protagonist demonstrate this sense of a broader social commitment (see Ricardo Pozas A. Juan Pérez Jolote. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952; Miguel Barnet. Biografía de un cimarrón. La Habana: Insituto de Etnologia y Folklore, 1966; Elena Poniatowska. Hasta no verte Jesús mío. México: Era, 1969).
perspective. They are also collective and social in the sense of the collaboration between two distinct historicities.55

The American theologian Rebecca Chopp comments that “testimonies enact a moral consciousness and communal, even at times, global responsibility” (7). The American literary critic John Beverley observes that testimonials affirm the power of literature as a form of social action (“Anatomia” 166), adding that the recognition of the testimonial has had a close relationship with the development of the armed struggle in all of the Third World (“Anatomia” 159). Beverley also comments on the role of the reader of testimonial novel, asking whether an innocent reading of the testimonial that is in solidarity with it is preferable to a reading that deconstructs the testimonial as imbedded either in neocolonial mechanisms of representation or in the interested ingenuity of the intellectual of the First World. He responds that “it is not the kind of reading that is valid, but rather the way in which the reading fits the necessities of the struggle of liberation or of survival that are expressed in the situation of enunciation of the testimonial” (Voz 18).

The Cuban writer of testimonial novels Miguel Barnet does not focus either on the revolutionary aspect of testimonial highlighted by Beverley, nor does he explicitly conceptualize testimonial novel as a vehicle for expressing solidarity with those who have no history. Yet he does perceive this literature as

55 Beverley comments that “If Elisabeth Burgos in a certain sense “exploited” the material which Rigoberta Menchú provided, Rigoberta also exploited her interlocutor in order that her story reach an international public reader” (“Anatomia” 165). Although this perspective distinctly recognizes two historical agents, it is phrased in a way that expresses the relationship in negative terms as one of exploitation, rather than in positive terms as one of collaboration. Indeed, both women could be perceived as acting out of a sincere commitment of “opting for the
expressing a kind of urgency; it is an urgency that is reflected in his insistence on the importance the testimonial novel in configuring a cultural definition for America ("Novela" 130, 143).

In either case, whether conceptualizing testimonial novels as a cry in the wilderness of social injustices perpetrated or as an integral aspect of the weaving of a national identity, the issue of testimonial referentiality demands critical reflection. Chopp states that in testimonial "one testifies, after all, in and to the public space about what one has seen, what one has experienced, what one knows to have really happened" (7). "What really happened" however, is an issue which requires an exploration of the nature of the historical and empirical truth-claims made by this literary form. Beverley discusses the question of the verisimilitude of the verifiable truth-claims of Rigoberta Menchú's testimony though a discussion of the work of anthropologist David Stoll with one of Menchú's compañeros, Ignacio Bizarro Ujpán. This work showed that "the specific ideological tendency is neither ontologically implicit in the experience [of a similar social situation], nor in the testimonial form itself" (Voz 13). It also brought into question however, the veracity of Menchú's account. This question arose with respect to the text of Me llamo Rigoberta for it became apparent in the course Stoll's research\(^5\) that there was some discrepancy with Menchú's account of the details of the torture and killing of her brother by the Guatemalan poor\(^6\).

\(^5\) Stoll was not in the altiplano for the purpose of investigating Menchú's claims, but rather to study the process of evangelization of indigenous communities by Protestant groups during the year 1988-9. However, he did present a paper "I, Rigoberta Menchú and Human Rights Reporting in Guatemala" at the conference "Political Correctness' and Cultural Studies" held at the Western Humanities Institute, University of California, 1990.
army. Menchú’s published account is supported by a document from an unspecified human rights agency. Differing accounts however, were reported to Stoll by Bizarro and other villagers. These accounts are also supported by documents from other unspecified human rights commissions (Voz 14). In response to this incongruency in the concrete details of a particular historical event, theorists seek to explain why this occurs and what it implies.

Beverley suggests several possible confounding variables: temporal distance may have been a factor as Stoll worked in the area ten years after the event occurred, or the methods of narration in Mayan culture may be different, or Menchú’s training as a catechist may encourage her dramatization of events when narrating them in order to ensure that her audience understands the meaning of the event she is narrating. Beverley follows these possible causes for the incongruency between accounts with an undocumented citation from George Yúdice: “the testimonial does not respond to the imperative to produce the cognitive truth – nor to destroy it –; its *modus operandi* is the construction of a praxis of solidarity and emancipation” (Voz 15).[^57] Thus, if the testimonial novel is conceptualized, as Barnet proposes, as invention within the essence of the real, then clearly *Me llamo Rigoberta* vividly evokes the lived experience of a collectivity.

[^57]: In support of her thesis that fictional and non-fictional discourses may be qualitatively distinguished, Foley discusses the relation of perception to cognition (which she supports with brief references to Gestalt psychology, philosophy of science, and Chomsky’s theory of linguistic competence) to argue that binary categories that are part of totalizing frames which are necessary for cognition and that it is through the social practice of reading narrative that its qualities are perceived (“Documental” 36-40).
Yet, as Beverley observes, "each particular testimonial evokes in absence a polyphony of other possible voices, other 'lives'"; thus, he adds, "a variation of the general form is precisely the polyphonic testimonial, composed by different witnesses of the same event ("Anatomia" 161). This innovation to the traditional form of the testimonial novel responds to the problematic of the internal reliability and validity of the empirical and historical truth-claims of the testimonial novel.

Testimonial novels, because of their explicit insistence that they refer to human historicity through some use of literary technique, provide particularly fertile ground on which to explore the relationship between the configured world of the text and the transfigured world of action. Clearly the world projected by the written texts of the testimonial novel claims overt -- although not unproblematic -- reference to a world of action, as argued above; Foster adds however, that "there is little doubt that, first with the novels of social realism, and then with contemporary fiction that bears witness to the conflict of Latin American society, there has been an emphasis on fiction as an especially productive form of documentary" ("Latin" 2). Barnet concurs with Foster regarding the referentiality of the fictional novel, observing that "reality is recognized in the imaginations of the poets; and the poets recognize their images in reality" ("Novela" 131). Barnet makes this observation as part of his argument for the recognition of the interdependence of narrative and human

---
58 Foley agrees with Foster's position, stating that novels such as Moll Flanders, Orlando, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, among others, "can be adjudged to be documentary novels" (Tell 26)
historicity, positing that not only the testimonial novel but that fiction itself exemplifies this same relationship.59

Ricoeur points out that “reference occurs wherever a symbolic system contributes to the making of a world” ("Mimesis" 153). It is the symbolic system of language employed in the creation of fiction that enables the text to project a world. As noted, this symbolic system is not a series of abstract signs inscribed in a vacuum, for if they were, fiction would be unreadable. The closer the organization of the text resembles the reader’s way of perceiving the world, the greater the ease with which the text releases its world through the configuring activity of the reader. Some deviation from the reader’s perception however, serves to push the reader to broaden her horizon in order to interpret and understand the written text.

In a review of three arguments which are in opposition to her conceptualization of a qualitative view of mimesis, Foley observes that fiction is generally perceived as imaginary while history is accepted as empirical (29). This disarticulation between literature and history effectively negates what Foley terms “the assertive capacities of fiction” (26). Foster too, contests the arbitrary distinction between kinds of discourse, arguing, as do Barnet and Foley, in favour of the “continuity between documentary history and narrative”

59 Examples of fiction with historical referents abound in Latin American literature, often configuring aspects of the sociopolitical reality such as social inequities and violence. To mention only a very few which relate specifically to the Mexican context are Carlos Fuentes Cabeza de hidra (1978) using a spy novel format to treat México’s emergence as an oil-rich superpower, Luis Spota’s La Plaza (1977), Miriam Ortiz’s Narciso en la costa (1998) exposure of life in the coastal village of Alvarado, Veracruz and Rosario Castellano’s Balún Canán (1957) depicting the reaction of Indians and mestizos in Comitán, Chiapas to Cárdenas’ policy that Indians have a right to be paid a fair wage for their work and to be educated.
Chopp concurs with Bamet, Foley, and Foster, adding that the "assertive capacities" of literature in general and testimonial literature in particular challenge how the real is both represented and created in culture ("Theology" 2). The conceptualization of the continuity between imaginative literature and the world of action shared by these critics is rooted in the understanding that "fiction is characterized by its ability to articulate or explain a complex event or situation" ("Latin" 42). Foster more precisely articulates the nature of this relationship between the event and its inscription by commenting that literature "is employed to portray complex sociopolitical reality" ("Latin" 38).

Alejo Carpentier however, disdains such an overtly pragmatic and indiscreet relationship between narrative and the world of action: "it is not for this [literary trap] that reason will then be given to certain partisans of a return to the real — a term that acquires, therefore, an enthusiastic political signification — that only acts to substitute the tricks of the magician for the common places of the "enrolled" writer or the eschatological enjoyment of certain existentialists" ("Real" 110). Despite the position articulated in this comment, Carpentier does not fall in with those critics who completely negate any relationship between the written text and the world of action. Rather, he posits that "many forget, with disguising themselves at little cost as magicians, that the marvellous begins to be such in an unequivocal way when it emerges from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, from an inhabitable or singularly favoured illumination of the inadvertent richness of reality, from an amplification of the stages and categories of reality, perceived with particular
intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit which conducts it to a kind of "limit situation"" ("Real" 109).

Although Foster's work explores the relationship between the documentary narrative and the specifically sociopolitical realities of the world of action, he has used the above citation from Carpentier as an epigraph to the first chapter of his *Alternate Voices in the Contemporary Latin American Narrative* (1985). However, he also adds to this citation the final sentence from Carpentier's essay: "¿Pero qué es la historia de América toda sino un crónica de lo real maravilloso?" (112). (But what is the history of all America if not a chronicle of the marvellous real?) This addition serves to support Foster's argument that distinctly pragmatic sociopolitical historical worlds may be accessed through fiction. Foster's approach is qualitatively in opposition to the position of Barnet, Beverley, Chopp and Foley. These latter critics articulate, depending on the genre of interest to each, that literature has the ability to evoke aspects of historicity that are not readily amenable to pragmatic, rational discourse.

The ability of imaginative language to articulate that which evades rational, in the sense of quantitative, formulation may be understood through Ricoeur's work on metaphor. For, as words in a sentence have the capacity to surpass their lexical reference, so too does a work exhibit this same capacity to move from its primary significance to a secondary level of significance through the activity of reading. The elucidation of this secondary level of significance in reflective refiguration permits the formulation of aspects of historicity that evade
empirical quantitative methods of inquiry. This access to aspects of the world of action which are less amenable to such “objective” discourse points to one of the major roles that literature plays in creating a polyphonic vision of the world of action which includes both dominant and non-dominant discourses. This polyphonic vision, which literature both reflects and enhances, addresses the issue of the indeterminacy of factual verification. “If [the novel] increasingly calls into question the possibility of truth-telling,” observes Foley, “this skepticism is directed more toward the ideological assumptions undergirding empiricism than toward the capacity of fictive discourse to interpret and represent its referent” (Tell 26).

This approach is consistent with the world projected by the citation from Carpentier for, despite the repetition of the word “real”, Carpentier is alluding to a sensation of the “marvellous real” which is evoked, in hermeneutic terms, in configuring the world of action through the act of reading its text. The resulting fusion of the horizon of the reader with the horizon of the world projected by the text and the appropriation such privileged revelation conducts the spirit to a kind of limit situation which permits a redescription of a world which is related to the world of action, broadening the horizon of the reader and enhancing her self-understanding.

Thus although all of the critics cited in this essay recognize a continuity between the imaginative realm of literature and the empirical realm of the world of action, the refigurations of Barnet, Beverley, Carpentier, Chopp and Foley propose that this continuity is realized in terms of the capacity of the narrative to
elucidate aspects of historicity which are more difficult for empirical thought to access. These less pragmatic aspects are closely tied to the way in which the real is signified – and created – through the cultural imaginary.

Guided by Ricoeur, Chopp observes that “poetics is discourse that reshapes, fashions in new ways, enlarges and calls into question the ordering of discourse within . . . the ‘social imaginary’ . . . [it is] a way to rename and refigure the real against the representations of dominant discourses” (6). The “social imaginary”, also referred to by the somewhat broader term “cultural imaginary” has been identified by Julia Kristeva and Homi Bhabha as basic presuppositions, metaphors, and rules which frame cultural operations (Chopp 2, 6). The cultural imaginary is not fictional in-itself, although fiction draws from and adds to it; it is rather the ideological basis on which social norms are legitimated in a given community. It is this ideological undergirding, often elusive to empirical scientific discourse, which may be accessed through the productive reference and the iconic augmentation of fiction.

In his essay “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality” (1979), Ricoeur notes that the philosophy of ordinary language, advocated by theorists such as Aristotle and Hume, conceptualizes the perception of an image, whether this image is a concrete photograph or a mental picture, as a copy or replica of an absent object. This absent object is one that exists, or has existed, in reality. Ricoeur thus postulates that presence and absence are different “modes of givenness” (120). He states that the question resulting from this
conceptualization of differing modes of givenness is simply: to what extent does the image differ from perception?

Ricoeur argues however, that image as copy is distinct from image as fiction. He posits that this distinction requires a change in referential status, for fiction has no presence in reality, no absent object of which it can be considered to be a copy. Thus, as there is no original which fiction can be considered to represent. This non-existence of the object of fiction in reality means that it cannot replicate an existing object in absentia. Ricoeur states therefore, that unreality must be characteristic of fiction. He observes then, that although the image is distinguished by the absence of its mode of givenness, fiction is distinguished by the unreality of its reference.\(^{60}\)

In positing unreality as the reference of fiction however, Ricoeur is not negating a relationship between the world projected by the text and the world of action. He proposes rather, that “the phenomenology of fiction has its starting-point in this lack of symmetry between . . . unreality and . . . absence” (120). He argues that, in order to understand the difference between the image as copy and the image as fiction, several changes need to be made to the well-known framework of ordinary language within which the problem of image is generally construed. He discusses two of these changes, the first of which is a shifting of

---

\(^{60}\) Ricoeur does observe that “of course, if you treat fiction as a complex image you may refer your elementary images one by one to corresponding entities in the world. But you have only displaced the difficulty. It [is] the new combination which has no reference in a previous original to which the image would be the copy” (120). He goes on, as I do in this present essay, to articulate through introducing the concepts of productive reference and iconic augmentation, the way in which the world projected by the fictional text (the new combination) refers to particular entities in the world. Ricoeur proposes that these entities are aesthetic, while I add that they also participate in broadening the reader’s understanding of ideologies which support particular
the problem of images from the sphere of perception to the sphere of language; the second of which is to link fiction tightly to work.

In the first conceptual change, the shift to the sphere of language from the sphere of perception, Ricoeur notes that "the denial of the primacy of the original opens . . . new ways of referring to reality for the image" (120-1). This refiguration of reality through the unreality of the reference of fiction is possible because "fictions do not refer in a 'reproductive' way to reality as already given, they may refer in a 'productive' way to reality as intimated by the fiction" (121). He adds that "because it has no previous referent, [fiction] may refer in a productive way to reality, and even increase reality" (121). It is in this way that "imagination is 'productive' not only of unreal objects, but also of an expanded vision of reality" (123); that is, the "productive reference" of fiction enables it to permit new ways of understanding the reality of the world of action.61

In the second conceptual change, the linking of fiction tightly to work, Ricoeur observes that "imagination is 'productive' when thought is at work" (122). Thus fiction "reveals its ability to transform or transfigure reality only when it is inserted into something as a labour, in short, when it is a work" (129). Ricoeur refers to this possibility that fiction offers to transform or transfigure reality as "iconic augmentation". Iconic augmentation is the "power of the image to condense, spell out, and develop reality" (130). For Ricoeur, the term "icon" entities in the world.

61 In this 1979 essay Ricoeur particularly seeks to emphasize an aesthetical grasping of world rather than, "the extent to which fictions also 'remake' human action or praxis as the practical fictions which are called ideologies or utopias" ("Function" 117); however, as discussed in this present work, Ricoeur does write and comment on fiction's close relationship with other aspects of the world of action.
is used to refer to image as homologous with language (126). Iconic augmentation then is “the new semantic pertinence which is born of the collapse of the semantic kinds under the clash of contradiction” (126) and as such it is the “schematization of metaphorical attribution” (126). In noting that “the poet is an artisan of language, who, by the sole means of language, produces and shapes images” (127), Ricoeur comments that the “image [created by the writer] is less ‘associated’ than evoked and displayed by the schematization” (127). In this way the “images created by the talent of the artist are not less real but more real because they augment reality “(130).

Ricoeur uses his theory of metaphor to demonstrate the way in which “the emergence of new meanings in the sphere of language generates an emergence of new images” (122). The split reference of the metaphor and the movement from a first level of significance to a secondary level of significance has been discussed above. Ricoeur adds here that it is “from the ruins of literal predication that imagination offers its specific mediation” (124). It is this “rapprochement which suddenly abolishes the logical distance between previously remote semantic fields in order to engender the semantic clash which, in turn, creates the spark of meaning of metaphor. Imagination is the apperception, the sudden insight, of a new predicative pertinence” (125). Thus, the first level of reference, the material medium of the labour of the writer’s imagination as externalized in the inscribed text, is configured through the imaginative labour of the reader. This configuring activity serves to “effect a sort of epoché of the real, to suspend our attention to the real, to place us in a state
of non-engagement with regard to perception or action, in short, to suspend meaning in the neutralized atmosphere to which one could give the name of the dimension of fiction. In this state of non-engagement we try new ideas, new values, new ways of being-in-the-world. Imagination is this free play of possibilities. In this state, fiction can, as we said above, create a redescription of reality" (128). Consistent with Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, it is particularly when the world which emerges from the fusion of horizons between the text and the reader clashes with the reader's current understanding that the appropriation of this second level of signification productively sparks a redescribed and expanded understanding of reality.

Ricoeur comments that "the more imagination deviates from that which is called reality in ordinary language and vision, the more it approaches the heart of the reality which is no longer the world of manipulable objects, but the world into which we have been thrown by birth and within which we try to orient ourselves by projecting our innermost possibilities upon it, in order that we dwell there, in the strongest sense of that word" (133). This comment supports the observations of the theorists discussed above (with the exception of Foster) that literature has the capacity to articulate aspects of reality that are less amenable to scientific discourse. As Ricoeur demonstrates, these aspects of reality are not simply reproduced in written text. It is rather that the written text serves as a first level of signification which, through productive reference, creates an iconic augmentation that enlarges the reader's understanding. The reality of the world of action which is enhanced through reading fiction is not
only the world of manipulable objects, but the world of the particular cultural imaginary into which the reader was thrown by birth. Thus, as discussed above with respect to Ricoeur’s essay “Mimesis and Representation”, in the three moments of mimesis action is effectively refigured through the configuration of real action. Mimesis configured as fiction does not produce a replica of an existing object in absentia that awaits refigurative reproduction of the original. Fiction is rather the creative rendering of the ostensive references of the world of action produced through the labour of a writer and which, through the productive reference to reality and through the iconic augmentation in which the reader engages, offers new ways of understanding the marvellous real.

It is through discourse that these new ways of understanding the marvellous real are then returned to the prefigurative matrix. “When the image is made”, states Ricoeur, “it is also able to remake a world” (“Function” 129). The understanding that fiction articulates and augments reality is supported by Nelson Goodman in his monograph Languages of Art, where he observes that “works of literature ceaselessly make and remake our world of action” (“Mimesis” 150). A clear demonstration of the interdependence of written texts and the world of action is the extent to which written texts may be problematic in the world of action. Ricoeur observes that “some may be tempted to refuse the problem, to hold the question of literature’s impact on life as irrelevant. But then, paradoxically, on the one hand, we ratify the positivism we ordinarily struggle against – that is, the prejudgment that the real is the given, such as it

---

62 What Ricoeur has identified as the "iconic function" as discussed above, Goodman names the
can be empirically observed and scientifically described— and, on the other hand, we lock literature up in a world in itself and when it breaks out as subversion, it turns against the moral and social order. We forget that fiction is precisely what makes language that supreme ‘danger,’ about which Walter Benjamin spoke with such awe and admiration, following Hölderlin” ("Mimesis" 148).

As discussed amply above in II.B., the inscription of the world of action as written text is achieved through a dialectic movement between the distanced whole of the world of action and the part which is being appropriated as written text. In this movement the reader/narrator seeks a fusion of her horizon with the horizon of the world of action, inscribing the world that is projected from this configuration. The resulting written text is then available to anyone who can read the language in which it is inscribed. Through the activity of reading, the reader in turn seeks to configure and appropriate the text, as yet distant to her, which emerged from the fusion of the horizons of the historicity of the world of action and the historicity of the reader/narrator. Thus, in the reverse movement from inscribing the world of action as written text as discussed in II.B., in III.B. the way in which the literary genres of the testimonial and fictional novels “explain” the marvellous real of the world of action through productive reference to it. It is because of this productive reference that literature permits, through the imaginative activity of refiguration, an enhanced understanding the self and of the cultural imaginary that supports particular worlds of action. Indeed, as

---

"symbolic function" of language and the plastic arts ("Function" 132).
Goodman states: one may "think of works in terms of worlds, worlds in terms of works" ("Mimesis" 150).
Return to the prefigurative

This thesis explored the question of the relationship between religious discourse and the world of action in México. It approached this question through the contemporary Mexican novel. Such an approach necessarily requires an examination of the relationship between written narrative and the world of human action. Phenomenological philosophical hermeneutics provides an appropriate theoretical framework on which to construct an examination of the articulation between literature and the world of lived experience, and the organization of this thesis directly reflected this theoretical framework. The work was divided into three major sections which mirror Ricoeur's three areas of engagement: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. Woven into these three major sections were Valdés' four stages of the operation of literary criticism: formal, historical, phenomenological and hermeneutical, which permitted a more refined elaboration of Ricoeur's three areas of engagement. This organizational structure served as a guide for the disciplined examination of the questions pertinent to this thesis.

The first of the three major sections outlined the theoretical framework that supported the whole thesis through a historical approach that is principally from the perspective of Valdés, Ricoeur and Gadamer. The second major section explored the movement from the world of action to its inscription in literary form both through an elaboration of how a particular text functions and through a theoretical reflection on the activity of inscription. The third section explored the
return movement from literature back to the world of action both through commentary on the relationship between religious discourse and action in three contemporary Mexican novels and through a theoretical discussion of literary referentiality.

I. Prefiguration

The purpose of this first section was to make conscious the theoretical perspective of philosophical phenomenological hermeneutics and to situate the reflections of this thesis regarding the relationship between religious discourse and human action within this framework. In a relatively brief historical overview which traces the development of the hermeneutic tradition from Schleiermacher through to Valdés, particular emphasis was placed on the evolution of the key hermeneutic terms of understanding, explanation, and interpretation.

Schleiermacher, accredited with integrating the approaches of Biblical exegesis and classical philology into a general theory of hermeneutics, considers interpretation to be understanding the Thou who wrote the text. Dilthey adds to this by arguing that in order to understand the author (and hence the text), the reader must understand the author's historical context. He posits that valid textual explanation must be drawn from objective, rational positivist methodologies and that interpretation simply differentiates the human and the natural sciences. Both of these theorists are considered part of a closed, romantic hermeneutics.
Two theorists not strictly part of the hermeneutic tradition added elements which significantly impacted on the development of phenomenological philosophical hermeneutics. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology introduced the concepts of horizon and life-world. For him understanding was the elaboration of the intentionality of the noematic contents of a text (that is, to elucidate the Eidos of a text). Heidegger introduced terms such as facticity, Dasein, fundamental ontology, and being-in-the-world. He radically changed the approach of hermeneutics in positing that explanation is the opening of a horizon and arguing that understanding must focus on a world rather than on an author. He proposes that a reader makes the text become itself and that hearing a text is the apprehension of a possibility of being.

Gadamer integrated concepts from romantic hermeneutics, transcendental phenomenology and fundamental ontology to create an open hermeneutics that challenges the reader to put the text into play. Understanding for Gadamer is the fusion of the horizons of the author and the reader.

Ricoeur follows the open hermeneutical tradition, integrating the Diltheyian quest for solid explanatory analyses with Gadamerian reflective interpretation. Ricoeur's text-centred approach places an emphasis on the formal aspects of the text as they may be analyzed from the structuralist theories found within the humanities. He argues that understanding the meaning of a text requires understanding the world that is revealed in front of it (rather than behind it in the intention of the author or within it in its semiotic structure), and that this understanding offers the possibility of redescribing the world of action of the
reader. Valdés adheres to the importance of formal explanation as a first step towards understanding a text itself, rather than reading the text in a way that enables it to conform to the perspective of the reader. He adds to the hermeneutic tradition a consciousness of the historical context of both the text and the reader as relevant factors in interpretation. Understanding for Valdés is not only the appropriation of the distanced world of the text, but also the sharing of this appropriation in dialogue with other readers.

II. Configuration

A. Formal/semiotics: inscribing the world of action

This second major section focuses on the composition and organization of a world which is distanced from the reader. Creating a diegetic world necessarily involves the use of a system of signs and, of the three texts that are analyzed in part IIIA, Oficio de tinieblas was selected to illustrate linguistic and structural strategies which serve to inscribe a particular ideological context. The narratological framework of Luz Aurora Pimentel provided the theoretical basis through which to explore the particular diegetic world of the selected text and the way in which it functions.

The sense of the characters of Leonardo Cifuentes, Catalina Díaz Puiljá, Pedro González Winiktón, and Fernando Ulloa is revealed through the techniques of narrating their actions and citing their direct discourse. These techniques expose the circumstances particular to each character and elucidate their psychological response to these circumstances, thus permitting insight into
why the plot unfolds as it does. The shift in narratological focus from the perspective of one character to another is a strategy which serves to create a polyphonic narrative which reveals the interdependence of the individual characters.

The inscription of the interrelatedness of the characters is deepened by structurally linking them together. Characters are narrated in diegetic spaces where they are not part of the central action. They may appear as observers or as passers-by to other events are taking place. Physical objects also link the them together as they appear in contexts to which they are not indigenous. It is through the privilege of the narrator that the reader may be made aware of these connections, for the characters themselves are not conscious of them. This narratological strategy then also serves to emphasize the lack of communication between the different characters whose actions so deeply affect one another.

There are two conceptualizations of time in Oficio de tinieblas: a linear, historical sense of time which is created through the narration of a sequence of events that are causally linked, and a cyclical, ahistorical sense of time which is related to the lack of change in the conditions which unleash the action of the text. This latter sense of the inevitability of the social structure of the region headed by Ciudad Real is emphasized through the opening myth of San Juan Fiador and the closing scene of Teresa telling the story of an ilol to Ildolina.

The interrelatedness of characters who are unconscious of the extent of their interdependence is the factor which drives the interweaving of events to
their culmination in the crucifixion of a young boy. This lack of awareness is inscribed through the technique of juxtaposing physical elements --fog, obscurity, smoke-- with the omniscient interpretation of the motivation of the characters. The Chamula valley is bathed in fog, characters close their eyes or retreat to dark rooms, smoke hovers in the valley after the implementation of the Ordenanzas Militares.

Narratological techniques and strategies such as those utilized in the text Oficio de tinieblas function to enable the inscription and creation of a particular world. This world however, remains distanciated until it is configured by a reader.

B. Historical semantics: relationship between the world of action and writing

In this part the text is the world of action and the reader/narrator is the mediator between the world of action and the inscribed text. Hermeneutics provides a theoretical approach which validates the consideration of the world of action as a text amenable to inscription and provides a guide through which to explore the process of fixing the world of action through writing.

Ricoeur posits four traits of a text to argue that the world of action may be conceptualized as a text. He recognizes a dissociation between the intention of the author and the meaning of the text, arguing that the external reference of the text of the world of action refers only to the world that it projects, and he leaves aside any Gadamerian textual self-referentiality. His key argument is thus based on the third trait of a text: the emergence of non-ostensive
references from the text of the world of action. It is this extracted noema, this pure meaning of the text of the world of action, which is inscribed.

This argument follows not only the four traits of a text, but also Ricoeur’s theory of the split reference of metaphor. In considering the importance of the non-ostensive references of the text of the world of action, Ricoeur has focused specifically on the aspect of split reference in which the metaphorical reference eclipses its literal reference to project a world. As he is arguing that it is only the Welt projected by the text of the world of action which is fixed, it follows that the reader then confronts the new ways of being-in-the-world presented by this inscribed noema. However, Ricoeur does not consider that the second level reference depends on the first level of reference in order to produce this gain in meaning. When taking this aspect into consideration, it is evident that the narration of the ostensive references of the text of the world of action serves to evoke the Umwelt and that meaning emerges at the intersection of the Umwelt inscribed by a reader/narrator of the text of the world of action and the world of the reader.

By the late 1970’s Ricoeur is addressing these problems, noting that the Welt of a text is projected from its sense. He is now writing about the reader appropriating a text through configuring its meaning in a dialectic movement between its sense and its reference. Valdés’ four stages of the operation of literary criticism, along with Ricoeur’s three areas of engagement, provide a theoretical basis on which to discuss the actual process of inscribing the world of action in narrative form in a way that includes not only the dialogue between
the historicity of the text (of the world of action) and the historicity of the reader/narrator, but also the role of the readers of the inscription of the text of the world of action in constructing the meaning of this text.

III. Refiguration

A. Phenomenology: narrative reflects the relationship between religious discourse and praxis in the world of action: three contemporary Mexican novels

As the narrative configuration in part II.A. indicated, the particular aspect of the world of action that this present work sought to explain and understand was that of the role of religious discourse in contemporary México. Religion—both official and popular—is an important factor in the history and culture of México and Latin America generally. The hermeneutic analysis of three contemporary Mexican novels clearly evokes religious discourse in the world of action, each permitting distinctive refigurations of this polyphonic phenomenon.


This testimonial novel addresses popular religiosity from the perspective of an individual who is an evangelical protestant. This essay explores the relationship between religious discourse and the actions of Jesusa Palancares, the protagonist of Hasta no verte Jesús mío. First, the manner in which God and Satan are conceptualized by Jesusa is discussed, along with the way in which this conceptualization is formed through the metaphors taken by the protagonist from the historical context in which she lives. It is noted that the contextual
metaphors utilized by Jesusa in order to articulate her Other are not neutral, but rather have an ethical value.

The second part of the essay describes the independent and combative character of Jesusa. This description serves as a point of departure for a discussion of Jesusa's understanding of her self. This discussion reveals a tension between the acceptance and rejection of the ethical values that are implicit in the metaphors that she has used to conceptualize her Other.


*El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán* involves three distinct narrative levels: the world of Jesucristo Gómez and his disciples in México during the 1960's and early 1970's, the life of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine 2000 years ago, and the present world of the narrator Lucas Gavilán in México in the late 1970's. The narrator retrospectively tells the story of Jesucristo Gómez in modern México through the perspective of liberation theology, tightly weaving it together with the Biblical narrative of Jesus of Nazareth in ancient Palestine. Although both the perspective of the narrator and the parallel structure of the text permit a redescription of the worlds of action of both modern México and of ancient Palestine, this essay reflected particularly on the relationship between the written text and the former of these two worlds.

The first part of the essay undertook a formal analysis of *El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán* through an examination of the actorial, temporal and spacial dimensions of the narrated world. This formal aspect of the paper also explored
the way in which the perspective of liberation theology is created by the narrative voice and through the dialogue of the characters.

The second part of the essay elaborated a redescription of the approach of Jesucristo Gómez towards addressing issues of social injustice in the diegetic world.


This text addresses both popular and official religion, offering insight into both Catholicism and syncretic indigenous religiosity within a particular community. The text weaves together the stories of indigenous characters in their chozas in Tzajal-hemel and San Juan Chamula with the stories of landowners in their houses in Ciudad Real. Added to this complex basic design are the stories of several persons who have dedicated their lives to the Church, and of several others who have chosen to serve the government. The intricate pattern which emerges from this insightful weave produces a rich fabric that evokes a Chiapaneca community during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. The referential ties of this esthetic creation serve as a starting point for a discussion regarding intercommunity dynamics which function to impede change in a particular historical context.

Inherent in the religious metaphors utilized by the Chamulas are indications of the way they conceptualize the world. The landowners, the representatives of the Church, and the representatives of the government also express their conceptualization of the world through their use of religious
metaphors. A careful examination of these metaphors reveals a close relationship between the distinct conceptualizations of the world and the differing actions of these groups. As it is consistent with their way of conceiving the world that it was impossible for the indigenous to conquer Ciudad Real, so it is also consistent with their way of conceiving the world that it was impossible for the representatives of the Church to reconcile landowners and indigenous in the name of God, that it was impossible for the representatives of the government to enforce federal law, and that it was possible for the landowners to maintain their position. The actions of each different group, rooted in their distinct conceptualizations of the world, result in the preservation of the status quo in the diocese of Ciudad Real. This status quo persists as implicit in each distinct religious metaphorization there is an understanding of the world which serves in part to render its adherents unconscious of the whole fabric, thus obscuring the role of each individual in the intricate design of interrelationships which creates this community.

B. Hermeneutics: testimonial and fiction novels

Once a written text has been created, hermeneutics also offers insight into the movement that is the reverse of the inscription of the world of action; that is, to what exactly do the inscribed actions refer? Thus while in II.B. the text was the world of action, in this section the text is the written document. Similarly, while in II.B. the reader/narrator was the mediator between the primary reference of the world of action and the text, in this section the text is the literal level of
reference, and the reader the mediator between the written text and the world of action.

Ricoeur's development of his theory of text involves the application of his theory of the split reference of metaphor to the text as a whole work. This theory of text evolves in a way which parallels the evolution of Ricoeur's conceptualization of the world of action as text. Initially for example, he places little emphasis on the primary level of reference, focusing rather on the non-ostensive aspects of the world projected by the text. In response to French structuralism in the 1960's however, Ricoeur's later essays include discussion on the way in which the non-ostensive level of reference of the world projected by the text is dependent upon the ostensive references of the text. He acknowledges that these ostensive references, these tools of language which construct the text, are not without a historical referent. He argues that dialectic reflection on this split reference of a work broadens the reader's horizon by enabling her to understand the world of action to which the text refers in a new way, just as with metaphor. At this point Ricoeur's concern is to explore the relationship between the configured world of the plot and the transfigured world of the reader.

This concern is echoed by Latin Americanists' interest in texts as an approach to interpreting sociocultural experience. As Ricoeur elaborates, written texts do not imitate or directly represent the world of action, but rather serve as puntos de partida for reflection on that world. It is this reflection which gives meaning to sociocultural experience.
Dialogue regarding the potential of literature to enhance understanding has led to debate on the nature of literature itself. These debates have considerably expanded the boundaries of what is considered to be literature. The broadest definition of literature is that literature is any whole work (written texts, theatre, cinema, etc.) that provokes a redescription of the world. This thesis focused on contemporary Mexican narrative and in III.B. elaborated a theoretical discussion of the way in which testimonial and fictional novels refer to the world of action.

The testimonial novel directly challenges theoreticians to explore the articulation between the aesthetic and imaginative aspects of the written text and the pragmatic world of action. Characteristically the testimonial novel involves the narration, by an external source, of a disturbing situation in the world of action from the perspective of someone who is living within the situation. This basic articulation of a part of the world of action makes available an aspect of the whole which might not otherwise be accessible to the reader, thus permitting her to broaden her horizon. However, it leads to a series of theoretical questions regarding the role of the writer of the text and the degree of correspondance between the text and the events of the world of action.

The written narration requires the immediate presence of an interlocutor, an educated gestor who most frequently is not part of the particular world of action narrated. This gives rise to the problematic of the implications this necessary gestor has on the story itself, which then leads to discussion of the role of the writer of the testimonial novel. Valdés' hermeneutical approach of
two historicites in dialogue, a reader and a text, also facilitates conceptualizing the creation of the testimonial novel by at least two individuals, one inside and one outside of the situation in the world of action that the narrative seeks to articulate. Latin Americanists who work with the testimonial novel state that the purpose of the articulation which emerges from this dialogue is specifically to unmask fixed interpretations of communities in the world of action. From an American perspective these interpretations seek to support marginalized peoples, while from a Latin American perspective these interpretations seek to contribute to the formation of national identities.

The degree of correspondence between the text and the events of the world of action presents another theoretical problematic in the study of the testimonial novel. Intertextual discrepancies between the novel and other external documents lead to questioning the verifiable truth-claims of the novel. The hermeneutical conceptualization that a novel is not a didactic text but rather an imaginative configuration that evokes lived experience through the aesthetic creation of verisimilitude responds to this problematic. The polyphonic testimonial however, does tend to increase the reliability and validity of the information given in the novel for it provides, as Nietzsche observes, more voices, different voices, to observe one thing, thus making the observations of this one thing more profound.

The appropriation of testimonial novels into the prefigurative matrix creates a polyfonia that questions the possibility of arriving at The Truth with respect to the realities of the world of action. Commentators point to the
capacity of these texts to articulate not only the rational, but also the non-rational elements inherent in the world of action. As Ricoeur's theory of split reference proposes, it is by way of the primary reference (the written text) that the secondary, or metaphorical reference of the text emerges. It is this dynamic which gives narrative its capacity to reveal aspects of the world of action which lie between facts simply recorded in rational fashion. Dialectic reflection on these two planes, the primary level of reference and the secondary, the formal and the hermeneutic, then serves to broaden the reader's understanding of both the rational and the non-rational elements of the world of action to which the narrative refers.

The fictional novel too, exhibits an external referentiality not only to the world projected by the text itself, but also to the world of action. Latin Americanists recognize the capacity of fiction to portray complex sociopolitical realities and to challenge the way in which the real is represented and created through the cultural imaginary. It is this ideological undergirding which is often elusive to rational thought, but that can be evoked through literary texts. This is not to argue that the world of action can be directly accessed and represented through these texts however. As Ricoeur demonstrates, unreality is the reference of fiction, for fiction has no presence in reality, no absent object of which it is a copy. Nevertheless, he notes that in negating the primacy of the original, new productive ways of referring to reality are opened up. Ricoeur argues that readers do not reproduce reality through reading a text, but that they refigure reality through the unreality of fiction. When the world projected by
the fictional text does not conform to the prefigurative conceptualizations that the reader brings to the text, the reader is then challenged to broaden her understanding of the context to which the text refers. It is through this reflection that understanding is augmented and that the reader is able to imagine possibilities for a transfigured world.
Works cited

1. Prefiguration


I.A. Formal


II.B. Historical


Valdés, Mario J. *Shadows in the Cave: A Phenomenological Approach to Literary Criticism Based on Hispanic Texts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.


**III.A.1. Hasta no verte Jesús mío**


III.A.2. El evangelio de Lucas Gavilán


III.A.3. **Oficio de tinieblas**


III.B. Hermeneutics


Works consulted

Phenomenological philosophical hermeneutics


"Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology" 1973. 63-100.

"The model of the text: meaningful action considered as text." 1971. 197-221.

"Narrative function." 1979. 274-305.


"From existentialism to philosophy of language." 1972. 86-93.

"The hermeneutics of symbols and philosophical reflection" 1962. 36-58.


**Philosophical background to hermeneutics: religion**


Ethnography


Religion


__________. "Option for the poor review and challenges". Faculty of Theology. University of Montréal, Montréal. 16 Sept. 1993.


Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA).


________. "Shaping their own future, the challenge taken on by the people of the barrio '3rd of May', Naranjal, Saint Martin de Porres". Unpublished essay, 1996.


Mexican literature

a) Commentary


Jorgensen, Beth Ellen. “Texto e ideología en la obra de Elena Poniatowska.” 

_Dissertation Abstracts International._ 47.4 (1986): 1344A.

________. “Creative Confusions: Readings of Hasta no verte Jesús mio.”


Lagos Pope, María Inés. “El testimonio creativo de Hasta no verte Jesús mio.”


__________. “Testimonios de una escritora: Elena Poniatowska en micrófono.”


Villarreal, Minerva Margarita. “La red de la discriminaciones o el enigma de las ovejas petrificadas: (comentario a la novela Oficio de tinieblas de Rosario Castellanos).” Revista Iberoamericana. 56.150 (1990): 63-82.


b) works


Sklodowska, Elzbieta. “Hacia una tipología del testimonio hispanoamericano”.


_________. “Forma y ideología en Oficio de tinieblas de Rosario Castellanos.”
Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana. 7.8 (1979): 73-91.

_________. “Literatura e historia: las contradicciones ideológicas de la ficción

_________. “Rosario Castellanos: nuevo enfoque del indio mexicano.” La
Palabra y el Hombre. 8.29 (1964): 83-88.


_________. “La mediación en las obras documentales de Elena Poniatowska.”
Mujer y literatura mexicana y chicana: Culturas en contacto. Ed. Aralia López
González, Amelia Malagamba and Elena Urrutia. 2 vols. Mexico y Tijuana: El

_________. “Testimonio y autoridad en Hasta no verte Jesús mío de Elena
Poniatowska.” Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana. 18.36 (1992): 155-
80.

Villarreal, Minerva Margarita. “La red de la discriminaciones o el enigma de las
ovejas petrificadas: (comentario a la novela Oficio de tinieblas de Rosario
Castellanos).” Revista Iberoamericana. 56.150 (1990): 63-82.

Volek, Emil. “Las modalidades del testimonio y Hasta no verte Jesús mío de Elena
Poniatowska.” Literatura mexicana/Mexican Literature. Ed. Jose Miguel