

**Psychology, Subsidized Journalism, and the Porfirian Public Sphere in
Emilio Rabasa's *Novelas Mexicanas***

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The Porfirian 'Public Sphere' and Rabasa's Quixotic Vision

In recent years, various scholars, referencing Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), have interrogated the legitimacy of using the concept of a public sphere in relation to Latin American societies—whether past or present.¹ Critics continue to debate whether Habermas' notion of a public sphere is best understood as historical description (and thus, generally inapplicable outside of Western Europe) or rather, as normative theory—and thus, at least partially fruitful for interpreting Latin America.² Furthermore, given the historical narrative recounted by Ángel Rama in *La ciudad letrada* (1984), in which he describes the hegemony and durability of a cabal of wordsmiths throughout Latin American history, we must wonder: How would the consolidation of Latin America's public sphere differ from that of Habermas' Western Europe? Indeed, Habermas signals both the creation and the dissolution of a public sphere—that is, the consolidation of a space for rational-critical debate in which participants bracket their respective socio-economic statuses, along with a

¹ See both texts by Piccato and also Lomnitz-Adler.

² See Uwe Hohendahl.

subsequent and unfortunate ‘refeudalization’ of that same space. The question should be posed: Did Latin America follow a similar trajectory? Or, rather, was the formation of a public sphere in Latin America around the end of late nineteenth-century both concomitant with and contemporaneous to the rise of a mass media and, ultimately, the dissolution of the division between private and public lives? Unzueta cogently forwards just this type of collapsed periodization and thus, offers a top-down creation of Latin America’s public sphere: mass communication (coupled with the aid of telegraphy and telephony), industrialized journalism, and state-subsidized news conglomerates coincided with the first inkling of a Latin American ‘public’ (35). Chasteen, too, it should be noted, posits a different chronology for Latin America than that elaborated by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (X). Like Unzueta, Chasteen suggests that the region first witnessed the creation of a public sphere at a later date, towards the end of the nineteenth century.

With the following, by focusing on the concept of a public sphere in relation to a particular Mexican novel, I add even greater complexity to this history of Latin America’s divergent modernity. I read Emilio Rabasa’s *novelas mexicanas* tetralogy (*La bola*, *Moneda falsa*, *El cuarto poder*, and *La gran ciencia*), written in Porfirian Mexico between 1887 and 1892, as one *letrado*’s attempted to garner support for the continued state subsidization of an industrial and objective press, thus buttressing journalism and aiding in the creation of a public sphere. Thus, I propose that the Porfirian lettered class aimed to extend participation in civil discourse even while controlling the terms of debate; in this way, they understood the public sphere both in terms of quantity and quality.³ In order to achieve their objectives, *letrados* activated various devices: some legal, some financial, and even others—like Rabasa’s *novelas mexicanas* tetralogy—literary. Before examining Rabasa’s work as part of this attempt to forge a certain type of Porfirian public sphere, I will briefly explain the concomitant legal and financial tactics employed by Porfirian *letrados* to define the contours of civil discourse.

After almost half a century characterized by political turmoil and rabbleroising newspapermen, in 1883, Mexico began to reform the legal codes affecting journalism.⁴ That year, it was reported in the Mexico City press that

³ See Gallagher for a discussion of the public sphere can be understood both quantitatively and qualitatively (3).

⁴ See Piccanto’s *Tyranny*.

Congress (*el Poder Legislativo*) was discussing how to modify the Constitution of 1857, particularly in regards to Articles 6 and 7. Article 7 had stipulated that the press, “no tiene más límites que el respeto a la vida privada.”⁵ The press had enjoyed a privileged legal position in Latin America since the Spanish Constitution of 1812. In Mexico, such trends continued through the ratification of the 1857 Constitution and up until the Porfiriato. In order to avoid the political corruption of judges, the Cortes de Cádiz Constitution required that those journalists charged with defamation, libel, or slander should be tried before not one but two juried courts, even while most criminals at the time were processed by courts presided over by a single judge. Denounced journalists thereby appeared before a fifteen-member jury meant to adjudicate their guilt or innocence (*jurado de acusación*) and, if found guilty, would then be sentenced by a twelve-member jury (*jurado de sentencia*).⁶ Beginning in the Porfiriato, juried courts were intensely interrogated, with many of the so-called *científicos* arguing that, on account of the system’s unfairness and inefficacy, it should be modified.⁷ Those who opposed such special juried courts for journalists regarded them as *fueros*.⁸ Amendments to Articles 6 and 7 were eventually ratified by Congress on the May 15, 1883.⁹ Interestingly, the passage of the amendments was hurried through the Senate under the guise of saving time and energy for the executive branch; instead of the usual roll call vote, the Chairmen of the Senate were content with a simple vote by voice.¹⁰ These collective amendments would be referred to colloquially—and especially among independent journalists—as the *ley mordaza* and would be a point of contention even during the final years of the Díaz administration.¹¹ As a consequence of the amendments, single judges could be more easily manipulated by local political caciques (*jefes políticos*) looking to stifle journalists who meddled in their affairs. For many Porfirian *letrados*, this type of juridical system was more conducive to forging an enlightened and objective public sphere. Furthermore, such judicial paternalism was oftentimes thought more adequate to dealing with the notable ethnic and cultural

⁵ “Constitution Política de la República Mexicana de 1857. Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas. January 19, 2014 <http://www.juridicas.unam.mx/infjur/leg/conshist/pdf/1857.pdf>.

⁶ Ovalle Favela, 756.

⁷ “Don Federico Gamboa calumnia al Jurado Popular: Un diario replete de aterradora vulgaridad.” *Gil Blas* (December 5, 1908). 1 Print.

⁸ Piccato *Tyranny*, 42.

⁹ Acevedo, 68.

¹⁰ Cosío Villegas, Vol. X, 233.

¹¹ “El Restablecimiento del Jurado. Para los delitos de la imprenta. El Tercer Congreso de Periodistas Reunido en Guadalajara, ante el señor General Díaz.” *El Ideal: Semanario para los obreros y el pueblo* (November 7, 1909). 1 Print.

diversity of Mexico. Amid such diversity—so the logic goes—organizing a jury of one’s peers would be nearly impossible; a single judge could at least offer a consistent, specialized, and even ‘scientific’ perspective.

As mentioned above, the Díaz government also took financial measures in order to both expand and define public discourse. In 1896, the Díaz government, via funds procured directly by the Secretary of the Treasury (*Secretario de Hacienda*) José Limantour, subsidized the creation of *El Imparcial*, journal directed by the Oaxacan Rafael Reyes Spíndola (1860-1922).¹² Reyes Spíndola was known to be a neurotic, feverish, and cantankerous workhorse, whose primary interest in life was producing a timely newspaper of information-driven rather than politically inspired news.¹³ He was infamously pugnacious towards his staff, and once proclaimed that “[l]os periodistas son como limones, a los cuales hay que chupar el jugo para arrojar luego con desprecio la corteza” (Saboritt 34). With government subsidies totalling 1,000 weekly, Reyes Spíndola could afford the most modern printing equipment, especially the ultra-fast Mergenthale linotype machine.¹⁴ Now, over 100,000 copies of *El Imparcial* could be printed in a single run; the price of a single copy was dropped to 1 cent, thus giving *El Imparcial* a definitive advantage over the 3 to 6 cents that was usually charged for more politically motivated newspapers in Mexico City. Both the *El Imparcial* and its more culturally focused counterpart, *El Mundo* privileged ‘objective’ news (both national and international) and information rather than the ideological, political harangues that had plagued Mexico’s press during most of the nineteenth century.

The Porfirian regime justified its sizable financial aid for Reyes Spíndola’s journals by claiming that the nation’s naggingly high illiteracy rates demanded that the nation’s inchoate public sphere be buttressed by government intervention.¹⁵ Subsidizing journals was thought necessary in order to educate the public—newspaper production entailed a distinctly didactic function.¹⁶ Soon, long-standing newspapers founded during the Reform years found it almost impossible to compete with *El Imparcial*’s success and tellingly, 1896 saw both *El Siglo XIX* and *El Monitor*

¹² See García.

¹³ Salado, 282.

¹⁴ Smith, 143.

¹⁵ Cosío Villegas, Vol. V, 678.

¹⁶ “Para qué sirve la prensa: Tarea educativa, 20,000 volúmenes.” *El Imparcial* (January, 10, 1899).1 Print.

Republicano shutter their respective presses.¹⁷ Many *letrados* thought, perhaps correctly, that such militant, oppositionist, and vehement journals were incongruous with the Porfirian epoch, which they deemed peaceful, progressive, and civil. Yet even though these newspapers and many others suspended operations, “newspaper circulation quadrupled between 1893 and 1907 and included a wide range of political opinions from the conservative voice of *La Voz de Mexico* to the radical Magonista publications” (Raat 440). In sum, Mexican media experienced a ‘refeudalization’ not unlike the one Jürgen Habermas had theorized as characteristic of the latter half of the nineteenth-century even while, simultaneously, the epoch witnessed an enhanced demand for journalistic production, and a veritable proliferation of newspapers of diverse political affiliations.¹⁸ Although Reyes Spíndola’s periodical did not last long in a post-Porfirian Mexico—the last edition of *El Imparcial* ran in 1914—for better or for worse, *El Imparcial*—this behemoth of the Porfiriato’s industrialized press—had created a new media moment for Mexico.

Finally, and as intimated above, Porfirian *letrados* attempting to define the character of public discourse in Díaz’s Mexico did not only include legal and commercial measures: the desire to define public discourse provoked a cultural response, specifically, in terms of literary production.¹⁹ In what follows, I propose that Emilio Rabasa’s *novelas mexicanas* are emblematic of this attempt to define Mexico’s nascent public sphere. I hope to accomplish this primarily by interpreting the *novelas mexicanas* as a reworking of Miguel de Cervantes’s *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de La Mancha*. By invoking El Quijote, Rabasa participates in one of the Porfiriato’s most prominent discourses, which associated independent journalism (either sensationalistic or oppositionist) with insanity.²⁰ Just as the legitimacy and logicalness of Don Quixote’s quest to incarnate the values of chivalric romances is ultimately undermined by the knight errant’s insanity, the quest to embody the values of independent journalism, undertaken by Rabasa’s protagonist, Juan Quiñones, is similarly satirized. In this way, Rabasa’s tetralogy offers a mordant critique of independent journalism and, in turn, proposes that the governmental subsidization of

¹⁷ See Lepidus. *El Siglo XIX* had been founded by Ignacio Cumplido in 1841; while *El Monitor Republicano* had been founded in 1844, by Vicent García Torres.

¹⁸ Cosío Villegas, Vol. V, 573. Also see page 681.

¹⁹ Although beyond the scope of this essay, the author has found 29 texts written between 1887-1915 in which journalists appear.

²⁰ During the Porfiriato, the general distinction made between the types of newspapers found in Mexico grouped journalism into two groups: ‘independent’ newspapers and ‘government-subsidized’ or ‘ministerial’ newspapers. See “La prensa en México.” *El Observador* (June 26, 1898). 1 Print.

journalism is the only means by which Mexico could foment the semblance of what Habermas theorizes as a public sphere: that is, a space to cultivate rational-critical, enlightened debates regarding matters of collective interest.

Until now, scholarly criticism of the *novelas mexicanas* has not considered the works' historical context, specifically in regards to the pervasive psychological discourse surrounding journalism during Rabasa's time. As such, critics have not ascertained what I argue to be Rabasa's primary objective with his tetralogy: by employing a psychological discourse both sarcastically and seriously, Rabasa intends to condemn independent journalism and, adversely, defend subsidized journalism. While various scholars have correctly shown that the *novelas mexicanas*—via the texts' stark description of a Mexico fragmented by chaotic political views and renegade journalism—attempt to garner support for a strong central government such as Díaz's, these critics ignore the works' two central themes: again, journalism and psychology.²¹ Other critics—like Rodríguez González (625) and Monsiváis (43)—do signal the work's harsh critique of journalism, yet ignore insanity's role. Finally, still other critics, describing Rabasa's works as expressing the political and social concerns that would eventually incite the Mexican Revolution of 1910, incorrectly propose that Rabasa's works constitute a critique of Díaz's administration: these scholars forward Rabasa and his novellas as essentially precursors of Revolutionary thinking.²² Such 'Revolutionary' interpretations of Rabasa's *novelas mexicanas* are markedly anachronistic, and ultimately occlude the original message of Rabasa's work—namely that it offered a spirited defense of the *pax porfiriana*.²³ All told, Rabasa's works address notably Porfirian (not Revolutionary) themes: namely the place and character of the press in Díaz's Mexico, the illogical character of independent journalism, and, by extension, the need to foment an extensive, active, and enlightened public sphere in Mexico by way of the government's subsidization of journalism.

Although Rabasa's *novelas mexicanas* include four separate novellas—*La bola* (1887), *La gran ciencia* (1887), *El cuarto poder* (1888), and *Moneda falsa* (1888)—the

²¹ See Grass, Alegría, Franco, Olea, Florescano, and Hale. Hale characterizes the tetralogy as an "overt apology for the Porfirian political system" (Hale 19).

²² See Hakala, Navarro, Lay, del Campo, and Stratton. Hakala claims: "Rabasa parece haber creído que la nación se adelantaba hacia una revolución eventual. Aunque no la consideraba totalmente desventajosa, puesto que podría conducir al progreso rápido que México necesitaba tanto, cuidaba distinguirla de la "bola" espuria, la cual según él no podría efectuar nada constructivo" (77).

²³ Cortazar correctly proposes, "Rabasa no fue crítico sino un convencido apologista del régimen" (159).

tetralogy develops chronologically, includes common characters and an integral plotline, and, most importantly, forwards a specific argument: independent journalism—whether oppositionist or sensationalistic—inspires harmful *bolas* that no reasonable (read: sane) citizen would desire.²⁴ Furthermore, and as alluded to above, Rabasa’s novel presents the subsidization of the press as indispensable in order to extend and organize a public sphere in Díaz’s Mexico.

Rabasa’s protagonist is Juan Quiñones, a twenty-year-old resident of a small town, San Martín de la Piedra. During the four novels, Quiñones involves himself in the vicissitudes of journalism, political life, and love. A skilled writer, Juan is vain, hotheaded, somewhat naïve but ultimately, good-hearted. His life is largely defined by two themes that develop in tandem: writing (especially independent journalism) and insanity, both of which are described within the text as constituting a violation of rationality, science, and mental health.

By associating journalism and madness, Rabasa participates in one of Porfirian Mexico’s most salient discourses. First, Díaz’s Mexico was immensely intrigued with psychological explanations and the occult areas of the mind; as the century drew to a close, it became increasing commonplace to talk about the psychology of alcoholics, of the masses, and even of the Mexican character.²⁵ As a branch of knowledge, psychology was employed for divergent political and personal ends both inside and outside the state. As a subject of study, psychology was first introduced in the national school system during the Porfiriato,²⁶ while the 1900 census was the first to catalogue those who suffered from “idiotismo,” “cretinismo,” or “enajenación mental.”²⁷ Moreover in 1910, as part of the grand celebrations for the Centennial of Mexican Independence, a sanatorium—the Manicomio General de la Castañeda—was inaugurated.²⁸

Secondly, and as intimated above, mental disease and independent journalism were closely linked in Mexico’s collective imagination in light of the 1883 amendments made to the Constitution. In a legal system now bereft of juried courts, around 1885, emboldened judges, enjoying their enhanced individual powers “devised the *psicología*, a test in which a journalist’s attitude toward the regime was judged. If he

²⁴ The following abbreviations will be used here: *La bola* will be “LB”, *La gran ciencia* will be “GC”, *El cuarto poder* will be “CP”, and *Moneda falsa* will be “MF”.

²⁵ See *100 años de la Psicología en México 1896-1996*. Also López, 49, and Sacristán.

²⁶ For an explanation of how indebted Mexico’s psychological scene was to positivist philosophy, see “Mexico, Psychology” in Craighead and Weiner.

²⁷ See Peñafiel.

²⁸ See Ríos.

had an attitude considered dangerous to society, he could be jailed” (Devitt 15). Psychological reasoning was activated to persecute journalists during visits to their printing presses, and it was also employed to justify judicial rulings against them.²⁹ In the years following the 1883 constitutional amendments, Mexican judges were able to “[c]lausur[ar] los talleres, y teniendo cada redactor varios procesos pendientes y varios ingresos a la cárcel, logró acallarse a la prensa libre de esa época” (Barrera 28). A judge’s decisions in libel cases were oftentimes rationalized as products of their psychological astuteness and thus opaque to both the accused and uneducated masses.³⁰ If an accused journalist had an attitude considered dangerous to society, he could be jailed” (Devitt 15). Defamation in particular was thought to be symptomatic of insanity, deemed a hostile, antisocial act constituting an attack against the private life of the individual who had been the target of journalist’s mordant pen.³¹ The vituperative screeds of independent journalists against private individuals³² were said to cause “daños psicológicos.”³³ Yet, the exact origin of the term “ley psicológica”—and, moreover, the first time the term was employed to justify legal proceeding and legitimate judicial rulings—remains disputed. While Ceballos claims that Oaxacan judge (*juez de lo civil*) Manuel Olivera Toro first used the term,³⁴ Roeder traces its origins to an unknown “ingenioso jurist,”³⁵ while Pruneda signals Mexico City judge Juan Pérez de León as its originator.³⁶ No matter the term’s exact provenance, Pérez de León, who condemned hundreds of journalists to Mexico City’s infamous Belem Prison, was deeply associated with the term.³⁷ He oftentimes visited printing presses personally, accompanied by his son, *juez 1º de lo correccional* Emilio Pérez de León, along with a few thugs for protection.³⁸ Among the presses inspected by Pérez de León were that of Daniel Cabrera, director of *El Hijo del Abuiçote*, and that of Filomeno Mata, director of *Diario del Hogar*. During a visit on October 1, 1891, Juan

²⁹ Mexico was not the only country in the late-nineteenth century where psychological arguments were used in cases of defamation and slander. See, for instance, Florian’s work, which was translated into Spanish and published in Mexico.

³⁰ Piccato, 180-181.

³¹ Ruiz Castañeda, 212.

³² Crimes against reputation like libel, defamation, and calumny increased between 1871 and 1885 (Speckman Guerra 374).

³³ Barajas, 498.

³⁴ Ceballos, 327 as qtd. in Ceballos and Luz América Viveros Anaya.

³⁵ Roeder, 294.

³⁶ Pruneda, 112.

³⁷ Cabrera Acevedo, 50. Also see “La voz del silencio,” in volume IX of Cosío Villegas.

³⁸ See both Arenas and Cosío Villegas, Vol. V, 252.

Pérez de León “practic[ó] averiguación sobre la redacción, composición e impresión del tiro en su parte litográfica” (Cabrera 64). Pérez de León’s inspections of printing presses oftentimes concluded with the apprehension, arrest, and incarceration of the journalists who ran them.³⁹ Case and point is the June 23, 1901, arrest of anti-Díaz journalists writing for *Regeneración*, Manuel de la Fuente and Daniel Cabrera, who were arrested and subsequently kept in incommunicado by Pérez de León.⁴⁰ Although the judge was synonymous with the persecution of journalists even as late as July 1911, he was not completely alone.⁴¹ Luis Garfías (*juez 2º de distrito* in Mexico City) and *juez 2º de lo criminal*, Wistano Velázquez, were also infamous for their hostility towards journalists.⁴²

By the mid-1880s, independent journalists writing in such newspapers as *El Chile Piquín*, *El Mero Valedor del Pueblo*, and *El Hijo del Ahuizote* sardonically, yet seriously, derided the notion that legal matters could be adjudicated by way of psychological reasoning.⁴³ Finally, some evidence suggests that imprisoned independent journalists attempted to defend themselves recurring to the same psychological explanations that had, in fact, locked them up.⁴⁴

All told, psychological explanations were often used to explain the nature of journalism as well as the types of punishments leveled at those who penned independent—and especially, outrightly oppositionist—journalism.⁴⁵ Thus, independent journalists such as Filomeno Mata, Heriberto Frías, Daniel Cabrera, Enrique “El Juvenel” Chávarri, Joaquín Clausell, and José Ferrel were each incarcerated multiple times in Belem Prison. Belem was notoriously diseased and neglected, and known for its unsanitary conditions: overcrowded cell blocks, rampant cases of typhus fever, and mentally unstable inmates. Criminality and confinement has been linked to insanity throughout Atlantic World for centuries, and the decrepit conditions of Belem, were especially thought to cultivate madness. Finally, the unsavory culture of Belem was regularly reported in newspapers, frequently by those same journalists who were locked behind bars. This, too, underscored the link between journalism, disease, criminality, and psychological illness.

³⁹ Pruneda, 112.

⁴⁰ Cabrera, 21.

⁴¹ *La Sátira* (July 9, 1911). 1 Print.

⁴² See Azpíroz.

⁴³ José Avalos Salazar, 44.

⁴⁴ See MacGrégor.

⁴⁵ Cabrera Acevedo, 22.

The strong association between writing and insanity so present in the mid-1880s when Rabasa began his tetralogy naturally evoked others places, other times, and other characters for the Porfirian intellectual: namely, Miguel de Cervantes's bemused knight errant made mad by words, the ingenious Don Quixote. For Rabasa, Cervantes's story of an ingenious but flawed hero helps to articulate the primary concern of the *novelas mexicanas*: independent journalism's inherent irrationality. While Cervantes's Don Quixote is made delirious by words (chivalric romances), Rabasa's Juan Quiñones is driven to madness by words (in his case, journalism).

Although other scholars have drawn connections between Rabasa's *novelas mexicanas* and *Don Quijote*, they have largely emphasized the author's personal predilection for Cervantes, alluding to Rabasa's respect for the most canonical of Hispanic texts.⁴⁶ Indubitably this is true, yet it fails to grasp the tetralogy's political message. By detailing the *novelas mexicanas*' relationship to Cervantes's masterwork, I aim to prove that Rabasa's central concern is that of defaming independent journalism and defending subsidized journalism. In this way, Rabasa's novel can be understood as a political intervention—defending subsidized journalism and by extension, trying to define a public sphere that is more extensive, more enlightened but also, sustained by and supportive of the Díaz government. This said, I now turn to the similarities between Rabasa's and Cervantes's respective works both in terms of characters and plot.

First, a few general comments about Juan Quiñones, the protagonist, are in order. Like tale of Don Quixote, Quiñones' story constitutes a struggle between *armas y letras*. As in the case of Cervantes's work, these dual concepts operate in tandem in Rabasa's tetralogy. In *Moneda falsa*, Juan—now fully committed to writing slanderous opposition journalism in *El Censor*—becomes incensed after being informed that numerous journalists have been unfairly jailed. As he explains: “me quedaba un estímulo para vivir: las glorias del periodismo; y el periódico era no solamente mi esperanza y mi consuelo, sino también mi arma” (*MF*, 267), while in *El cuarto poder*, Juan affirms “[m]i arma es un periódico que él [Mateo] no ha podido comprar” (*CP*, 132). Via his injurious journalism, Juan also inspires others to take up arms, addressing his readers “en términos y frases más o menos francas, que no sufiera más, que se pusiera en armas y diera en tierra con el castillo de barajas que se llamaba Gobierno” (*CP*, 170).

⁴⁶ Guerra Ramírez, 95. Also see Oseguera, 188.

Secondly, and tellingly, both Quixote and Juan are afflicted by vanity. While various scholars have described Don Quixote's vanity,⁴⁷ some even locating the creation of Dulcinea as a product of the knight's overabundance of pride, Juan's vanity manifests itself most obviously in his predilection for elegant clothing.⁴⁸ Thus, in the first scene of the tetralogy, Juan confesses, while en route to visit his love, Remedios, that: "si he de decir verdad, no acierto a decidir si mi afán era ver a Remedios o que ella me viera con aquel traje tan mono" (4). Significantly, Juan's pride in his sartorial panache only grows when he starts enjoying success as a mud-slinging, independent journalist in Mexico City. His colleague, Pepe, accordingly notes that Juan has donned a new suit, accuses him of becoming "muy gastador y muy elegante" (*MF*, 191), until even Juan comes to recognize his own "vanidosa vergüenza" (*CP*, 21). Juan's vanity is innately wrapped up with his vitriolic journalism; indeed, he feels emboldened upon successfully scandalizing others in print: "Mi artículo había causado un escándalo sin ejemplo, y Albar [el editor] estaba contentísimo. No se registraba en los anales del periodismo, suceso semejante. Estaba reservada esta gloria para mi pluma" (*CP*, 174). His "vanidad" is also "irrita[da]" when he is forced to read the work of an antagonistic journalist (*MF*, 218).

Thirdly, Juan shares Don Quixote's propensity for sickliness—specifically, nervousness and delirium. These symptoms, like his vanity, become increasing acute the more involved he becomes with independent journalism. Quiñones describes how he:

tenía yo miedo a mis pensamientos, a mi conciencia; y para huir de ellos me era forzoso buscar un motivo de distracción que sólo alcanzaba yo a veces en la agitación nerviosa que se apoderaba de mí cuando, tomando la pluma y llamando en mi auxilio todos los recuerdos que halagaban mi orgullo, escribía yo uno de aquellos artículos, ni pensados ni estudiados, que lastimaban y ofendían, y en los cuales los lectores apacentaban su avidez de oposición insultante y de lectura de sensación. (*MF* 201)

Thus Juan, like Quixote, suffers from somatic manifestations of his illness—an illness whose origin ultimately resides in words. In Rabasa's *novelas mexicanas*, scribing journalism and also, being attacked by sensational journalism inspires insanity, as injurious words become contagious. Hence, when a defamatory article detailing Don Mateo Cabezudo's quest to marry Juan's dear friend, Felicia, is

⁴⁷ Márquez Villanueva mentions Quixote's "ridícula vanidad" (61); Sender also discusses Don Quixote's vanity, as does Welsh.

⁴⁸ For Don Quixote's pride see Herrero, 34.

published, Juan describes that “me reía yo a carcajadas, nerviosamente, sin poder contener aquella risa, que me hacía daño, y que semajaba las carcajadas de un loco” (MF, 222). Similarly, near the tetralogy’s finale, when another Mexico City journalist, Claveque, slanders Juan’s character, Juan experiences the same maddening effects. Juan recounts: “[c]uando llegué al último renglón, mi cabeza parecía próxima a estallar, y la ira, el espanto, la vergüenza y la desesperación me volví loco” (MF, 333). In the final pages of the *novelas mexicanas*, as he laments his experience as a *bolista* and as an independent journalist, Juan admits that “Yo tengo la culpa, sólo yo. He estado loco” (MF, 385). At the end of the tetralogy, Juan, now an old man, finally decides to put down his pen (MF, 393).

Finally, Juan himself underscores his connection to Don Quixote. His thoughts are swept away in a quixotic daydream when Sabás Carrasco invites him to join him as a journalist:

Me había yo sentado al borde de la cama, como debía de hacerlo el Ingenioso Hidalgo, cuando se imaginaba, antes de su primera salida, una descomunal batalla con desmedido gigante o con una serpiente de siete cabezas; y veía yo ¡sí! veía yo en mis manos un periódico, y en el periódico un largo artículo calzado con mi nombre, y en el artículo mil galas de lenguaje, fraseo elocuentísimo y sutilísima argumentación. (CP, 30)

It is no coincidence that the word ‘loco’ pervades each of the four novels: in *La bola* the word *loco* is used 4 times; *El Cuarto Poder* includes 16 mentions of *loco*; *Moneda falsa* has 12 mentions of the word; and *La Gran Ciencia* has 11 uses of *loco*. Nor is it coincidence that the names of Cervantes’s and Rabasa’s respective protagonists each contain four syllables: “Juan-Qui-ño-nes” is “*don-Qui-jo-te*.” Opposition journalist Gavilán refers to Juan as “chiquillo, quijote y tonto” (GC, 272) and Juan evinces an “arranque quijotesco” (MF, 287) after a night of drunken revelry. Juan is, at heart, a Quixote, swept away not with chivalric novels but rather, independent journalism.

Other characters and plotlines in Rabasa’s *novelas mexicanas* underscore the text’s quixotic elements, thus reinforcing the tetralogy’s central objective: to prove the ‘insane’ nature of independent journalism. Particularly telling is Juan’s sidekick, Pepe Rojo, who is likened to Sancho Panza. Like the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the friendship between Juan Quiñones and Pepe Rojo is characterized by lively conversation and heartfelt commiseration. Juan reports enjoying Pepe’s “humor y [...] chispa” (GC, 34), his “mezcla de pudor y cinismo,” and his “charla llena de intencionada hinchazón y burlescosos tropos” (MF, 187) that “encantaba y entretenía las horas enteras” (MF, 187). Pepe is sensitive to the

emotional needs of his friends, and attempts to steer Juan away from his more quixotic activities, both figuratively and literally. Like Cervantes's Panza, Rojo, too, thinks with his gut, evinces survival skills, and tries to keep Juan on the paths that offer the least resistance and which promise the most material gain.⁴⁹ Most strikingly, Rojo expresses trepidation about Juan working with Javier Escorroza in *El Censor*, the job that initiates Juan into the *demimonde* of independent journalism (*CP*, 85). Pepe is also present at the tetralogy's finale, when Juan's feverish dream of independent journalism ends when the *El Censor* is retracted. Here, Juan loses both his intellectual lifeblood (as an independent journalist) and his financial subsistence. The Sancho-like Pepe underscores the grim reality of the situation, telling Juan: "¡Es decir que ya no hay *Censor*, ni tenemos que comer ni usted ni yo!" (*MF*, 311). Juan describes how "Pepe siguió hablándome, siempre serio y grave, pintando mi horrible situación con vivos colores" (*MF*, 331). Pepe eventually counsels Juan to relinquish his pride and to make peace with local political baddie, Don Mateo (*MF*, 321).

Two other similarities between Cervantes's Sancho and Pepe are of note. First, Rojo, like Panza, is carried away by grandiose daydreams of dominating faraway lands. While Sancho imagines himself as governor of an island, Rojo expresses his desire to emigrate to a more 'liberal' and 'civilized' country (*GC*, 313). Secondly, like Sancho Panza, Pepe Rojo, too, transforms over the course of Rabasa's work, becoming more like the choleric and quixotic Quiñones.⁵⁰ These changes are most notable in the second chapter of *Moneda falsa*, when Rojo publishes a defamatory article in *El Censor* that is celebrated far and wide for its mordant tone. Ultimately, it is no coincidence that Pepe Rojo and Sancho Panza—like Juan Quiñones and Don Quixote—have the same number of syllables in their respective names: "Pe-pe-ro-jo" is, effectively, "San-cho-Pan-za."

Although other characters Rabasa's *novelas mexicanas* are inspired by *Don Quijote* (Rabasa's Jacinta is Cervantes's Altisidora, and Juan's love interest, Remedios, is Dulcinea) perhaps the most obviously cervantine character is Sabás Carrasco who, like his similarly named counterpart, Sansón Carrasco, is crucial in awakening Juan

⁴⁹ Pepe says: "¡Magnífico! Y no se piense usted: el hambre ha sido la fuerza impulsiva de la civilización, y más que eso, la reveladora de los genios. Yo compadezco a los ricos, porque nunca llegan a saber si tiene talento o no. Imagínese usted un genio ahito. ¿Para qué ha de pensar? No tienen las letras, las ciencia y las artes mayor enemigo que un lomo relleno, alimento macizo, compacto y de peso, que quita por tres días la tentación de pensar en cosas útiles" (*CP*, 43).

⁵⁰ See Madariaga for a discussion of "La Quijotización de Sancho Panza y la Sanchificación de Don Quijote."

Quiñones from the feverish maddeness of words. Rabasa's Carrasco, like Cervantes's Carrasco, effectively cures his protagonist buddy of a bad case of craziness. The relation between Carrasco and Juan is established from the first scenes in the tetralogía when, in *La bola*, the *jefe político* of San Martín de la Piedra, Don Jacinto Coderas, offers Juan the job of *secretario*, a post which, until then, had been occupied by Carrasco. Like Cervantes's Sansón, Rabasa's Sabás, too, soon thereafter disappears from the narration, only to reappear later in dramatically different contexts, a propensity the narrator makes explicit.⁵¹ Just as Cervantes's Sansón appears as the Caballero de los Espejos and later as the Caballero de la Blanca Luna, Rabasa's Sabás appears in the first novel of Rabasa's tetralogy, *La bola*, before reappearing (much to Juan's surprise) in *El cuarto poder*, immediately after Juan's arrival to Mexico City; Sabás, like the Caballero de los Espejos, begins to mirror Juan's movements. We see the two reconnect in the capital, where Sabás urges the now penniless and despondent Juan to join him as a journalist in *La Columna del Estado*. Although the journal is governmentalist, Carrasco explains that he would prefer to write in the oppositionist press, and moreover, that Juan, similarly, is more suited for opposition journalism. Sabás's association with Sansón is most apparent in the tetralogy's final novel, *La moneda falsa*, when he (Sabás) reports to Juan that Don Mateo Cabezudo intends to marry Felicia, a young girl who has followed him (Juan) from his hometown, has helped him out in times of need, and has oftentimes acted as a matchmaker between Quiñones and Remedios. That is, like Cervantes's Carrasco, Sabás is fundamental in catalyzing the quixotic Juan's final, and elucidating, self-realization. After Felicia informs Juan that Remedios no longer pines for him, Juan becomes notably depressed and ceases writing for *El Censor*, the opposition newspaper that he works for at that time. Sabás, a vehement opposition journalist himself, is saddened by Juan's crestfallen state, and thus, like Cervantes's Sansón (as Juan explains), Sabás begins to "busca[r], excitando mis conocidas aficiones, la manera de volverme al camino de la razón, que era, en su concepto, ponerme otra vez en el de la gloria y la inmortalidad (MF, 217); he "trataba de obtener para buscar los medios de aliviar mi dolencia" (MF, 235).⁵² In short, both Sansón and Sabás task their respective heroes with returning to reason. After gaining Juan's trust, Sabás rouses

⁵¹ "Día llegará, si el lector y yo seguimos nuestras respectivas tareas adelante, en que pueda y deba contarle cómo Sabás Carrasco llegó a estar sometido a mi férula y esperanzado en mi buena disposición hacia él, como hoy se dice" (LB 73).

⁵² Similar to Don Quixote, Rabasa, too, focuses on the 'triste figura' of his protagonist. Sancho refers to Don Quixote as "El Caballero de la Triste Figura" in I, 19.

him from his malaise, appropriately, by reading a short story published in *El Censor* and penned by their fellow opposition journalist, Claveque. The inflammatory story recounts—via pseudonyms—that Don Mateo Cabezudo plans to marry Don Ambrosio’s innocent and honest daughter, Felicia, who has aided Juan throughout the tetralogy. Juan explains that the story, along with the excitement in the *El Censor*’s editorial office “caus[an] efecto en mi ánimo, pues despertaron de nuevo mis aficiones, o mejor dicho, encendieron mi fiebre de periodismo carnívoro, que me ponía fuera de razón” (MF, 229). Like Cervantes’s Sansón, Sabás, too, inspires his respective hero to act: Juan, enlivened by Sabas’s cajoling, begins again to pen vitriolic opposition articles, wanting to “embriagarme con los triunfos o de distraerme dañando a los demás” (MF, 229).

The connection between Rabasa’s Sabás and Cervantes’s Sansón is underscored one final time, appropriately, at the novel’s conclusion, where the place of newspapers is again foregrounded. As Carrasco awakens Juan from his irrational dream of independent journalism as Remedios lies moribund, after having been accidentally shot following a streetfight between her beloved, Juan, and her uncle, Cabezudo. Sabás demonstrates to Juan the hurtfulness and irrationality of independent—opponentist and sensationalistic—journalism, thereby inspiring Juan to return to his hometown of San Martín de la Piedra. Ingeniously, Juan is defeated not with a sword, but rather with a newspaper.⁵³ The edition of *El Censor* that Sabás hands Juan includes the article written by Juan’s fellow journalist, Claveque, and financed by Don Mateo Cabezudo; in which all of Juan’s misadventures over the course of the tetralogy are recounted. Especially emphasized therein are the ways in which Juan has harmed others. The article details Juan’s “el instinto perverso de que estaba [Juan] dotado” (MF, 333), and describes his attempt to kill Miguel Labarca (*La gran ciencia*), his unfulfilled promise to marry Jacinta (*El cuarto poder*), and most heinously, “el desenfreno de [su] lenguaje en los periódicos” (MF, 334) along with his “una oposición sistemática, grosera e insultante” (MF, 334). As a journalist, so the article details, Juan “había concluido por alimentarse del más infame *chantaje*, de la socialiña más desvergonzada, en la cual había yo tenido el talento de no figurar como agente principal, aprovechándome de sus productos, que yo llamaba producto de anuncios” (MF, 334).

⁵³ “Carrasco llevaba un periódico en la mano, lo cual no me llamó la atención porque era costumbre suya, como para denotar que era periodista. Se acercó algo más a mí y me preguntó: ¿Es algún viaje...largo?” (CP, 332).

Significantly, Juan recognizes that the article is written in the same sensationalistic and hurtful journalistic style that he has evinced throughout the tetralogy; Claveque's article is "como los que yo había aplaudido mil veces, y aun retocado en ocasiones" (MF, 333). Juan, realizing the dark, hurtful, and crazed path he has taken, asks Sabás, accordingly: "Es decir, que soy un miserable, ¿no es verdad?" (MF, 335). In the days after Sabás' intervention, other newspapers reproduce Juan's sad story (CP, 342 and 347), and to Juan it seems that "todos los transeúntes me conocían y que acababan de leer mi historia en *El Censor*" (MF, 336). Rabasa's Carrasco once again approximates Cervantes's in that they both appear towards the end of their respective novels, returning their respective protagonists to reason. Finally, both Carrascos force the story's protagonist to return home.⁵⁴

Thus, as Quiñones sets out to leave town with his new love interest, Jacinta, Felicia suddenly appears, cajoling Juan to visit the dying Remedios (MF, 350). Juan hurries to Remedios's bedside, where he finds her uncle and his perennial rival, Don Mateo Cabezudo. As Remedios lay dying, the two men realize how badly they have acted, and how incredibly alone they feel.⁵⁵ The novel ends with Juan returning to the quiet life of San Martín de la Piedra, where he ruminates on his own mortality. Sabás Carrasco, Rabasa's version of Cervantes's Sansón, has brought Juan back to sanity via the newspaper. What for so long been Juan's saving grace, now becomes the mote in his eye, effectively allowing him to see the hurtfulness of ragtag, oppositionist, and sensationalistic journalism. With a pharmakos-like newspaper in hand, Carrasco fights fire with fire, giving Juan a final taste of his own medicine.

'Independent' Journalism's Illegitimate Origins

Having argued that independent journalism is represented in Rabasa's text as a quixotic, innately insane enterprise which provokes widespread violence and disorder, I turn now to Rabasa's more concrete statements regarding the state of public opinion in Mexico and, moreover, the status and worth of subsidized journalism. Ultimately, I propose that Rabasa's tetralogy characterizes public opinion in Mexico as lacking, and thus in order to remedying such dire straits, the author forwards the idea of the subsidization of journalism by the government. Rabasa's

⁵⁴ In Chapter 64, Part II of *El Quijote*, Sansón, dressed as the Knight of the White Moon, defeats Don Quixote on the beaches of Barcelona, making him see the comedy of his errors, and inciting his return back to La Mancha.

⁵⁵ "—Yo estoy solo en el mundo—dije con voz trémula.
— Yo también—replicó el general conmovido—" (MF, 391).

texts, consequently, bear out the truths that Unzueta would later theorize during our time and, I contend, support the notion that Latin America experienced the forging of a public sphere at a later time. Rabasa claims state-subsidized journalism as the only means by which an extensive, enlightened, and refined public could be forged in Mexico.

First, Rabasa's suggestion that Mexico lacks a public. At the end of *El cuarto poder*, as Juan has fought a battle with Don Mateo via newspaper articles throughout the entire novel, we learn that the independent newspaper for which Juan writes with Pepe and Sabás, *El Cuarto Poder*, has procured new subsidized funds from the government, and thus changes stripes overnight. Barely escaping a fistfight with Don Mateo, Juan finds himself tired, beaten down by life, and takes shelter in the appropriately named Hotel del Refugio.⁵⁶ Here, Juan is informed by his Sancho Panza (Pepe Rojo) that the paper's director, Pablo Albar y Gómez, has arranged for their paper to their former political view, supporting the state:

El Cuarto Poder vuelve a las ideas de *La Columna* las cosas han cambiado, según dice el Director. El sobretiro se agotó anoche, y esta mañana muy temprano fue el Sr. Albar al Ministerio...
—¡Pero esto es inaudito! exclamé yo espantado.
—No, señor; replicó Pepe con calmosa gravedad: esas son las oscilaciones de la opinión pública. (*CP*, 180)

The fact that Rabasa puts these words in the mouth of the buffoonish Pepe (speaking suddenly with “calmosa gravedad”) leads us to suspect that his statement cannot be true. We know for a fact that the director of *El Cuarto Poder* “fue al Sr. Albar al Ministerio...” (*CP*, 180); indeed, it is doubtful that public opinion has changed. Rather, government administrators have demanded a change in the newspapers' political commentaries. Rabasa suggests that journalists would be lucky to house a public that was even fickle; ultimately, in Mexico, there is none to speak of.

With the conclusion of his *novelas mexicanas*, Rabasa undermines the worth of independent journalism one final time and ultimately promotes subsidized journalism as the only viable solution for Porfirian Mexico's lack of a public sphere. Here, anti-state journalism is cast not only as politically unacceptable, harmful, but also, economically unfeasible.

In the final novella of Rabasa's series, *Moneda falsa*, Juan writes for the independent and fiercely anti-statist newspaper, *El Censor*; Juan's employer, director of

⁵⁶ Juan is “tendido, pálido y débil, presa de extraña enfermedad” (*CP*, 180).

La Columna, Pablo Albar y Gómez, no longer shows any control over what *El Censor* publishes on a daily basis, although it is he, ostensibly, who pays Juan for his articles. With Pablo out of the picture, *El Censor's* staff—which includes Juan, Braulio Claveque, and Pepe Rojo—pen increasingly mordant attacks against the government. Claveque, a new addition to the paper, is first described as a very devoted opposition journalist, and Juan, accordingly, has great confidence in him (*MF*, 199). Claveque's hatred of Don Mateo Cabezudo is almost as vehement as Juan's, and the new journalist writes a piece mordantly attacking Cabezudo, deriding him for wanting to marry Felicia (*MF*, 219). Don Mateo, accordingly, is forced to subsidize three newspapers in hopes of undermining the articles of various journalists who attack his person on a daily basis (*MF*, 270). And yet, there remains something mysterious about Claveque. At times he intimates that it would be acceptable to stop writing opposition articles (*MF*, 217), and soon thereafter, Bueso, a government bureaucrat working with Mateo Cabezudo, urges Juan and the rest of the *El Censor's* journalists to stop defaming Mateo (*MF*, 227-229). Mateo and Juan begin a markedly brutal battle via newsprint, dragging each other's name in the mud (*MF*, 269). As tensions heighten between Mateo and Juan, Claveque urges that Juan to make peace with his longtime rival (*MF*, 270). As Juan's maddening journey to the dark heart of independent journalism quickly draws to a harrowing close he finds himself (appropriately) in a pulquería, carousing late into the night with other independent journalists, where he is toasted as, effectively, their king.⁵⁷ Here, Juan becomes so inebriated that he fails to notice that Claveque seems to be brokering Juan's fall from grace, providing him (Juan) with more money to buy libation and speaking to government official and Mateo's right-hand man, Bueso in the pulquería, even when Juan is too drunk to understand their conversation. Finally, Claveque refuses to publish one of Juan's articles on account of there being a lack of space in the day's edition. This is where Rabasa launches his final blow against independent journalism.

Before the final showdown between Mateo and Juan, Javier Escorroza appears at *El Censor's* offices and urges Juan to cease publishing articles slandering Cabezudo. Escorroza at first tries to explain to Juan that his (Juan's) employer, Pablo Albar y Gómez, requests that he stop defaming Cabezudo in print since Quiñones is, in fact, being paid to write. That is, there is a system of remuneration, an exchange of goods and services, which—Escorroza suggests—Juan needs to respect. Juan explains

⁵⁷ See the chapter in *MF*, "Entre amigos," page 273.

that, with Escorroza's request, "[l]a cólera y la risa hicieron un baturrillo dentro de mí, y lancé una carcajada insultante" (MF, 302). Juan suggests that the merger salary which Albar y Gómez gives him is not enough to buy his silence. Escorroza corrects Juan, explaining that—although unbeknownst to him (Juan)—it is, in fact, the government that has continually paid his salary since Albar y Gómez started *El Cuarto Poder*. Juan is taken aback: "Yo estaba aterrado y di lentamente dos pasos atrás. [...]—¿Es decir—exclamé aterrado—que me mantiene el mismo Gobierno a quien yo ataco sin cesar? ¿Es decir, que soy yo un canalla como usted y Albar?" (MF, 302). Juan proceeds to call Escorroza a 'canalla' before fleeing the office even while making mental calculations; finally thinking clearly (that is, the fever that is opposition journalism is broken), he realizes that Albar y Gómez is earning an absolutely immense sum of money, while he earns a pittance.

Things go from bad to worse in the next pages when the cryptic figure, Claveque, finally shows his true colors by disabusing Juan from the idea that *El Censor* actually has a readership: "no tiene el periódico suscriptores, si no son dos o tres Gobiernos de los Estados que toman algunos ejemplares a cambio de elogios de *El Cuarto Poder*" (MF, 312). Juan explains that "[l]as palabras de Claveque tan pronto me helaban la sangre, revelándome mi verdadera situación, como la encendían con la vergüenza [...] Tuve en cierto momento la intención de tirarle a Claveque una silla a la cabeza, sin saber por qué" (MF, 312). Thus, *El Censor* is neither a 'real' independent newspaper (since it is funded by the state), nor does it even really circulate. Juan has no public. His bohemian dream of conscientious, politically-motivated independent journalism is, in short, a joke. Essentially, there is no public in Mexico without governmental funds. The public sphere of Díaz's Mexico is neither a space for rational-critical debate, nor is it even extragovernmental.⁵⁸ Rather, it is only rational to the extent that the state is involved. Juan has incorrectly believed himself to be taking part in a political vanguard, or perhaps what Michael Warner theorizes as a 'counterpublic.' Nevertheless, unlike Warner's definition of a counterpublic, which understands itself pertaining to a subculture, Juan—along with his fellow independent journalists—obviously don't believe that they answer to the same master as those rooted firmly within the establishment; and yet, they do.⁵⁹ Juan and his fellow

⁵⁸ This is, of course, keeping in mind the definition of the public sphere as elaborated by Habermas.

⁵⁹ Warner proposes that counterpublics "maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status" (56); "a counterpublic in this sense is usually related to a subculture" (56).

independent journalist have been, in short, deluding themselves: their belief that a public actually exists outside the purview of the state is wrong-headed and unfounded. Rabasa's novel intimates that in Díaz's Mexico only the state that can assume the role of creator for a public.

Rabasa's message is underscored in yet other ways. The novel's clever plot twist, which suggests that independent journalism and state-subsidized journalism have a common origin, coincides with the origins of the work's two *döppelgangers*, who propel the narrative forward, and whose shared history is articulated at the very beginning of the *novelas mexicanas*. Better said, just as independent journalism and subsidized journalism secretly share a 'patron' (government subsidizes), we learn (tellingly) that the tetralogy's protagonists—Juan Quiñones and Don Mateo Cabezudo—may actually share more than is immediately apparent. They may actually share a father, and indubitably share a patriarch. In this way, Rabasa underscores his tetralogy's primary argument regarding the necessity of 'fatherly' government protection. More explanation is needed.

Early on in the series' first novella, *La bola*, Juan describes Mateo in the following way:

Nacido de una mujer del pueblo, que solía desempeñar en mi casa los oficios de lavandera (y esto no es rebajarle), tomóle mi padre alguna afición, y le enseñó a leer y escribir cuando ya pasaba de los veinticinco años, tratando de colocarle después en la tienda de Gonzaga, padre de mis conocidos. (*LB*, 11)

The enemies throughout the tetralogy grew up in the same household. That much is indisputable. Rabasa may also be suggesting that Juan and Cabezudo, in fact, share a common father: Mateo is perhaps the offspring of Sr. Quiñones and the house's indigenous washing woman. Rabasa ironically emphasizes the kinship between Mateo and Juan with his description of Cabezudo, in which he characterizes Mateo as "nunca confundido con ningún otro de los seres vivientes" (*LB*, 11). Of course, the two men go on to become very different people—Juan is a "muchacho ilustrado" (*LB*, 16) who cultivates his "letra inglesa" (*LB*, 16) and who "tenía formado un caudal de instrucción" (*LB*, 16). Mateo, on the other hand, is forcefully conscripted in the military.⁶⁰ And yet, like newspaper production in Díaz's Mexico, the men share an unmistakable father, a deep history, a common origin; perhaps, like independent journalism and state-subsidized journalism, they only appear to serve two different masters. In this way, too, the *novelas mexicanas* evince the same type of

⁶⁰ Don Mateo is said to have "cayó de leva" (*LB*, 12).

circularity as does Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, and which was previously noted in relation to Remedios and Juan's mother. Consequently, the tetralogy begins with talk of the protagonists' shared origins and ends with a discussion of the common origins of independent and subsidized journalism. All told, Rabasa's text is a return to origins, a reencounter with a shared past in order to elucidate the present crisis of a nation bereft of a rational, informed, and enlightened, public. The fever that is independent journalism is extinguished, and the tetralogy's constant conflict between thanatos and eros is resolved: the only reasonable answer to independent journalism's life is, in fact, death.

One final note on Rabasa's attempt to undermine the harrowing fever that is independent journalism. As Remedios' condition worsens during the finale of the *novelas mexicanas*, she is offered medicine. With a prescription in hand, Felicia, Juan's friend, asks him for money in hopes of saving Remedios. In hopes of curing Remedios' illness, both appropriately and ironically, Juan uses money procured from the ways in which he manifested that same illness—that is, by penning journalism: “Llevé la mano al bolsillo rápidamente, pero al tocar el dinero de *los anuncios*, la retiré en un instante de vacilación que fue también de tortura” (*MF*, 355). When Felicia leaves, Juan, “sofocado por la vergüenza, que venía a acabar de volverme loco, iba yo a levantarme, porque sentía necesidad de movimiento y de air” (*MF*, 355).

In sum, Rabasa's tetralogy constitutes a means of studying the malaise that is oppositionist and sensationalistic journal. The work, in both form and content, expresses the necessity to rid opposition and sensationalistic journalism from Mexican public life. Ultimately, Rabasa's project coincides with that of other Porfirian intellectuals who aimed to modernize Mexico with the creation of an informed, enlightened, and loyal citizenry willing and able to participate in a type of public sphere.⁶¹

Conclusions: Rabasa's fiction as exemplary of Latin America's particular public sphere

On one hand, Mexico under Díaz did, in fact, experience some of the same socio-economic preconditions that Habermas signals as necessary for the creation of

⁶¹ See “Los grandes periódicos de Nueva York. Una lucha sin tregua. Lo que significa una gran circulación.” *El Imparcial* (December 30, 1900). 2 Print. The article praises the way *El Imparcial* has modernized Mexico's newspaper production: “Hacer que un pueblo lea, lograr que los asuntos públicos interesen a todos, mezclar lo que es agradable al curioso con lo que es útil a todo hombre, ya es un fin elevado para el periodista.”

a public sphere: namely the general consolidation of the nation-state and the influx of capitalist modes of production and distribution. Specifically, within the idealized version of Habermas' narrative, an inclusive and extensive public sphere relies upon the stabilizing aspects of governmental authority, the movement of commodities within the marketplace, the existence of a lively print culture to transmit information, facts, and figures. The Porfiriato, too, gave rise to a burgeoning middle class of shopkeepers, bureaucrats, and tradesmen, many of whom were mestizos and many of whom moved to the largest urban centers of Mexico from the countryside. And yet, it would be somewhat erroneous to say that these structural transformations led directly to changes in terms of how citizens took part in public and extragovernmental, rational discussions. Porfirian Mexico evinced a peculiar trajectory.

To the extent that a public sphere did exist in Porfirian Mexico, we can say that it was deeply personalist—that is, individual gain was often valued over collective ideals. Civil discourse, business deals, and political debates were only made available to close-knit groups of friends, cronies, and compadres. Indeed, Francisco Bulnes—in his *El verdadero Díaz*—would define Mexican society as built upon “la amistosidad.” Bulnes propose this form of personalism as a “forma de gobierno, sea dictatorial, faccional u oligárquica, es de los amigos para los amigos, hasta donde lo permiten los gobernados o robados” (248). As Lomnitz similarly explains, Porfirian civil discourse was largely defined by those governors, *científicos*, and very locally-minded *jefes políticos* that were obediently part of an elaborate chain of command reaching all the way to Díaz himself (150). Again, this is not to say that critiques and rational debate were absent. As already signalled, debates were being had in Porfirian Mexico and, furthermore, the character of and participants in a public sphere were being elaborated. And yet, what remains true is that those who took part in civil conversations remained an exclusive group. As I have shown here, Rabasa fiction was an attempt to bolster and consolidate that group. His novels speak to the notion that Latin America's public sphere was created towards the end of the nineteenth century. His tetralogy illustrates how fiction, too, was employed so as to forge a particular type of public.

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