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**Beyond Innocence: Mexican Guerrilla groups, State Terrorism, and
Emergent Civil Society in Montemayor, Mendoza, and Glockner**

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¿Inocente o culpable? ¿Y a quién le importa si eres uno o lo otro? La justicia es una puta más en nuestra libreta de direcciones y, créenos, no es la más cara.

Y aunque cumplas al pie de la letra con el molde que imponemos, aunque no hagas nada, aunque seas inocente, te aplastaremos.

Y si insistes en preguntar por qué lo hacemos, te respondemos: porque podemos hacerlo.

—SupMarcos, ‘Ellos y nosotros: las sinrazones de los de arriba’, January 2013

In 1960s and 1970s Mexico, like in many other Latin American countries, urban and rural *guerrilla* groups proliferated. As in many other Latin American countries, successive Mexican governments—those of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), and of José López Portillo (1976-1982)—responded to demands for social and political change first with repressive policing, and then with state terrorism and *dirty war* tactics.¹ But in contrast to those of other Latin American

¹ In its final report the Fiscalía Especial para Movimientos políticos del pasado (Femospp) registered 436 victims of enforced disappearance, though

countries, the Mexican governments maintained a widely believed revolutionary and Third Worldist rhetoric and created a façade of left-wing politics. Luis Echeverría formed diplomatic alliances with Cuba and the government of Salvador Allende in Chile, and he bound the loyalties of the Latin American Left by granting asylum to refugees from the Southern Cone and by supporting Cuba in the OAS. These policies successfully invisibilized and obfuscated his government's repressive policies within Mexico. Indeed, the Mexican *guerrillas* never became a topic of international interest, and they did not receive international solidarity or assistance from other Latin American leftist governments.² Within Mexico, the *guerrilla* movements did not gain influence or access to government, to the public debate, or to public institutions through peace negotiations. The only gesture made towards them was the—controversial—amnesty for political prisoners in 1978. Impunity of the agents of repression prevailed even after the 2000 'transition' from PRI to PAN.³ Clandestine guerrilla

Human Rights organizations suggest that the actual numbers were much higher. See also the special reports of the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, cited in the bibliography. There are no numbers for victims of torture or of those who were killed.

² This point is particularly salient within the context of the Mexican government's claims that Cuba had provided arms to the protesting students in 1968. In an analysis that investigates such claims, Carlos Montemayor quotes a testimony of José Luis Alonso Vargas of the *guerrilla* group FARP, of a meeting with a Cuban representative: "En primer lugar, nos aclaró que, por tener una buena y necesaria relación diplomática con México, Cuba no nos iba a dar entrenamiento militar, como al resto de los guerrilleros de América Latina; que los gobiernos del continente, de Guatemala para abajo, habían roto relaciones con ellos y los habían expulsado de la OEA por órdenes de Estados Unidos. Y que México era la excepción. Por eso no iban a poner en peligro esas excepcionales relaciones diplomáticas ayudándonos con los entrenamientos. Que podíamos solicitar todo lo que quisiéramos, menos eso..." (Montemayor 17). The MAR eventually received training from North Korea, after their requests were turned down by Cuba and Vietnam.

In this context it is noteworthy that the most important contemporary *guerrilla* group, the EZLN, has often looked towards the U.S. for groups with whom they openly share affinities, for example the Black Panthers or the American Indian Movement.

³ In 2001, Vicente Fox opened the archives of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) to the public. In 2002 his administration set up the *Fiscalía Especial para los movimientos sociales y políticos del pasado* (Femospp), with the brief to investigate what had happened during the 1970s and to prosecute those who had participated in the repression. It was closed down in 2006. See Montemayor 2008, González Ruiz 2009, and documentation available on the website of the National Security Archive <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB180/index.htm>>.

After this, a few high-profile trials took place, but none of the accused was

organisations are active to this day in Guerrero and Chiapas. Interestingly and maybe unusually, writers of literature and members of autonomous civil society were among those who responded most strongly and sympathetically to the Mexican armed movements. While these writers and activists did not themselves opt for armed struggle, their civic activism was motivated by ethical concerns and convictions largely compatible with those who did take up arms.

In this article I will compare three novels which explore this relationship between literature, the guerrillas, and civil society with regards to the events in 1970s Mexico: Carlos Montemayor's documentary novel *Guerra en el paraíso* (1991)⁴, Élmer Mendoza's postmodern novel *El amante de Janis Joplin* (2001), and Fritz Glockner's autobiographically informed *Veinte de cobre: Memorias de la clandestinidad* (2005). None of them has been published in English translation, possibly an indication of just how persistently excluded the Mexican guerrillas of the 1970s are from international political, critical and academic debates.⁵ Each novel is set in a different area of the country, and each focuses on a different guerrilla group. Within these different settings, all three novels focus on three specific aspects of the relationship between civil society and armed movements: they question the deceitful hegemonic frameworks through which guerrilla subjectivity is understood; they denounce secret repression by the government; and they expose the existence, and explore the consequences, of what I here call the façade of legality.

sentenced. Since then, non-governmental groups have brought cases to international courts but the Mexican government has refused to comply with their recommendations. To-date, no-one has been sentenced for Human Rights violations during the 1970s; though some of the army personnel involved in the repression in the state of Guerrero were sentenced for their involvement in the drug trade. See Díaz 2009 for the trial of the case of Rosendo Radilla, a victim of enforced disappearance, in the Interamerican Court. For summarized information see González Ruiz 2009.

⁴ I borrow the term "documentary novel" from Barbara Foley. Foley's theorization of this novelistic sub-genre focuses mainly on North American and European examples of the documentary novel, and she deploys a Marxist framework. The term is still useful here because it permits a theorization of fictional storytelling that draws on factual events in the recent past or in the present. This storytelling makes a claim to truth by way of allusion and critique rather than historical evidence or the authenticity of the writer's voice.

⁵ A translation of *Guerra en el paraíso* is currently in preparation for PM Press, to be published in 2014.

Deceit passed off as truth was one of the strategies that the Mexican government deployed most successfully. Deceit I take to refer to the authoritative publicizing of slander and of skewed and biased interpretation of events, combined with silencing of alternative visions and of facts that contest the official version. Luis Echeverría's presidential address to the nation from 1st September 1974 is exemplary of this form of deceit. The speech is cited in *Guerra* and present as a subtext in *El amante*, and worth quoting at length:

Surgidos de hogares generalmente en proceso de disolución; creados en un ambiente de irresponsabilidad familiar; víctimas de la falta de coordinación entre padres y maestros; mayoritariamente niños que fueron de lento aprendizaje; adolescentes con un mayor grado de inadaptación en la generalidad; con inclinación precoz al uso de estupefacientes en sus grupos, con una notable propensión a la promiscuidad sexual y con un alto grado de homosexualidad masculina y femenina; víctimas de la violencia; que ven muchos programas de televisión...; víctimas de diarios que hacen amarillismo a través de la nota roja y de algunas revistas especializadas que hacen la apología y exaltan al crimen, son estos grupos fácilmente manipulables por ocultos intereses políticos, nacionales o extranjeros, que hallen en ellos instrumentos irresponsables para acciones de provocación en contra de nuestras instituciones. Y a veces se piensa que obedecen...a grupos de extrema izquierda. Pero cuando se ve su impreparación ideológica, y que tratan en realidad de provocar la represión, de inmediato se aclara su verdadera naturaleza: pretenden detener la marcha de nuestras libertades cuando apenas se inicia una política de nacionalismo económico en nuestra patria. (Montemayor 2002 [1991]: 307)⁶

Echeverría vilifies the guerrilleros as sociopaths, derides them intellectually, and devalues and pathologizes their motivations. He undermines the integrity of their families (“hogares generalmente en proceso de disolución; creados en un ambiente de irresponsabilidad familiar; víctimas de la falta de coordinación entre padres y maestros”) and that of the critical press (“diarios que hacen amarillismo a través de la nota roja y de algunas revistas especializadas que hacen la apología y exaltan al crimen”). He suggests that the guerrilla initiated the conflict with the

⁶ Echeverría does not mention the PDLP, even though his report refers to one of the time periods with most intense combat between the army and the *Brigada*. The government did not accept that the *Brigada*'s actions were politically motivated and maintained that they were bandits and thieves.

government and that they had been asking for a violent response (“tratan en realidad de provocar la represión”). The speech refers to the urban guerrillas only and makes no reference whatsoever to the rural groups.

Carlos Montemayor in *Guerra* takes on this latter act of silencing. *Guerra* is the outcome of years of painstaking research and highly respected as a source of *bona fide* information.⁷ It is mostly set in the rural areas of the state of Guerrero. There, several groups tenaciously worked for peaceful social change during the 1950s and the 1960s.⁸ They met with increasingly violent repression by the government. One such example was the massacre of Atoyac in May 1967, when five people were killed in a public rally. One of the speakers at the rally was Lucio Cabañas, a local schoolteacher and organizer. Cabañas was warned that he had been one of those targeted by the police, and escaped to the mountains. Over the next two years he built up the *Brigada campesina de ajusticiamiento*, the military arm of his *Partido de los Pobres*. The *Brigada* was a militarily effective and strategically sophisticated organization, and it counted on strong and sustained support from the civilian population. With 347

⁷ Montemayor, who passed away in 2009, is the author of a significant body of scholarly work, novels, poetry, and translations from indigenous languages, classical Greek, and Latin. He was also one of Mexico’s most eminent writers and scholars on the armed movements, the secret service, and state violence. Among his publications is a trilogy of novels on the group of *guerrilleros* that attacked the Madera barracks in 1967. Montemayor was drawn to the subject after witnessing the character assassination of activists from his home state of Chihuahua, with whom he shared political organizing work and personal friendship. Shortly after he moved from Chihuahua to Mexico City, he saw photos of some of his friends in the newspapers:

After the assault on the barracks in Madera, Chihuahua, took place on September 23, 1965, I saw photographs of some of my friends in a newspaper article that was posted on the bulletin board in the law school of the UNAM. The official version of what happened shocked me. The stroke of a pen had turned my friends into murderers and delinquents. Instead of acknowledging the conflicts that had led these talented individuals to take up arms against injustice, the press and the government turned them into public enemies... The establishment story is a lie that permanently assaults humanity, and I would say that my personal commitment, to my friends, is the source of my social commitment. (Long 2006: 38)

His life’s work is testament to his commitment to contest successive governments’ attempts obscuring the reasons behind the choices of those who took up arms and at assassinating their characters, after the individuals had already been killed.

⁸ For an account of the mobilization in Guerrero and autonomous peasant organisations see Bartra 2000 a and b.

combatants (Aguayo 175) it became the second-largest guerrilla group in the country.⁹ Even though it lost military strength after Lucio Cabañas died in combat in November 1974, it still exists today under different names.¹⁰

Veinte de Cobre and *El amante* are set in urban areas, where guerrilla groups started to proliferate during the late 1960s, also after the repression of non-violent civic activism. In October 1968, the government ended the student movement of 1968 with the massacre of Tlatelolco in Mexico City, initiated by the paramilitary group *Batallón Olimpia*. When the student movement started to re-group in 1971, the paramilitary group Los halcones carried out the Corpus Christi massacre on 10th June 1971. After this, several urban guerrilla groups joined together to form the Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre, with approximately 392 combatants (Aguayo 175). The Liga was one of the primary targets of state terrorism, and the organization did not survive the sustained repression against its members. One of the central characters in *El amante*, el Chato, is a commander of the Liga. Also founded after the Corpus Christi massacre was the group Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN), based in the urban areas of Puebla, Mexico City and the North of the country. FLN survivors were part of the group that founded the Ejército Zapatista para la Liberación Nacional (EZLN). Though Glockner never explicitly states that the FLN is the guerrilla group mentioned in *Veinte de cobre*, contextual information suggests that it is, or very well could be.¹¹ Glockner and Mendoza question the hegemonic

⁹ The numbers are taken from Aguayo 2001; Aguayo in turn draws for them on General Mario Acosta Chaparro's *Movimiento subversivo en México* (1990). The reliability of Acosta Chaparro—who had his own point to make—is questionable, but numbers seem to not blatantly contradict those one can deduce from Human Rights Reports.

¹⁰ Two factions eventually split off from the PDLP. The remainder of the PDLP joined with the Unión del Pueblo (UP) in the 1980s and formed the PROCUP, which was the renamed PROCUP-PDLP. The PROCUP-PDLP turned into the Ejército Popular Revolucionario, which is still active today. In the 1990s, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente (ERPI) split off from the EPR. For an account of this split through the powerful testimony of Gloria Arenas Agis see the chapter “Guerrillas” in Gibler 2009.

For a collection of communiqués from the PDLP see the website of the Centro de Documentación de los Movimientos Armadas <www.cedema.org>.

¹¹ For full accounts of this time period, see Castellanos 2008 and Glockner 2007. Glockner's study ends with the year 1967. In a chapter that weaves together many different strands of frustrated civic activism, Glockner suggests that 1967 was the year in which events came to a head, formerly civic activists took the decision to take up arms, and that those members of the younger generation who

framework by engaging in detail with the motivations of the guerrillero characters and with their personalities; Montemayor does so by engaging with the social root causes and the collective identities of the guerrilleros and their support bases in Guerrero.

Deceit ensured that society at large viewed the guerrillas as an unacceptable Other and did not find out about—let alone, question—the extent of the repression. All three authors use the autonomous position of literature to denounce the extent and the type of the repression, its brutality and, where possible, its agents. Repression was directed against the members of the guerrilla and the population of the affected armed movements in order to annihilate the members of the guerrillas and terrorize their support bases. In the speech, Echeverría publicly recognizes that there is repression so that the government can be seen as effective; but he keeps secret the intensity and the brutality of the repression. In the urban areas the secret service Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) launched an extensive surveillance and infiltration operation. It built up an extra-legal apparatus of repression, which included secret para-police forces¹² and clandestine detention centers, often located in army installations. In the rural areas of Guerrero, the government deployed a massive number of troops. They imposed a state of siege and isolated the Guerrero Mountains so that information did not penetrate to the outside world. A network of prisons and secret torture centers was built up.

Less directly violent, and widely effective against all members of

were already involved in political activism increasingly gravitated towards armed struggle because of the futility and repression against civic activism.

¹² The paramilitary group Batallón Olimpia played a crucial role in the repression of the 1968 student movement and in the massacre of Tlatelolco; the successor of the same group, known as Los halcones, carried out the Corpus Christi massacre in 1971; and the notorious Brigada Blanca, allegedly founded and commanded by the second-in-command of the DFS Miguel Nazar Haro, committed a great number of atrocities before its final dissolution in 1982.

A particularly notorious clandestine detention center was Campo Militar Número 1 in Mexico City, first used as a detention centre in 1964. After the massacre of Tlatelolco, many of the arrested students were brought there. Castellanos collects testimonies of former army members who confirm the existence of a subterranean detention centre at the camp, the entrance to which was hidden behind fake library shelves and covered by a steel plate; and Montemayor. In 2011, the area of Campo Militar Número 1 was opened to the public in the context of the Cycling Sundays in Mexico City. The groups Comité Eureka and HIJOS registered their protest against this use of the space (Petrich 2011).

society, was the “façade of legality.” It is erected and maintained through cumbersome and only seemingly effective legal procedures, the true purpose of which is not to implement the state of law, but to hide a state of exception. As a result, citizens’ cognitive understanding of citizenship is based on the government’s claim that the state of law is implemented, and that violations of the law are transgressions that will not be tolerated. By contrast, citizens’ experience of citizenship is that of living in a state of exception, where their constitutional and human rights are not respected and where certain agents of repression are beyond the law. Such an experience of citizenship cannot be reconciled with the cognitive understanding of it, and vice versa. The resulting chasm between experience and understanding cannot be named or described, nor is it possible to articulate the experiences that people have because of the coexistence of the two. As a result, the population lives in a paralyzing state of what I call civic schizophrenia and which, as we will see, is considered a state of innocence by those in power.

These three motives structure most autonomous narratives on the Mexican guerrillas. To my knowledge they first occur in the story of peasant leader Rubén Jaramillo, as told by Carlos Fuentes in *Tiempo mexicano* (1962). Jaramillo’s assassination in 1962 was the watershed moment of a sweltering conflict between, on the one hand, the Mexican PRI governments who legitimized their power by evoking the revolutionary notion of social justice and, on the other hand, those sectors of the population who felt that the status quo did not provide social justice. Jaramillo himself had fought with Pancho Villa and, after the Revolution, led sugar cane farmers in Morelos in their struggle for better prices for their goods, and for self-determination. Frustrated by the government’s unwillingness or inability to break the abusive power of local *caciques*, he repeatedly took up arms but was always persuaded to return to legality. In the last of these instances, President López Mateos guaranteed Jaramillo’s protection against possible revenge attacks of local *caciques*. The meeting, in March 1962, ended with the notorious “abrazo de Judas.” Two months later, on 23rd May 1962, a group of paramilitary agents, army members, and local police took Jaramillo, his pregnant wife, and his three step-sons

from their home and executed them.¹³

The novels discussed here draw on these same three motives, but within the context of the 1970s, thus indicating the persistence of oppressive power structures as well as of a rebellious spirit. The extremity of the events—in terms of the guerrilla’s passion and urgency for change, in terms of the savagery and secrecy of repression, and in terms of the degree of governmental cynicism—puts citizens and readers on the spot and becomes a dividing line between those who accepted the official interpretation of ‘politics’ as participating in an existing system and maintaining of the status quo; and those who come to understand ‘politics’ as the ethically motivated participation in networks of autonomous and coordinated resistances that build alternatives to the status quo. In all three novels this choosing of sides is expressed through characters’ attitudes towards the government’s authority over guilt and innocence. While some characters accept this authority and try to prove their innocence on the terms of a government that readers come to understand as terrorist, other characters renounce ‘innocence’ and reject any terrorist government’s moral or legal authority over ‘guilt.’

The Encounter with the ‘Other’ in Montemayor’s Guerra en el paraíso

Carlos Montemayor published *Guerra* in 1991, long before the guerrillas became a matter of public debate in Mexico. The novel integrates the story of the guerrilla group Brigada campesina de Ajusticiamiento, the military arm of the Partido de los Pobres, with the story of the government’s counterinsurgency war against the population of the Guerrero mountains. The narration begins in May 1971 and ends with Cabañas’ death in combat in December 1974. Flashbacks sum up important events between 1968, when Cabañas took up arms, and 1971. The novel’s implied readership are those members of the urban middle classes who lack information on, and an understanding of, the resistance struggles in the rural areas of the country; and who are interested in gaining both.

¹³ For the earliest published full account of the assassination of Jaramillo and his family see Fuentes (1972), 109-122. For a comprehensive account of Jaramillo’s rebellion and assassination see Glockner 2008. For more detailed information in English on the political trajectory of Jaramillo and his followers see Padilla 2001.

However, instead of providing his readers with privileged access to information, or ‘representing’ the people in resistance, Montemayor challenges his readers into an encounter with the ‘Other’: the collective of the impoverished *mestizos* and indigenous population of remote rural areas. He accomplishes this in the first instance by making it impossible for readers to identify with individual characters, and in the second instance by inviting readers to choose between reading as an act of bourgeois privilege, or as an act of solidarity. As for the impossibility of identifying with individual characters, there are no individual protagonists among the guerrilla. Everyone—including Lucio Cabañas—is part of a collective and exists within a social context and a symbolically charged landscape or physical environment. Even where the narration occasionally zooms in on individual actors, it does not turn them into protagonists. As for reading as an exercise of privilege or as an act of solidarity, Montemayor creates situations—often around clandestinity—that invite readers to relinquish readerly privileges for the sake of the preservation of clandestinity.

A particularly clear example concerns a character initially only known as ‘the man.’ He first appears late in the novel, in a chapter which narrates the most repressive phase of the counterinsurgency war from August to November 1974. The military and the government have collaborated on what they pass off as a project of development. They have covered the *sierra* of Guerrero with a network of roads, telecommunication facilities, and medical centers, which serve to access the mountains and control the communities. The military’s counterinsurgency campaign has devastated the communities. The Brigada is in decline. Lucio Cabañas, afflicted by terrible headaches, seems increasingly removed from the other members of the Brigada. The media—with few exceptions—have been shown to be corrupt. In this situation a military squad arrests a young man who tries to get to a village that has previously been raided and occupied by the army, to look for his father—or so he says. When the soldiers find a piece of cord among the sugar canes he carries, they take their find as proof of his being a member of the guerrillas. The cord is supposedly used to clean out guns. The soldiers immediately start to beat their captive. Very soon ‘the man’ confesses that he has given a false name because his real

name, Gervasio Iturio Barrientos, indicates that he is a relative of Lucio Cabañas Barrientos. When the officer asks why he lied, the man replies: “Es que ustedes nos obligan a confesar cosas que no sabemos”, [you make us confess things that we don’t know] (290). ‘The man’s’ own comment invites the soldiers and the reader to assume that anyone would confess to anything under torture and, consequently, that silence under torture is an expression of innocence in the sense of non-involvement in the guerrillas.

‘The man’ is then ‘disappeared’ and tortured. This is narrated in short sections that are interspersed throughout the chapter. When both his torturers and the reader are convinced that he has no connection to the Brigada—otherwise he surely would have given information, considering the horrors he has been subjected to—the army releases him under the condition that he becomes their informer. Readers do not necessarily expect to encounter this character again; nor do they have any reason to doubt that he will indeed become an informer. However, several pages later, a certain ‘Pedro’ arrives at the house of a doctor. Soon it becomes clear that ‘Pedro’ is ‘the man’, or Gervasio Iturio Barrientos. The conversation with the doctor reveals that he *did* give the army his real name, that he *is* a key figure in the Brigada, and that he is on his way to re-join the group.

In the clandestine and safe space that makes frank conversation possible, Gervasio is finally in a position to articulate his commitment in his own words and through direct speech, when he tells the doctor about an encounter he had while he was held by the military, with a former member of the Brigada who did become an informer. When his former *compañero* tells him that his struggle is futile, Gervasio replies:

Pero no todos pensamos que cuando nos arresten lo que hay que hacer es pasarse al gobierno... Porque yo lucho no nada más por mí mismo, cómo tú, sino por todo lo que me familia ha vivido, por todo lo que le ha faltado a mi familia desde antes que yo naciera, o de que mi padre naciera. Por eso no me importa lo que tú quieras hacer, Santiago, pues ya saben que ustedes mienten mucho para tener beneficios. (...) Porque no me importa que me maten, pero a ti sí te importa. (338)

Gervasio articulates his commitment as rooted in a collective experience of deprivation and oppression, and as an expression of an ethos of care for a

collective.¹⁴ The source of his commitment places him beyond the government's ability to pronounce him innocent or guilty, because moral authority over him is held by a historically and experientially defined collective to which the government—or the author or the reader, for that matter—does not belong.

Montemayor himself takes an unequivocal position and expresses it through his narration, by keeping secret information on Gervasio until the latter is in a safe place and in a position to speak for himself. This potentially offends the expectations of his readers, because the delayed information affects their interpretation of the story and their judgment of the character. However, had Montemayor inserted the information at an earlier point in the narrative, he would have carried out acts of authorial violence against both Gervasio and the reader. He would have undermined the only expression of agency that is left to Gervasio while he is held captive, and which Gervasio protects and exercises at the price of excruciating pain and possible death: his silence. Moreover, he would have forced his readers into complicity with breaching Gervasio's silence, since the chronology of narration would not have given them the choice to wait for the information. Instead, Montemayor sacrifices the privileges and the authority of the omniscient narrator for the sake of ethical coherence, his commitment to his character, and his readers' liberty to choose between privilege and solidarity. If a reader's own commitments are compatible with those of Gervasio and Montemayor, they will respect the secrecy of clandestinity. In this case, the guiding principle of reading and narrating

¹⁴ In *La guerrilla recurrente* Montemayor argues that the rural guerrilla movements were defined by the social circumstances of their locality, and not by the ideological motivations that drove the members of the urban guerrilla movement:

Si en los movimientos urbanos la radicalización ideológica es fundamental, en los movimientos armados rurales no necesariamente hay un proceso de formación ideológica, pues la mayor parte de sus contingentes suelen tener un nivel muy bajo o incluso inexistente de escolaridad. En los movimientos rurales debemos prestar atención a un proceso de radicalización o polarización distinto: el que nace de las circunstancias sociales, agrarias o políticas prevalecientes en la zona o región del alzamiento. Por la naturaleza de su génesis, la urbana podría suponer cauces supraregionales (incluso internacionalistas) y una movilidad mayor de sus células activas. Por su distinto origen, la guerrilla rural suele ser regional y de movilización lenta, puesto que se propone resolver o combatir conflictos propios de una región y no fuera de ella. (13-14)

becomes critical trust, as distinct from transparency and authentic representation: readers will have learned that people are not always who they seem to be, and they will allow for this possibility in their future readings. If readers' commitments are not compatible with those of Montemayor and Gervasio, then they will quite possibly respond by rejecting the novel as disingenuous and the narration as manipulative.

With regards to the guerrillas, Montemayor respects the rules of clandestinity; with regards to repression, he breaches them. Throughout the book, Montemayor exposes what the army's secrecy hides: the identities of the intellectual authors of the counterinsurgency war in Guerrero and their motivations. High-ranking army officials mostly comprise one group who have a stake in the political system and want to protect the status quo; a second group which wants to establish the military as a political force; and a third group which believes that the people of Guerrero are oppressed by what the officers think of as the criminals of the Brigada. These views are expressed in a disagreement between several officers very late in the novel, shortly before the death of Cabañas. General Escárcega puts forward his views on the required strategy:

—...el pelotón que entra en un pueblo no sabe aún en qué casa, en qué momento o cuántos hombres se han vinculado con la guerrilla. Deben sitiar y actuar como si todo el pueblo fuera cómplice de Lucio. Por eso se requiere de un control efectivo de la zona. Porque además no podríamos localizar toda la red clandestina de apoyo en los pueblos si dejamos la investigación, los interrogatorios, las detenciones y las medidas de cualquier clase a las autoridades civiles, a una legislación regular en tiempo de paz. Por eso tenemos el control total de la región, señores, porque no puede resolverse de otra manera. Y solamente una fuerza como el ejército puede tomar una decisión así, no el presidente de la República ni el gabinete civil, porque a ellos les aterra la imagen política de la decisión. (348)

Colonel De la Selva disagrees:

—Yo no puedo aceptar que el pueblo esté con Lucio. De ninguna manera. Se trata de un grupo de rebeldes que han amenazado la zona, que han causado terror y que cuentan con un grupo muy bien distribuido en la sierra de Atoyac que sirve a sus propósitos. Los pueblos comienzan a delatarlos. Nos hubiera sido imposible cercarlos como lo hemos hecho ahora si los pueblos, o mejor, si el pueblo mismo no los estuviera delatando. (349)

Colonel De la Selva is convinced that the people of Guerrero are terrorized

by Lucio and that the army acts in their interest. He refuses to even consider the possibility that the population might genuinely support Lucio—a possibility which Escárcega not only considers, but affirms:

[...] no nacimos ayer y sabemos por qué empiezan los pueblos a delatar a movimientos como éste. Lo saben también los asesores norteamericanos que están en Atoyac. Y los especialistas en interrogatorios que tenemos en el Campo Militar número uno y en Atoyac. Pero hay accidentes, coronel, accidentes de la razón, o de la teoría. (...) Yo no estoy diciendo que Lucio sea un héroe. Pero sí afirmo que la lucha de un pueblo es un accidente, o puede ser un accidente para un Estado, para un gobierno que se niegue a creer que él mismo no es la razón del pueblo. Es una trampa de la historia. (350)

Escárcega responds to the popular support of Lucio by patronizing citizens and by belittling their decision-making capacity. The populace is committing a ‘mistake,’ the support given is an ‘accident’ and not based on experience and ethos as articulated by Gervasio. The civilian government is unable to deal with this ‘mistake’ because it is bound to a semblance of representative democracy. The army, in contrast, is in a position to intervene and to ‘correct’ the mistake made by the population because the army does not need to be concerned about political legitimacy. Escárcega’s attitude and rank make it clear that he, and not the colonel, will decide on the strategy of the counterinsurgency campaign; and this, in turn, strongly suggests that deceit, torture and assassinations were not the excesses of individuals (as in De la Selva’s analysis), but a systematic part of the counterinsurgency strategy deployed in Guerrero.

Systematic repression is protected by a façade of legality. Montemayor visibilizes it through a symbol, a written permit granted by one local commander and disregarded by another. The permit is initially in the possession of a young man who carries a sack of corn, and who is arrested at one of the roadblocks:

—A ver muchacho, respóndeme—dijo [el militar] con tono pausado y tranquilo—. Porque de mí depende que te vayas ahora o que ya no salgas de este hoyo. Dime quién te mandó a comprar ese maíz.
 —No tenemos maíz para comer tortillas—dijo el campesino, después de un momento de silencio, nervioso—. Pedí permiso para transportar este maíz al capitán que está en El mezcalito. Lo compramos entre varios vecinos.
 —¿Te dieron un papel?—preguntó el militar.

—El joven campesino sacó de una bolsa de su pantalón azul claro un pequeño pliego. El militar lo tomó y empezó a leerlo. El campesino reconoció las insignias del capitán.

—Pero aquí no vale ningún papel—explicó el militar, despedazando el escrito—. Ni con la firma del general Cuenca Díaz te dejaría yo pasar, mucho menos con la de un capitán. Así que dime quién te pidió ese maíz. Con esto pueden vivir muchos días los perros de Lucio Cabañas. (221)

The officer utters his request for the written permit knowing full well that he will not recognize its validity. And yet, it is crucial that he make the request because the existence of the permit undermines the credibility of those who claim that the state of exception is real: if it was, there would surely not be a procedure to obtain a permit or a request to have one. Moreover, the request evokes the illusory hope in the population that such a permit might indeed grant the right to safe passage; that there is a way of doing things right and keeping safe; that there is the possibility of demonstrating one's innocence to the authorities. Suspended in this hope, people continue to ask for and carry permits instead of questioning the authority of those who grant or refuse a document as precious as it is useless: After taking the permit off the young man, the officer orders the soldiers to torture him until he confesses.

The reader might now wonder whether the local military commander who issued the campesino's permit was a Colonel De La Selva, who believed that the paper would be respected; or whether he was a General Tapia or Escárcega, who wrote the permit in the full knowledge that it might not be respected and that he was putting the young campesino's life on the line. The question is purely academic because whatever the answer, there are no police who would investigate the whereabouts of the young man, no attorney who would follow up on the accusations, no court that would try the perpetrators. And if there was, then surely the commander would remember that he gave the campesino the permit which the officer destroyed, and surely the commander's perfectly credible testimony suggests that the young man has run off with his lover or escaped the dire conditions of his village for a better life elsewhere, and that he does not want to be found. If readers do not ask such pointless questions because they do not believe the official story, they break through civic

schizophrenia; but this very gesture of renunciation places them in the eyes of the authorities on the side of those who question the status quo.

A Multiplicity of Voices in Élmér Mendoza's El amante de Janis Joplin

Élmér Mendoza's *El amante de Janis Joplin* explores the connections between the dirty war and the drug war. It is set in Culiacán, Sinaloa and the narrative follows the fate of one specific family, the Palafox Valenzuela. The novel's central character, David Valenzuela, epitomizes innocence. He is mentally challenged and never grasps what is going on around him. After a fall-out with the local drug lord, he is sent to live with his aunt's family, the Palafox Valenzuela. This traditional, patriarchal and politically naïve lower middle class family is harassed and periodically arrested by the paramilitary group *Los dragones*, led by Eduardo Mascareño, because David's cousin, el Chato, is a commander of the Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre. The near destruction of the Palafox Valenzuela is paralleled by the success story of el Chato's childhood friend Santos Mojardín, alias el Cholo, who rises up through the ranks of the local drug cartel and has become immensely rich by the end of the novel, but not powerful enough to save his friends. The narration is character-driven and relies mostly on internal monologues, and on dialogues between el Chato, el Cholo, David, el Chato's parents María Valenzuela and Gregorio Palafox, el Chato's younger sister María Fernanda, and the parapolice agent Mascareño. Occasionally a third-person narrator intervenes to focalize specific characters through other characters, thus maintaining the constantly subjective perspective on the events. This technique makes it impossible to construe a counter-narrative that draws for legitimation on the contestation of the dominant narrative or on the authenticity of the speaker. Instead, it challenges readers to critically engage with different voices and perspectives and piece together their own, autonomous vision of the events.

Mendoza problematizes the framework of reference through which society understands guerrillero subjectivity. No-one in the novel understands the guerrillero character, el Chato. This is partially a result of the limitations imposed by clandestinity and death; the reader finds out

little about el Chato's clandestine life as Comandante Fonseca. However, the effect of the strict rules of clandestinity is compounded by the remaining characters' inability to engage with political views and an ethical stance radically opposed to their own notions of what is understandable, acceptable, or normal. To convey this, Mendoza focalizes El Chato almost always through other characters, mostly David or el Cholo. Both are fond of him, but neither of them understands or sympathizes with his outrage against injustice. Consequently, the reader never engages with el Chato's motivations or his causes in any more depth than they do. The passage which introduces el Chato is exemplary. It is focalized through el Cholo, and it converts Echeverría's presidential address into the future drug dealer's and his fellow citizens' framework of reference for the understanding of guerrillero subjectivity:

Para Santos, como para mucha gente, fue una sorpresa que el mayor de los Palafox se involucrara en la guerrilla. Nadie logró imaginarse que alguien tan aplicado iba a terminar de guerrillero, pues al Chato le encantaba leer y aprender. Mientras el Cholo fingía estudiar agronomía, el Chato discutía acoloradamente con sus compañeros de la facultad y presentaba trabajos donde criticaba ferozmente a la clase empresarial. Era el único de la generación que había leído a Fernando del Paso, Marcel Proust y William Faulkner; el único que disfrutaba a Sibelius, Richard Wagner y John Cage; su preferencia por artistas burgueses...era una razón suficiente para que...se le excluyera de las reuniones más importantes, aquellas donde se analizaba la vía del enfrentamiento directo. Además de que carecía de contactos y actitud militar, el Chato siempre mantuvo una postura escéptica en relación a la lucha armada... Nada parecía indicar que sería guerrillero, pero un día el ejército tomó la ciudad universitaria y el Chato, que presenciaba todo, advirtió como sus compañeros invocaban a Dios llenos de espanto y buscaban dónde esconder siete pistolas Taurus y dos escopetas sin recortar. Antes de que nadie lo pidiera, el Chato les abrió la cajuela del *Valium* [the family van of the Palafox Valenzuela], acomodó las armas bajo una pila de guantes de beisbol y el asunto no pasó a mayores. (57)

El Chato's personality defies Echeverría's propagandistic blueprint of the guerrilleros, just as much as he defies more 'sympathetic' stereotypes of the 'ideologically prepared' guerrillero or the 'new man.' El Chato is not a subaltern figure, but distinctly privileged. He joins the guerrilla after much study and deliberation, is unusually intelligent and thoughtful, and has the musical and literary tastes of a cosmopolitan bourgeois. He responds to the

more dogmatic guerrilleros' gesture of exclusion by saving them when they lack courage and presence of mind in a dangerous situation, and his decision to join the guerrilla is motivated ethically and sustained ideologically. Everyone is puzzled, but no-one responds by questioning their framework of reference, which clearly fails before reality. Most people instead choose to disengage by interpreting el Chato as an exceptional and inexplicable individual.

Such disengagement is the more benevolent response to the guerrilleros. Those who have a stake in the system react more aggressively. Among them is el Chato's father, Gregorio Palafox, a well-adjusted and hard-working patriarch who personifies an attitude that Carlos Monsiváis identified as one of the elements that created the social climate in which state terrorism become possible: a compliance with the status quo that was passed off as apolitical (Monsiváis 2004: 144 ff.). Only after being repeatedly beaten and arrested does Gregorio notice that his framework of reference does not correspond to his experience of reality. He responds by putting the blame on those who do not conform:

Put a vida, qué jodidos estamos, ahora resulta que son ellos los que tienen razón: toda esa bola de greñudos que bailan como changos, que quieren tumbar al gobierno, que dicen que la religión es el opio del pueblo y que los empresarios son unos ladrones, ahora ellos son los que piensan correctamente, no puede ser; lo único que he hecho en mi vida es trabajar como burro, votar, no meterme en broncas y ahora resulta que el pendejo soy yo. (146)

The derogatory terms in which Gregorio thinks and speaks of his son and his compañer@s make it impossible for him to engage with their choices. For this father, el Chato is not an individual but one of a "bola de greñudos," and he is the enemy of everything Gregorio believes in: "ahora ellos son los que piensan correctamente, no puede ser." What exactly el Chato feels, thinks or believes is reduced to a caricature that says more about Gregorio's fears and preconceptions than about el Chato's thoughts or beliefs.

Only two characters explicitly grapple with the epistemological framework of the status quo: el Chato himself, and his sister María Fernanda. In one of the few passages when el Chato is not spoken about but expresses himself, he addresses in a discussion with el Cholo the inability of

those close to him, to understand him. El Cholo asks his friend to reconsider his choices and leave the guerrilla while he still can. El Chato responds: “Cholo, tú no sabes de estos pedos, tú eres narco, cabrón, tú no podrías entender que queremos un sistema más justo, un gobierno del pueblo y para el pueblo’ (147). El Cholo responds to el Chato’s ethical—not ideological—point from the perspective of a free market ideologue. He tries to convince el Chato not to risk his life for a struggle that can only be futile because people want wealth, not justice. This reiterates and entrenches the paradigm that marginalizes and disarticulates motivations like those of el Chato, and that creates emotional and political distance between the two friends.

María Fernanda partially questions her perception of her brother, but only after his death. While he is still alive, the siblings hardly speak because male privilege and gendered behavior get in the way. María Fernanda is initially her father’s darling and embodies his hope for upward social mobility; a vision of herself that she accepts and complements with non-threatening environmental activism dedicated to the salvation of the panda bear. While the siblings share the sense that something is wrong with the system, they are separated by the targets of their outrage. El Chato refuses to muster compassion for the panda, and María Fernanda is put off by her brother’s domineering and condescending behavior. Only after her brother’s death does she express regret at not having made more of an effort to understand his ideology; but by the same token, the very choice of the term ‘ideology’ suggests that she is unable to see that her brother is predominantly motivated by an ethics of care.

Conversely, Comandante Fonseca is a gender iconoclast, whereas el Chato is deeply conventional when it comes to his sister. Comandante Fonseca uses gender-bending to slip into the invisible existence beyond hegemonic perceptions. His favorite disguise is to dress up as a woman, and his astute perception of the phenomenology of gendered behavior lets him replicate it to the extent that he becomes unrecognizable even to his closest friends. El Chato, in contrast, is caught up in the hegemonic perception of women, which he so effectively appropriates for his protection. He cares about María Fernanda, but regularly belittles her, and

only ever refers to her with the family nickname 'la nena.' He is blind to the fact that his 'little sister' is the only person who could—and eventually does—become an effective and equal ally in his struggle for social and political change, even though she espouses a different strategy. He does not recognize in María Fernanda her ability to critique, and María Fernanda cannot see in el Chato his ability to care. As a consequence, el Chato spends time with his male friends who will never understand him, and María Fernanda withdraws into herself and develops her ideas in long internal monologues.

Eventually, el Chato's absence is felt more keenly than his presence. Halfway through the novel, David finds the tortured body of his cousin in the sea.¹⁵ It is only then that readers become acutely aware that however they might feel about his methods, el Chato had been the only ethically and emotionally coherent character in the novel, and the only one to retain agency. His commitment to justice and change set a counterpoint to the confusion and impotence of his family, to the callousness and corruption of government agents, and to the cynicism and the brutality of the para-police forces. After his death, only the drug dealer el Cholo—for reasons of *machista* honor and emotional attachment rather than ethics—defends the victims of repression and injustice, and puts himself and his drug money between the Palafox Valenzuela and the secret agents of repression, the parapolice group *Los dragones*.

Los dragones are commanded by an individual aptly named Eduardo Mascareño, his surname indicating that he is the 'mask' for darker forces. His hatred of el Chato, who outwits him on several occasions, becomes a personal obsession so powerful that he develops a stomach ulcer. The ulcer symbolizes Mascareño's obsessive interest in the persecution of the guerrilleros and the unreflected, compulsive nature of his actions. His cruelty, his irrationality, his sadism, and his inability to reason or to critically review his own actions mark him as the type of

¹⁵ The "vuelos de la muerte" occur in both *El amante* and *Guerra*. This particular element of dirty war strategies was for a long time considered to be first used by the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983). However, there have always been persistent rumours that helicopters and planes had been used in Mexico to dump the bodies of victims of enforced disappearance into the ocean. Two different witnesses confirm that the military used "vuelos de la muerte" in Guerrero (Castellanos 2008: 160-164; article *La Jornada*).

sociopath evoked by Echeverría with reference to the *guerriller@s*.¹⁶ The multiple narrative perspectives of the novel never permit an unequivocal conclusion as to whether Mascareño's pathology is developed as a result of his existence outside of the law, or whether the anonymous 'superiors' that set up the extra-legal structure of repression recruited him because of his pathology. What is certain, though, is that Mascareño is a creature of oppressive and extra-legal secrecy, that is, of the co-existence of the façade of legality and exceptionalism.

Like Montemayor, Mendoza deploys symbolism to render tangible this intangible state of affairs; and like Montemayor, he chooses the symbol of a permit. When the dragons come to raid the Palafox home for the first time, María Fernanda insists that they need a court order:

¿Dónde está el Chato?, gritó Mascareño... Aquí no hay nadie, respondió la Nena, Eso lo diré yo cuando registremos... ¿Trae una orden?, Me cago en las órdenes y en los jueves que las expiden, No puede registrar nuestra casa sin una orden, insistió María Fernanda, nada pescadito, la Constitución nos protege, Pues que los proteja, ipongan todo patas arriba!, ordenó a sus hombres. (72)

Just as the officer tells the young man that no permit has validity in the space of exception that he has entered, Mascareño tells María Fernanda that the constitution is nothing but a piece of paper that does not have the power to protect anyone, because constitutional rights are enforced by laws and Mascareño is not subject to the law. The episode can be taken as an allusion to the assassination of Jaramillo and his family. When Jaramillo's

¹⁶ Los dragones allude to the previously mentioned, historical *halcones*, who were in turn the predecessor organisation to the Brigada blanca. The Brigada Blanca, also called Brigada Especial Antiguerrillas (BEA), was founded in June 1976 by the commander of the DFS Miguel Nazar Haro (See Monsváis 2004: 190-191; and Castellanos 2007: 266 ff.). Testimonies link its commanders and members to systematic torture and to several enforced disappearances. The Echeverría and López Mateos administrations categorically denied the existence of the Brigada Blanca; and since the Brigada Blanca did not officially exist it could operate in an extra-legal space. Several details in the novel evoke facts that are known about the Brigada Blanca, for example the existence of a secret subterranean prison and torture center, and the peculiar status of the group outside the law and official hierarchies but inside the center of power.

The character Mascareño can be read as an allusion to the director of the DFS Miguel Nazar Haro, though the fact that Mendoza does not establish any direct links and the name of the character (mascareño draws on *máscara*), suggests that the character contains a more general comment on those who were in similar positions of power.

assassins arrived at the house and tried to take him away, his stepdaughter Raquel insisted that they could not enter the house or take her parents and brothers without a court order. Like María Fernanda, she was mocked by the assassins.

After their first introduction to the co-existence of the façade of legality and the state of exception, the Palafox Valenzuela are paralyzed by civic schizophrenia for much of the novel. However, individual family members respond in radically different ways. Gregorio accepts right away that he lives in a state of exception. His reaction to this insight is destructive of himself and of his relationship to others, especially his children. We have already seen this with regards to his son; and Gregorio also pushes away his daughter. As María Fernanda prepares her brother's funeral, she insists on 'denunciar'. Her father is enraged by this suggestion:

¿A quién hija? explotó Gregorio, ¿A la policía?, ¿al ejército? Para el caso que nos hicieron la vez pasada, ¿de qué sirvieron tantas vueltas, antesalas y entrevistas? (...) Las mujeres definitivamente no entienden, lo mejor será enterrarlo sin escándalos ni denuncias, sin avisar siquiera a los amigos o a la familia, si no en menos que lo cuento tendremos a los estudiantes y a la judicial encima. (133)

Gregorio wants to hide—invisibilize—his son's tortured body in the soil. Impunity and silence are for him the only adequate response to torture, assassination and dis-empowerment. Moreover, he is unable to receive the solidarity of the protesting students, which to him is the same as the violence of the police. Eventually he withdraws into clinical depression.

María Fernanda, in contrast, responds to the pointlessness of denouncing by asking critical questions, if initially in silence: “¿qué pasaría si nadie denunciara a los atropellos?, ¿cómo sería la vida en la absoluta impunidad?” (133). Eventually, after many more futile attempts at denunciation and after suffering many more “atropellos,” she acknowledges that she already lives in “absolute impunity”:

¿Esa era la impartición de justicia? Qué bueno que no iba a estudiar leyes, qué bueno que no iba a entrar en esa podredumbre, qué horror... Si en unos años no se puede pasear de noche, si este país se convierte en el paraíso de la violencia, todos seremos culpables. ¿Cómo es posible tanta impunidad, tanto abuso? Y yo aquí, chillando en vez de dar la batalla. (145)

Once María Fernanda ceases to believe in the façade of legality and

acknowledges the existence of the state of exception, she brings together her cognitive analysis of citizenship and her experience of citizenship. She responds by changing her attitude and claiming agency. She renounces the patriarchal political culture espoused by her father, where one keeps safe by shutting up, burying the evidence, and looking to authority figures for solutions. Instead, she espouses a political culture of autonomous critique and resistance, where she—not the government—decides on the criteria for innocence and guilt. She replaces the authority of the judicial institution with the authority of an ethics of the public sphere, and decides that she does not want to become a lawyer, but a journalist in order to critique the system instead of participating in it. From this moment onwards, her internal monologues become less frequent and she starts to communicate meaningfully with other characters, thus contributing to the emergence of a critical, informed and mobilized, anti-patriarchal civil society which, as becomes clear at the end of the novel, will eventually have to fight two agents of exceptionality: the government and the drug cartels.¹⁷

The Solitude of Silence in Veinte de cobre: Memoria de la clandestinidad

Fritz Glockner's novel *Veinte de Cobre: Memoria de la clandestinidad* (2005) contributes the perspective of those who were children during the 1970s. The novel is set in Puebla and Mexico City, and focuses on the family of the assassinated guerrillero Miguel Ángel. In contrast to the Palafox Valenzuela or the people of Guerrero, Miguel Ángel's family is highly educated, has financial and social capital, and has taken a critical stance towards the political status quo for decades. The novel is narrated with hindsight by his son Federico, and the occasion for the narration is Federico's younger brother David's accidental discovery of a family archive of newspaper articles on his father's clandestine activities and assassination—information which the older family members had kept from him. In an attempt to address the recriminations of David, Federico shares with him his recollections of an adolescence overshadowed by his

¹⁷ Monsiváis analyses different elements of violence in this political culture which contributed significantly to the social climate in which the *guerra sucia* became possible. Citizens practiced a political compliance, which was not named as such, but was instead passed off as apolitical (Monsiváis 2004: 144 ff.).

father's absence, initially because he chose clandestine armed struggle over his family, eventually because of imprisonment and, finally, because of his assassination. Glockner draws on allusion for veracity. Informed readers will notice that Miguel Ángel's case resembles that of Glockner's father Napoleón, that Federico is the Spanish version of Fritz, that the names of several characters are similar to those of members of the Glockner family.¹⁸ However, the ambivalent status of *Veinte de cobre* as *Memorias de la clandestinidad* renounces the truth-claims of autobiography or *testimonio*. The novel's subtitle may refer to memory (without specifying whether those are collective or personal memories), or to memoir. The attention of the reader is thus directed away from the private (and privatized narration) experience of pain, and towards the social, cultural and political context within which the story is embedded.

The guerrillero character of Miguel Ángel is considerably more nuanced as an individual than Gervasio or el Chato, partially because the narrative is organized around his son's attempt to recover him as a father. Throughout the novel, Miguel Ángel is mostly referred to as "papá." The children's knowledge about Miguel Ángel is limited by the government's lies, by the children's own anger at their father, and by the mother's attempt to protect the boys from knowledge that might hurt them. And yet, his sons make a sustained effort to understand him. The image that emerges from this attempt is that of a thoughtful and quietly defiant man. Like el Chato, he opts for armed struggle only after much deliberation and anger at injustice. This puts him into an impossible situation because circumstances forbid him to bring together his role as father and husband with his sense of self as a politically engaged and committed individual. He defies social conventions first by leaving his family and following the call of his political commitment. He then defies the rules of clandestinity by

¹⁸ Glockner's father, Napoleón Glockner, left his family to join the guerrilla group FLN. He spent several years in clandestinity, and was then arrested and jailed. During his time in clandestinity he started a relationship with a fellow *guerrillera*, Nora Rivera. After both were released from jail, they lived together in Mexico City. On 5th November 1976 Napoleón Glockner was shot in the street. Nora Rivera was kidnapped and killed; her body was left in the car in which she had been taken. The FLN holds the paramilitary group Brigada blanca responsible for the assassination. The police maintains that the FLN killed both in an act of revenge because after being tortured, they had collaborated with the police (Castellanos 272-274).

keeping a short, erratic and fragmentary diary, which eventually finds its way into the narrator's hands and which he inserts into the book without commenting on it. After his release from prison and in his role as a father, he defies taboos. During a short period of time when Federico lives with him, Miguel Ángel openly addresses issues related to adolescent masculinity and sexuality, as well as torture and disempowerment. One time, Federico walks in on him while he is taking a shower and stands aghast when seeing the traces of torture on his father's body. Miguel Ángel returns his son's gaze with a mixture of vulnerability, guilt, shame, and concern; but he does not ask him to leave or look away, which is the usual parental response to horror in *El amante* and *Veinte de cobre*. Miguel Ángel disobeys social conventions once again by eventually leaving his family for a second time, this time to live with Dora, his *compañera* and partner/lover from times in clandestinity. In this last instance he tries to bring together his feelings for his son and those for his lover by offering Federico the opportunity to live with them; but Federico refuses and, shortly after, his father is shot dead in the street and Dora is also killed.

Agents of repression figure only marginally in *Veinte de cobre*, partly because the novel is narrated from Federico's perspective, who was a child at the time of the events, and who was protected from many of the most immediate encounters by his mother and older sister; and partly because Miguel Ángel is the only *guerrillero* character who is eventually transferred from illegal confinement to a legal prison. For the most part, the likes of Mascareño tower over the lives of the children as an often unacknowledged, but threatening presence in the background, who hurt the children through having hurt their parents. However, Federico does have regular encounters with those who keep the legal façade in place and who permit acts of repression from within it, mostly prison guards and bureaucrats.

The most intense of these encounters takes place after Miguel Ángel's death, when the co-existence of the façade of legality and the state of exception is symbolized by a stolen watch. The significance of the watch is highlighted by the atemporal quality of the narrative throughout the novel. The family seems to be constantly waiting: for Miguel Ángel's return,

for his release, for a decision, a permit, an answer. The passage of time is measured by the non-actions of the legal bureaucracy, and the constant wait for someone else's actions suspends the family in constant inaction. After Miguel Angel's assassination, the family initially decides to relinquish his belongings, to forget what happened and to let life continue. However, the narrator decides that he would like to have his father's watch as a keepsake:

Deseaba tanto tener aquel reloj con el que papá murió. Era un símbolo insignificante, absurdo si se quiere, pero en aquel momento no había otro deseo más importante para mí que conseguir aquella prenda. (...) El valor era lo de menos, con ese reloj se había detenido el tiempo para papá; (...) aquel objeto lo había acompañado hasta el último instante. Imaginaba el número de veces que papá habría detenido su mirada sobre aquella carátula. Simplemente era de esas ilusiones que a un adolescente se le prenden, pienso que me hubiera dado mucha seguridad el haberme colocado aquel reloj en la muñeca. (143)

The family takes on a battle with the authorities in order to get the watch for Federico, and his mother and his aunt accompany him to Mexico City to recover the father's belongings. After a day of waiting, humiliations, and arguments they are finally given the package:

Yo buscaba el reloj con la mirada, pero saltaron las fotos del cadáver acribillado en plena calle, diagnósticos, reportes de autopsia. Mamá, angustiada frente al espectáculo, sugirió que mirara hacia otra parte. Todo quedaba ahí, como testimonio del final de los días de papá. La ropa, las fotos, los informes, indagaciones, detalles, la hora, la forma, los hechos, el tiempo pero el reloj no. Habíamos sido ingenuos al suponer que hubieran guardado cualquier objeto de valor, por mínimo que fuera. (145)

Individual transgression—petty thievery—colludes with systemic and symbolic repression; or does systemic and symbolic repression invite and tolerate petty theft? Whatever the causality, the authorities clearly attempt to deprive the boy of all evidence of his father's life and instead, overload him with evidence of their own version of his father's death: photos taken by official photographers, the coroner's report, an official record of the gruesome details about the assassination, a few depersonalized clothes. Tragically, Federico's mother completes the project of erasing memory. Her anxious supplication to "mirar para otra parte" seeks to protect her child

from horror, but in so doing, delivers him to silence.

The story of Miguel Ángel ends with his son not having anyone to turn to for memories of his father. This is the situation Federico then conveys to his younger brother, until David starts to claim a story. Federico responds with a narrative that gradually punctures the atemporality of silence. However, the effectiveness of his narrative is confined to the intimate space of the family, unless readers respond to it from their own loci of enunciation.

Conclusion: “Para un gobierno terrorista no hay inocentes”

Towards the end of *El amante*, an anonymous fellow prisoner tells David, “Para un gobierno terrorista no hay inocentes” (159). For all those characters who reclaim civic agency when faced with a terrorist government, the statement turns into a question: would I want to be innocent on the terms of a terrorist government? Answering ‘no’ to this question marks the threshold between the delusional belief in the façade of legality, and resistance to the state of exception; between impotence and agency; between asking for a permit and building a secret trail; between choking on silence and sharing vulnerability through a story. This negation constitutes the ethical kit that holds together the diverse actors. María Fernanda might not agree with el Chato’s articulation of his ‘no,’ but the bond of their negation is stronger than the relationship of authority that subjugates them to their father’s ‘yes.’ Federico refuses to explain or rationalize away the pain caused by his father’s choice of armed struggle over raising his sons, but his desire to speak and to share has a stronger affinity with his father’s breaking of conventions and taboos than with the graveyard silence of the status quo. The narrator of *Guerra* does not share in the collective identity of the population in the mountains of Guerrero, but he renounces authorial privilege for the sake of committed writing and invites the reader to renounce reading as an exercise of privilege and instead, explore the possibilities of reading as a practice of solidarity.

Turning the move beyond innocence into an act of collective change—as distinct from individual and isolated rebellion—requires a shared language, shared knowledge, and shared memories. These have to

be expressed in a language that is not necessarily factually authentic, but ethically truthful. Mendoza, Montemayor and Glockner draw on literature to find words, stories, and symbols for what does not officially exist. They recover the guerrilleros as being involved in a project that, to paraphrase John Beverley, had its “misconceptions, arrogance, and just plain foolishness” but that “with all its flaws and sometimes lethal illusions...revealed Latin America in its most generous, creative, courageous, and diverse aspects” (Beverley 58). They connect armed struggle with the experience of those who shared the ethical urgency, but not the strategy of the guerrillas, and establish equality between different modes of resistance. By rendering tangible and sayable the intangible and the unsaid, the writers break through the schizophrenia engendered by the façade of legality. This ends silence’s privatization of pain and recognizes isolated and atomized individuals and families as members of a civil society that acknowledges the existence of both the façade of legality and of the state of exception, moves past civic schizophrenia, and works for an alternative. The emergent potentiality is that of a network or coalition between different actors who share sensitivities and possibilities that inform all three novels: a re-thinking of masculinities and femininities and of gender relations and gender roles; a greater openness towards rethinking conventions of love, sexuality, and articulations of emotional attachments; a pluralization of our understanding of collectivity and subjectivity through the lens of shared commitments; a stylistic sensitivity for different forms of expression by different voices, from different perspectives, and through different registers of language; and a mindful approach to different kinds of silence and of speech. The analysis presented here can only be a starting point for further work on different aspects of guerrilla literature in Mexico. An analytical inquiry into, for example, why the authors and the guerrilla protagonists of most fictional texts tend to be men, while especially in recent years women have published a significant number of testimonial texts, would be interesting.¹⁹ But as they stand, the novels discussed here

¹⁹ An exception to the rule is Carlos Montemayor’s novel *Las mujeres del alba*, published posthumously in 2010.

As this article is about to enter the public domain, John Gibler’s generically hybrid book *Tzompaxtle. La fuga de un guerrillero* is also going to press. Some of

make a passionate case *for* literature—for a literature that critically works through its privilege, is driven by commitment, and located beyond innocence.

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the reflections presented here resonate strongly with the story told by Gibler and with the ways in which he tells it.

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